Writing in Film Studies, from Professional Practice to Practical Pedagogy

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Chapter One

Disciplinary Expectations
in Film Studies

An illustration will prove helpful as I begin this book on writing in film studies. Imagine faculty members from several disciplines meeting together inside a college classroom to discuss university-wide assessment. On the desks in front of each faculty member rests a standardized rubric meant to assess student communication effectiveness. The faculty, in order to calibrate their use of the rubric, watch a recorded student speech, given in an unnamed course, on the projector screen. The faculty member leading the discussion asks, once the speech concludes, how the other faculty members would score such a speech. A professor from the kinesiology department confidently asserts the introduction of the speech clearly falls below standards and should receive the lowest possible score. Confused, a faculty member from the communication department says she would score the introduction of the speech much higher, telling the kinesiology professor that the student did exactly what communication faculty teach students to do by starting with an attention-getter that relates to the topic at hand. In response, the kinesiology professor, who mostly teaches students wanting to become physical therapists, says, "OK, but I expect my student introductions to include a greeting followed by their name, and this student did neither of those things."

The above story, which comes slightly paraphrased from an actual assessment meeting, illustrates a truth commonly overlooked by instructors teaching across academic fields: teachers have cultivated a set of disciplinary expectations, and they, often unconsciously, use those disciplinary expectations to assess student work. In this example both the communication professor and the kinesiology professor are assessing the same speech through the lens of their individual disciplines. Even though both professors share the same rubric, the disciplinary norms familiar to each shape their assessment, with neither professor fully conscious of the role disciplinarity plays in their assumptions. The task of assessing communication effectiveness across disciplines assumes certain communicative traits to be generalizable.

No matter the setting or the content of a communicative act, the assumption goes, certain qualities remain fixed as fulfilling requirements of effective communication. While this assumption contains a certain amount of truth, it is important to acknowledge the role of disciplinary expectations in the delivery and reception of a communicative act, even student-to-professor communication in the classroom.

Writing is the most common way instructors ask students to communicate in film studies, and film instructors also carry into the classroom a set of expectations for student writing inextricably tied to the discipline. Like the kinesiology and communication professors noted earlier, film professors often remain unaware of how much influence the norms of disciplinary rhetoric hold over their assessment of student work and often view writing as a skill learned outside of film classrooms. Additionally, college and university professors must juggle the demands of their own research and writing with the ever-increasing amount of content knowledge in their discipline. The demands of professional research and writing limit the time teachers have to help student writers outside of class, while the importance of content instruction limits the amount of writing instruction taking place during class. Timothy Corrigan succinctly summarizes the issue in this way: "Those of us who teach film rarely have time to discuss writing about film. Most of us are busy presenting films and various books about those films, and the usual presumption [we] are forced to make is that students know how to put what they see and think into a comprehensible written form."[1] The "presumption" Corrigan notes, that students should be able to write better than they do, is a widespread complaint in subjects throughout academia. Research continues to suggest a disparity between student writing capabilities and expectations held by faculty members in disciplines across the curriculum. Caffarella and Barnett describe the "shocking" realization faculty make when they realize many "students not only do not write like scholars, but they also may not think like scholars."[2] The same holds true in research from library and information science,[3] student affairs,[4] and

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[1] Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (New York: MacMillan Learning, 2021), ix.
[2] Rosemary S. Caffarella and Bruce G. Barnett, "Teaching Doctoral Students to Become Scholarly Writers: The Importance of Giving and Receiving Critiques," *Studies in Higher Education* 25, no. 1 (2010): 39.
[3] Anita L. Ondrusek, "What the Research Reveals About Graduate Students' Writing Skills: A Literature Review," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 53, no. 3 (2012): 176–188.
[4] Margaret Sallee, Ronald Hallett, and William Tierney, "Teaching Writing in Graduate School," *College Teaching* 59, no. 2 (2011): 66–72.

geography,[5] with faculty finding students "under-prepared in the skills and techniques that will enable them to present their findings effectively" because "no one has taught them how to write."[6] As with film studies, students in these disciplines are too often "left to their own devices, and, without guidance, their writing activities seldom exceed the academic requirements of degree programs."[7] On top of this presumption, film scholar David Bordwell adds that those teaching film studies have used "imitation and habit" to understand the conventions needed to function within, and contribute to, film studies discourse, while also expecting "coordinated action from others," including students, "without any particular awareness" of the underlying rules to which they proscribe.[8] Instructors, therefore, not only feel time constraints keeping them from direct writing instruction in courses, but also lack experience in what direct instruction of disciplinary norms would look like.

Thus, film instructors who view writing as a key component in their curriculum must combat the tendency to assume students entering their classroom already know how to write film essays. There are certainly film professors who spend considerable time and energy aiding student writers through classroom lecture, individual conferences, and written feedback on student papers. However, there are also many who include books such as Corrigan's *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* in the "Recommended Texts" section of their syllabus hoping it can be the "guide" helping students "through the mechanics of the essay form" and encouraging a "more enjoyable and articulate communication between" instructors and students.[9] In recent years, scholars have begun to acknowledge the long-term and ongoing insufficiency of writing instruction in film classes and have even taken some provisional steps to define and address the problem. This trend has influenced the content in recent editions of popular textbooks *Film Art*[10] and *Looking at Movies*,[11] which include expanded sample student essays

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[5] Dydia DeLyser, "Teaching Graduate Students to Write: A Seminar for Thesis and Dissertation Writers," *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 27, no. 2 (2003): 169-181.

[6] DeLyser, "Teaching Graduate Students to Write," 169.

[7] Carol A. Mullen, "The Need for a Curricular Writing Model for Graduate Students," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 25, no. 1 (2001): 120.

[8] David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 7.

[9] Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, xiii.

[10] David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2020).

[11] Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021).

along with professional excerpts to exemplify quality writing about film. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*[12] and *Film: An Introduction*[13] also include chapters specifically devoted to writing about cinema. Although these texts guiding students through a film-specific writing process exist, the real or perceived lack of time available for instructor-to-student, discipline-specific writing instruction warrants further exploration. The presence of film-specific writing guidebooks indicates the presence of film studies-specific discourse conventions, yet a lack of time spent on concentrated classroom writing instruction in film studies classrooms hampers student recognition of, and familiarization with, those conventions.

As Bordwell's quote above acknowledges, it also provides evidence that many instructors may be unconscious of, or unable to verbalize, the conventions they require students to follow. As a whole, the current situation often leads to frustration with student writing achievement from both instructors and students and indicates the need for a more pervasive understanding of the current status of film studies classroom writing pedagogy and ways instructors can further help student writers succeed.

Writing Pedagogy in the Film Classroom

Ultimately, the lack of time spent on in-class writing instruction necessitates a reliance on students to tacitly learn the writing conventions of film studies. Students must learn to produce quality written discourse implicitly, with instructors hoping that, eventually, students will acquire an ability to produce the conventions through trial and error. To move beyond the current method of implicit instruction, film studies pedagogy must wrestle with the decades-long debates in Writing in the Disciplines (WID) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) scholarship, especially those surrounding the identification of disciplinary conventions and whether or not the current pedagogical situation in film studies warrants more explicit classroom instruction about those conventions. My aims are to show that more explicit instruction of film-specific writing conventions will lead to better student writing in undergraduate film studies and to identify those underlying rules of film studies writing to then clearly articulate what constitutes the rhetoric of film studies discourse, thereby helping film instructors recognize the underlying assumptions currently influencing student classroom assessment. Ultimately, I am joining other WAC and

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[12] Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (New York: Macmillan Learning, 2021).
[13] William H. Phillips, *Film: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

WID researchers in helping instructors identify "what they already know and do (with both writing and with their disciplinary knowledge)" in order to "bring those things to conscious awareness," resulting in better teaching of, and with, writing.[14] My particular focus will be on the undergraduate film course, taking note of how influential disciplinarity is in the construction, and grading, of assignments at what many consider the entry point into the field. Once identified, instructors can then apply these conventions to the larger pedagogy already in use within film studies classrooms.

Pedagogical questions are certainly not new to cinema studies, and many within the field have added their insights to advance teaching effectiveness in film courses. The most prevalent pedagogical tools in the discipline are those written with the student in mind. Textbooks, anthologies, and histories written for student readers proliferate the disciplinary landscape. Less pervasive, though still available, are texts written with the instructor as the intended audience. The British Film Institute (BFI) often provides instructional materials and support for those using film in the classroom, and has even published a "Teaching Film and Media Studies" book series, which includes such titles as *Teaching Men and Film*,[15] *Teaching Black Cinema*,[16] *Teaching Stars and Performance*,[17] *Teaching Short Films*,[18] and *Teaching Contemporary British Cinema*.[19] There is also an ever-growing collection of articles detailing new approaches and methods to teaching both graduate and undergraduate film students. These articles run the gamut of pedagogical thought, exploring ways to address specific theoretical questions in the classroom,[20] how to help students approach topics of disciplinary and interdisciplinary concern,[21] and encouraging more conscious

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[14] Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, eds, *(Re)Considering What We Know: Learning Thresholds in Writing, Composition, Rhetoric, And Literacy* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2019), 302.

[15] Matthew Hall, *Teaching Men and Film* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005).

[16] Peter Jones, *Teaching Black Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

[17] Jill Poppy, *Teaching Stars and Performance* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

[18] Symon Quy, *Teaching Short Films* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

[19] Sarah C. Benyahia, *Teaching Contemporary British Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

[20] See Wheeler W. Dixon, "Teaching Film After 9/11," *Cinema Journal* 43, no. 2 (2004): 115-118 or Lee Easton and Kelly Hewson, "Reflections on the Interplay of Race, Whiteness and Canadian Identity in a Film Studies Classroom," *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 2, no. 2 (2010): 116-148.

[21] See Christopher Faulkner, "Teaching French National Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 38, no. 4 (1999): 88-93 or Colleen Jankovic, "Feeling Cinema: Affect in

engagement with teaching practice.[22] However, as one of the few book collections on film pedagogy, *Teaching Film*, points out, these articles, spread across many journals and many decades, have a more "piecemeal and dispersed" than organized feel and can be "difficult for a teacher to know of or track down."[23] With *Teaching Film*, Fischer and Petro also knew they were "only [gesturing] toward broad areas, issues, and questions" in the field, trusting these areas would "receive more detailed consideration in the future."[24] One such area to explore further is teaching students how to write within the discipline of film studies.

Disciplinary Expectations

Before any exploration of student writing in film studies, and cinema studies discourse more broadly, can take place, however, it is important to acknowledge the social dimension of academic film study, because the study of rhetoric is, by nature, the study of social interactions. David Blakesley provides a helpful way to understand the rhetorical nature of cinema interpretation. First, Blakesley acknowledges the rhetorical nature of film itself, with filmmakers using film language to direct "our attention in countless ways" with the "aim of fostering identification and all that that complex phenomenon implies."[25] The rhetorical cues in a film carry narrative, thematic, and symptomatic meanings which "reveal not only the predispositions of filmmakers but they also serve ideological functions in the broader culture . . . that can be analyzed as having a rhetorical function, especially to the extent that rhetoric serves as the means of initiating cultural critique and stabilizing cultural pieties."[26] In this sense films are the conduit filmmakers use to elicit thoughts, emotions, and actions from an audience, as well as the means through which implicit social norms are codified and strengthened. Films then, as Blakesley points out, foster identification (or what Kenneth Burke calls consubstantiation) and carry cultural ideology,

Film/Composition Pedagogy," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 22, no. 2 (2012): 86-103.

[22] See Diane Carson, "Teaching for Learning: Do They Learn What You Teach?" *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 2 (1997): 109-114 or Frank P. Tomasulo, "Researching Your Teaching: A Mini-Manifesto," *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 3 (2011): 84-86.

[23] Lucy Fischer and Patrice Petro, eds. *Teaching Film* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2012), 2.

[24] Fischer and Petro, *Teaching Film*, 1.

[25] David Blakesley, *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2007), 3.

[26] Blakesley, *The Terministic Screen*, 5.

and they do this through rhetorical means. Additionally, we must account for the rhetorical act of film interpretation. Film theory plays a role in this process, providing "the interpretive lens through which and with which we generate perspectives on film as both art and rhetoric" while also "filtering what does and does not constitute and legitimize interpretation and, thus, meaning."[27] Legitimate and acceptable interpretation, then, involves the construction of meaning through the selection of certain discipline-accepted elements in a film. Proper film interpretation must account for the way others have interpreted film in the past and must fit into standards others have already conceived.

The social nature of film studies discourse, therefore, includes the messages coming from films as well as those coming from the interpretation of those films. Of course, neither films nor interpretations of films occur in a vacuum. Films consciously and unconsciously interact with other previously released films as well as with historical events and cultural beliefs. Likewise, film interpretation considers previously released films, previous interpretations of films, and the historical and cultural milieu of both when the film was released and when the interpretation takes place. Mikhail Bakhtin, when discussing the nature of communication, writes that any "utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances."[28] Thus, the nature of film interpretation, as with all communication, is inherently social, and must consider the ongoing dialogic nature of the topic at hand. Responses to other utterances, to be comprehensible and accepted, must incorporate this social aspect of communication. Each new addition to film studies discourse takes not only a generic form recognizable to the intended audience, but also includes certain modes of thought, argumentation, and expression familiar to others within the discipline. Filmmakers and critics are not always consciously aware of these considerations or the conventions they follow. Even the generic forms films or interpretations can take often go unnoticed or unanalyzed by those using them. Professionals may be able to use the forms of the discipline, which would include what Bakhtin calls speech genres, "confidently and skillfully in practice" without ever analyzing or even suspecting "their existence in theory."[29] In harmony with Bordwell's observation mentioned earlier, Bakhtin recognizes those in the discipline as accepting and utilizing, though not always fully conscious of, socially constructed norms of thought and communication.

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[27] Blakesley, *The Terministic Screen*, 3.
[28] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 69.
[29] Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 78.

Instructor expectations, based on the social nature of filmic discourse, inevitably influence classroom practice. Writing scholars have long wrestled with this reality in disciplines across the academic landscape, trying to figure out the best way to approach the divide between "insider" and "novice" writers, especially when those teaching hold certain "insider" expectations for students writing at a "novice" level. It is now a widely held position that writing takes place within specific contexts, and a more developed understanding of that context results in more successful, insider-type writing. In written communication, familiarity with genre is a key component in properly responding to a given rhetorical context. Over the years, many scholars have used different terms for this context, but all agree genre knowledge is essential to effectively understanding a given social situation. So, whether describing the context as a ceremonial,[30] a discourse community,[31] a sphere of communication,[32] or a community of practice,[33] genre plays a major role in situating knowledge, distributing ideas, framing social relationships, and coordinating the actions of a given group.

Writing Genres: Implicit vs. Explicit Instruction

Genre owes its elevated place in writing scholarship to the fact that, by nature, genres not only manifest as a result of social constructs, but they also have reoccurring structural elements. To some degree, both the structural and social elements of a genre codify to become conventions, which work as "perceptual signals" within a text to "ensure [its] appropriate reception" in a given context.[34] Writers use codified conventions within one text to respond to similar codified conventions used by another writer, in another text, producing a clear form of social interaction between those writers. Additionally, this social interaction works to further socialize the users of the conventions into the discourse community within which they take part. This process can happen within a single genre, such as when scholars interact using the conventions of scholarly research essays published in academic journals, but can also take place across genres, as in the case of a

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[30] Aviva Freedman, "Anyone for Tennis," in *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, ed. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 43-66.
[31] John M. Swales, "Discourse Communities, Genres and English as an International Language," *World Englishes* 7, no. 2 (1988): 211-220.
[32] Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*
[33] Etienne Wenger, "Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System," *Systems Thinker* 9, no. 5 (1998): 2-3.
[34] Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (1975): 136.

call for papers eliciting a query letter, resulting in an emailed response, ultimately causing the submission of a scholarly article. The communication exchange between members of the discourse community relies on acknowledgement of, and adherence to, certain generic norms. As Bawarshi and Reiff state, genres are "forms of cultural knowledge that conceptually frame and mediate how we understand and typically act within various situations."[35] Knowledge of conventions, therefore, allows for better understanding of existing texts along with the ability to contribute new texts within an ongoing conversation.

As structural entities, genres are a great pedagogical tool for instructors attempting to explicitly teach writing conventions since genres tend to standardize syntactical and linguistic features scholars can identify and utilize in teaching. John Swales' work in "identifying the frequency of occurrence of certain linguistic features in a particular register and then making these features the focus of language instruction" exemplifies this approach.[36] David Bartholomae also argues for the importance of explicit instruction in conventions "so that those conventions can be written out, 'dymystified,' and taught in our classrooms."[37] Teachers using this perspective analyze the conventions and expectations of generic writing within a discipline in order to provide students with examples to study and emulate. Using this method, teachers hope students come to recognize both the formal characteristics and content knowledge necessary for what Bartholomae calls "insider" writing. Wolfe and Schilb both also argue student familiarity with prevalent disciplinary conventions should be a major goal of discipline-specific writing instruction, and that such instruction breeds student confidence.[38]

Research also shows student initiation into a discourse community relies heavily on the recognition of social conventions, which many claim students learn more through experience than explicit instruction. Some have gone so far as to challenge the "critical pragmatism" inherent in explicitly teaching genres as codified structures, viewing such an approach as removing genres

[35] Anis S. Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy* (Boulder: WAC Clearinghouse, 2010), 4.

[36] John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

[37] David Bartholomae. "Inventing the University," *Journal of Basic Writing* 5, no. 1 (1986): 12.

[38] See Joanne Wolfe, "A Method for Teaching Invention in the Gateway Literature Class," *Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2003): 399-425; also John Schilb, "The WPA and the Politics of Litcomp," in *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, eds. Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Jarnagi Enos (New York: Routledge, 2002), 165-180.

from their social contexts.[39] From this perspective, explicit instruction of genres conceals their social uses, producing a lack of critical awareness and, ultimately, a lack of engagement with the genres in question. Following Carolyn Miller, a socially driven view of genre claims "what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends…for the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community."[40] Since genres function within a community, they remain fluid and are consistently facilitating the relationship between subjects and social institutions.[41] This aspect of genre knowledge is something which develops over time and is intimately linked to a discipline-specific way of knowing. It is much harder to learn these social aspects of discourse through explicit classroom instruction, and therefore many claim these qualities are better appropriated implicitly through experience.

However, there are scholars who recognize the social nature of genres and still advocate for explicit instruction of both structural and social genre conventions. One such approach emerges from the view that genre knowledge functions both in the realm of "genre sets" and "genre systems."[42] These concepts explore the ways different genres interact within

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[39] See Alastair Pennycook, "Vulgar Pragmatism, Critical Pragmatism, and EAP," *English for Specific Purposes* 16, no. 4 (1997): 253-269; Aviva Freedman, "Show and Tell? The Role of Explicit Teaching in the Learning of New Genres," *Research in the Teaching of English* 27, no. 3 (1993): 222-251; Sarah Benesch, *Critical English for Academic Purposes: Theory, Politics, and Practice* (Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001); Christine P. Casanave, "Looking Ahead to More Sociopolitically-Oriented Case Study Research in L2 Writing Scholarship: (But Should it be Called 'Post-Process'?)," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 12, no. 1 (2003): 85-102; Brian Paltridge, "Genre and Second-Language Academic Writing," *Language Teaching* 47, no. 3 (2014): 303-318.
[40] Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70, no. 2 (1984): 165.
[41] See Anis S. Bawarshi, *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2003); Charles Bazerman, "Intertextuality: How Texts Rely on Other Texts," in *What Writing Does and How It Does It*, eds. Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 2004), 83-96; Mary Soliday, "Mapping Classroom Genres in A Science in Society Course," in *Genres Across the Curriculum*, eds. Anne Herrington and Charles Moran (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 65-82.
[42] For discussion on "genre sets," see Amy J. Devitt, "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept," *College Composition and Communication* 44, no. 4 (1993): 573-586 and Bawarshi, *Genre and Invention of the Writer*. For discussion of "genre systems," see Charles Bazerman, "Systems of Genres and the

certain social, or "activity," systems.[43] Genre sets are the collection of genres a particular group uses within a social system. For example, students in a film studies class would write notes, reflections, summaries, analyses, and academic essays. All of these genres would make up a genre set utilized by the student. Of course, within the same class, the instructor would also utilize a genre set, including a syllabus, assignment prompts, rubrics, feedback, presentation slides, etc. Understanding genres in this way highlights the interactive, and creative, nature of genres. Each text is created, used, and produces a response, and that response usually comes in the form of a different genre. The combination and interaction of the different genre sets constitutes a genre system. Genres within a genre set are, of course, not unique to that particular genre system. Students in a history or biology class, for example, will utilize many of the same genres as those in a film studies course. Genre systems, then, help to regulate how writers use genre sets. The interactions between the genre sets, and those using them, creates the social environment within which users utilize the genres. This is why explicit instruction of only generic structural elements falls short of teaching the full nature of writing within a discipline. Bazerman states that only "a limited range of genres may appropriately follow upon one another in particular settings, because the successful conditions of the actions of each require various states of affairs to exist."[44] Students must not only understand how a particular genre looks, but they must also recognize when certain genres are used, and the types of knowledge those genres are meant to contain within a genre system.

A Student's Place in the Discipline

To be sure, the film studies classroom environment does not require nor ask students to completely master any particular written genre, and it certainly does not require students to attempt all the genres available within the film activity system. Russell explains "the division of labor within and particularly among activity systems" makes it so "not all of the participants must appropriate (learn to read/write) all of the written genres" within the

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Enactment of Social Intentions," in *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway (London: Routledge, 1994), 79-101.

[43] David R. Russell, "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis," *Written Communication* 14, no. 4 (1997): 504-554.

[44] Bazerman, "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions," 97-98.

system.[45] In fact, much of the work students do in introductory film courses may only vaguely resemble professional genres and fit more into the category of "mutt genres" which "mediate activities in other activity systems" though "their purposes and audiences are vague or even contradictory" within the classroom setting.[46] For example, when film instructors ask students to write short discussion posts analyzing a particular scene from a movie, the exercise, in some ways, mirrors analysis done by professionals writing a journal article or movie review. Of course, professors often use these written assignments as exercises in application, and ultimately as practice for the longer papers awaiting at the end of the semester. However, students often attempt this assignment without any bearings on what constitutes proper analysis within a larger argumentative essay, or how analysis differs depending on the type of audience being addressed. Analysis in a journalistic film review looks a lot different than analysis in an academic, peer reviewed journal article, which also looks different than analysis in the notes included with a special edition Blu-ray release from the *Criterion Collection*. Many of these assignments are "genres that do not respond to rhetorical situations requiring communication in order to accomplish a purpose that is meaningful to the author" outside of earning a passing grade.[47]

Yet, as we will see in a later chapter, introductory film courses often structure these assignments as preparation work for longer argumentative papers meant to more fully coincide with professional discourse. Instructors also bring to their grading certain expectations gleaned from professional discourse, including the social function of the academic essay genre, which is inherently situated within a certain socially constructed discourse. Often, students have a hard time making connections between the mutt genres of the course and "specific academic genres" of the discipline and, therefore, fail to make connections necessary for high marks on their final papers. Genres exist "when a situation recurs often enough that rhetors learn similar and agreed upon ways to respond to it," but mutt genres, which may only recur within a particular classroom, "do not recur for the student rhetor" and may never be "required by the varied exigencies that arise from their

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[45] David R. Russell, "Uses of Activity Theory in Written Communication Research," in *Learning and Expanding with Activity Theory*, eds. Annalisa Sannino, Harry Daniels, and Kris D. Gutierrez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.
[46] Elizabeth Wardle, "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" *College Composition and Communication* 60, no. 4 (2009): 774.
[47] Wardle, "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC," 777.

academic experiences to perform such a task again."[48] Students, then, must navigate an unstable landscape where disciplinary norms outside the realm of their experience play a role in their final grade even though instructors never fully place those students within situations requiring engagement with those norms.

Writing in the Disciplines

Starting with Shaughnessy, scholars in rhetoric and composition have tried to further understand the structural and social contexts of academic writing to identify the importance of generic discourse conventions in writing and writing instruction.[49] Research by Bizzell,[50] Kinneavy,[51] Bartholomae,[52] and Freed and Broadhead[53] reiterated and expanded on Shaughnessy's work, leading to MacDonald's claim that identification of discourse conventions helps students "adapt their writing to the shifting demands made upon them in different parts of the academy."[54] Research by Fahnestock and Secor,[55] MacDonald,[56] and Pullman further encouraged making discourse conventions an object of instruction rather than something tacitly learned and absorbed by students.[57] Genre theorists such as Swales and Johns also support explicit instruction of genre conventions, arguing such teaching helps students more fully recognize and enter disciplinary

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[48] Wardle, "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC," 778.

[49] Mina Shaughnessy, "Some Needed Research on Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 28 (1977): 317-320.

[50] Patricia Bizzell, "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know About Writing," *PRE/TEXT* 3, no. 3 (1982): 213-243.

[51] James L. Kinneavy, "Writing Across the Curriculum," *Profession* 83 (1983): 13-20.

[52] Bartholomae, "Inventing the University," 4-23.

[53] Richard C. Freed and Glenn J. Broadhead, "Discourse Communities, Sacred Texts, and Institutional Norms," *College Composition and Communication* 38, no. 2 (1987): 154-165.

[54] Susan P. Macdonald, "Data-Driven and Conceptually Driven Academic Discourse," *Written Communication* 6 (1989): 411.

[55] Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor, "The Rhetoric of Literary Criticism," in *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*, eds. Charles Bazerman and James Paradis (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 77-96.

[56] Susan P. MacDonald, *Professional Academic Writing in The Humanities and Social Sciences* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).

[57] George L. Pullman, "Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Composition, Invention, and Literature," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 14, no. 2 (1994): 367-387.

discourse communities.[58] As Bartholomae notes, "all writers, in order to write, must imagine for themselves the privilege of being 'insiders'. . . of being both inside an established and powerful discourse, and of being granted a special right to speak."[59] This confidence to speak comes from first, as Ong puts it, "fictionalizing" themselves as part of the audience, then recognizing tendencies, learning content, and finally composing material to the community of which they are now a part.[60] Their initiation into the discourse community is, obviously, not perfect and takes time, but teaching through the lens of genre conventions helps students "extend themselves into the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals, gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions, and necessary connections that determine the 'what might be said' and constitute knowledge within the various branches of our academic community."[61]

Responding to, and in some ways emerging from, such research, scholars in WID and WAC have attempted to identify the social and structural aspects of genres within specific disciplines. Though composition research and writing studies spawned from the same departments meant to research literature, most WID and WAC research focuses on disciplines housed outside English departments, particularly those in the hard and social sciences. Together, this research shows both the fluidity and stability of generic conventions, as well as their persuasive function. In many ways research has worked in reverse, focusing first on those disciplines perceived to be most removed from literary studies, such as the hard sciences, and gradually coming closer and closer to the fields most familiar to those in writing studies, such as literary studies. Laura Wilder sums up this inevitable move back toward the English department in this way: "If the shifting demands of different disciplines present noteworthy challenges for [students], then presumably the demands of specialized, scholarly literary study would present no lesser challenge to students than those they encounter in other corners of the academy."[62]

Film studies is one particular discipline writing research has mostly ignored, likely because of its close relationship with literary studies,

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[58] See Swales, *Genre Analysis* and Ann M. Johns, "Destabilizing and Enriching Novice Students' Genre Theories," in *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives*, ed. Ann M. Johns (Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 237-246.
[59] Bartholomae, "Inventing the University," 10.
[60] Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 90, no. 1 (1975): 9-21.
[61] Bartholomae, "Inventing the University," 11.
[62] Laura Wilder, *Rhetorical Strategies and Genre Conventions in Literary Studies: Teaching and Writing in The Disciplines* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 4.

primarily entering higher education through the doors of literature departments. The ties between film and literature have led to a significant overlap in the expectations for student writing in both fields. In fact, several texts combine instruction in writing about film and writing about literature, including *Writing About Literature and Film*,[63] *The Elements of Writing about Literature and Film*,[64] and *Ways In: Approaches to Reading and Writing about Literature and Film*,[65] even as they try to argue that "analyzing a film is different from analyzing any work of literature."[66] Yet, there are differences between the disciplines which have only strengthened over time, and the development of stand-alone film departments, along with the interdisciplinary nature of many cinema studies courses and journals, continue to challenge the notion that writing about film is simply an extension of writing about literature. Therefore, to paraphrase Wilder, if a goal of WID is to help students understand the shifting demands placed upon them in different parts of the academy, then film studies deserves the attention of WID researchers.[67]

While writing research has neglected film studies, some film scholars have still examined the rhetorical features of the discipline in an attempt to categorize, and in some cases alter, the theoretical framework ensconced within its critical practices. Most notably, David Bordwell's seminal text, *Making Meaning*, examines and critiques the way cinema scholars interpret film. Bordwell acknowledges "institutional protocols and normalized psychological strategies" used by critics to "build up meanings" through interpretive strategies.[68] He also notes that only "certain theories count as worth mining" in the film discourse community, and those theories "are assumed to be valid or accurate on grounds other than their applicability to the film at hand."[69] Included within the underlying rules of a discipline are ways to cognitively approach and interpret material—in other words, the social aspects of genre and the specific ideas and arguments acceptable within a genre system. Later chapters in this book will explore specific argument types accepted in film studies, including common argument types such as "the best directors control meaning through aesthetics" or that "the

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[63] Margaret B. Bryan and Boyd H. Davis, *Writing about Literature and Film* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Press, 1975).

[64] Elizabeth McMahan, Robert Funk, and Susan Day, *The Elements of Writing About Literature and Film* (New York: Macmillan, 1988).

[65] Gilbert H. Muller and John A. Williams, *Ways In: Approaches to Reading and Writing About Literature* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

[66] Bryan and Davis, *Writing about Literature and Film*, 153.

[67] Wilder, *Rhetorical Strategies and Genre Conventions in Literary Studies*

[68] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 3.

[69] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 6.

best films challenge conventions." While certainly not the only arguments available for use in film analysis, these argument types routinely appear in professional writing about the cinema.

Professionalization

Explicitly teaching students in an undergraduate film course about this disciplinary knowledge, however, leads to questions of professionalization beyond what many would normally categorize as the point of an undergraduate course. This is a concern many in literary studies have wrestled with over the years, mostly spurred by Gerald Graff's call to "teach the conflicts." The "conflicts" Graff references are the issues scholars address in professional discourse, and he sees many pedagogical benefits to teaching students what those conflicts are, and how students can engage with them. For Graff, opening student eyes to the "climate of ideological contention in the university" has positive results beyond disciplinary professionalization.[70] For one thing, the "conflicts" provide students a "sign of democratic vitality" and techniques of analysis to utilize in other "real-life situations" even if their career is not in literary studies.[71]

Contrasting Graff's view are those who would rather not see undergraduate classes as an introduction to scholarly disciplinarity. Some see this "professionalization" as perpetuating power structures, competitive practices, and argumentative cultures which should actually be done away with. Work by Spanos,[72] as well as Downing and Sosnoski,[73] is characteristic of this call for a "post-disciplinary" approach to instruction which relies more heavily on personal narratives and reflection than inculturation within the norms of any discipline. In a slightly different vein are studies encouraging a "pre-disciplinary" approach to instruction.[74] Rather than seeing

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[70] Gerald Graff, "Other Voices, Other Rooms: Organizing and Teaching the Humanities Conflict," in *Teaching the Conflicts: Gerald Graff, Curricular Reform, and the Culture Wars*, ed. William E. Cain (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 26.
[71] Gerald Graff, "Afterword," in *When Writing Teachers Teach Literature: Bringing Writing to Reading*, edited by Art Young & Toby Fulwiler (Portsmouth: Boynton, 1995), 331.
[72] William V. Spanos, *Heidegger And Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[73] Davis. B. Downing and James J. Sosnoski, "Working with Narrative Zones in a Postdisciplinary Pedagogy," *Narrative* 3, no. 3 (1995): 271-286.
[74] See Richard Ohmann, *English in America: A Radical View of The Profession* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); Jane Hedley and Jo Ellen Parker "Writing Across the Curriculum: The Vantage of The Liberal Arts," *ADE*

students as apprentices moving toward a particular discipline, "pre-disciplinary" instruction seeks to develop writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in a more general fashion that can bridge gaps across the humanities.

While the debate over professionalization continues, actual classroom practice tends to expressly favor students who utilize discipline-specific norms. Some observational case studies provide evidence that, even when instructors claim to teach for more general writing and thinking skills, or even to avoid disciplinarity altogether, most instruction tacitly models and promotes discipline-specific conventions.[75] Therefore, even when not providing explicit instruction in disciplinary convention, and many times even purposefully disdaining such methods, many instructors reward writing that most effectively uses disciplinary conventions. Schmersahl and Stay's study even found writing assignments in the English department as "consistently imitat[ing] professional genres" even as instructors lacked "a high degree of self-consciousness" about preferencing disciplinarily.[76]

These findings mirror Bordwell's assertion about film studies that those implicitly teaching the rules of the discipline lack conscious awareness of their own conventions even as they pedagogically preference those conventions. This situation leads to an implicit bias toward disciplinarity when grading student writing, even though students may never be directly taught the conventions being rewarded in their papers. In fact, WAC research suggests this is a problem across the curriculum, as faculty members can both know how to expertly craft written discourse in their

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Bulletin 98 (1991): 22-28; John Trimbur, "Taking English: Notes on Teaching Introductory Literature Classes," in *When Writing Teachers Teach Literature: Bringing Writing to Reading*, eds. Art Young and Toby Fulwiler (Portsmouth: Boynton, 1995), 15-22; Bruce E. Fleming, "What is the Value of Literary Studies?" *New Literary History* 31, no. 3 (2000): 459-476; Christopher Diller and Scott F. Oates, "Infusing Disciplinary Rhetoric into Liberal Education: A Cautionary Tale," *Rhetoric Review* 21, no. 1 (2002): 53-61.

[75] See Anne J. Herrington, "Teaching, Writing, And Learning: A Naturalistic Study of Writing in An Undergraduate Literature Course," in *Advances in Writing Research, Volume Two: Writing in Academic Disciplines*, ed. David A. Jolliffe (New York: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1988), 133-166; also see Patricia A. Sullivan, "Writing in The Graduate Curriculum: Literary Criticism as Composition," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 11, no. 2 (1991): 283-99.

[76] Carmen B. Schmersahl and Byron L. Stay, "Looking Under the Table: The Shapes of Writing in College," in *Constructing Rhetorical Education*, eds. Marie Secor and Davida Charney (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 142-143.

discipline and not know how to teach disciplinary writing to their students.[77] Recently, WAC scholars have explored the concept of "threshold concepts" in an attempt to more fully understand the cognitive changes taking place within students as they learn how to write. Threshold concepts are ways of thinking that, when mastered, completely change a person's approach to thinking and interacting with a particular topic. Yet, as Basgier and Simpson point out, "because faculty are immersed in these disciplinary perspectives (threshold concepts) and their concomitant genre expectations, the features of 'good writing' can come to seem natural and transparent when in fact they are highly localized to their community of practice."[78] Still, instructors will classify writing as "good" when that writing demonstrates "immersion in disciplinary perspectives" by reflecting knowledge of threshold concepts "represented in constructions of genres."[79]

Writing "Inside" and "Outside" the Disciplines

One reason instructors have such a hard time identifying the structural and social conventions of their own writing in a way students can understand is the widespread, and implicit, way they view disciplinarity. David R. Russell summarizes the majority view across the academy as the distinction between writing "outside" vs. "inside" the disciplines.[80] The widespread thought is that we can generalize writing to such a degree that learning to write can, and should, be done outside specific disciplines. Scholars, now knee-deep in their own discipline, were never explicitly taught the conventions they use and, therefore, believe knowledge of a discipline and writing within that discipline are completely separate endeavors. Colleges and universities typically house these generalized writing courses in the English department as first year composition classes. Building off of Russell's ideas, Michael Carter writes that in this "model of education understood as the delivery of specialized disciplinary knowledge, writing is considered outside the disciplines . . . and thus unable to play an

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[77] Adler-Kassner and Wardle, *(Re)Considering What We Know: Learning Thresholds in Writing, Composition, Rhetoric, And Literacy*
[78] Christopher Basgier and Amber Simpson, "Reflecting on the Past, Reconstructing the Future: Faculty Members' Threshold Concepts for Teaching Writing in the Disciplines," *Across the Disciplines* 17, no. 1/2 (2020): 9.
[79] Adler-Kassner, *(Re)Considering What We Know: Learning Thresholds in Writing, Composition, Rhetoric, And Literacy*, 283.
[80] David R. Russell, "Vygotsky, Dewey, and Externalism: Beyond the Student/Discipline Dichotomy," *Journal of Advanced Composition* 13, no. 1 (1993): 173-197.

important role in the disciplines."[81] The disciplines, therefore, become areas of specific content knowledge, and deal in specialization, while writing ability is a general skill applicable to all disciplines. Writing separates from knowing and instead becomes simply the means used to show knowledge.

WID practitioners counter the writing-outside-the-discipline view by highlighting the deep connection between writing and knowing. As Carter points out, this view has its roots in classical rhetoric, "in which invention has historically played a critical role in both recovering knowledge and generating new knowledge."[82] From this viewpoint writing becomes integral to the learning process since learning is not just about grasping concepts, but also about the process through which, and by which, people gain and share knowledge. Therefore, changing the perception of writing as something learned outside the disciplines means reframing the way those inside the disciplines understand the writing process. As mentioned above, showing how integrated genres are with content and disciplinary knowledge provides one way to change this perception. According to Carter, this distinct view of writing shows "the difference between knowledge and knowing, that is, [viewing] disciplines as repositories and delivery systems for relatively static content knowledge verses disciplines as active way of knowing."[83] Writing does not just relate content knowledge but works as part of the "doing" of a discipline. Carter calls the conventions used in a discipline's discourse "ways of doing and knowing," and it is instruction in these ways of doing and knowing that allow students to become active participants in not only a genre system, but also the larger activity system. The challenge, pedagogically, is making disciplinary ways of doing and knowing explicit to both students and instructors. Doing so means connecting generic forms to social contexts and providing students ways to discover how formal generic elements are directly tied to rhetorical and social situations. Ultimately, disciplinary knowledge is not a static entity to be absorbed and then regurgitated through writing. Instead, disciplinary knowledge is a continual process involving knowing, doing, and writing. As Carter point out, "doing is the middle term that links writing and knowing in the disciplines."[84] Helping students and faculty recognize the ways of doing in a discipline will enhance our understanding of genre conventions and lead to better teaching and writing in the classroom. Accomplishing this

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[81] Michael Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," *College Composition and Communication* 58, no. 3 (2007): 386.
[82] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," 386.
[83] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," 387.
[84] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," 389.

feat will mean "describing in convincing terms the ways of doing that characterize the disciplines."[85]

Film Studies as a Discipline

An appropriate question, at this point, would be whether film studies is a discipline we can categorize and characterize. As mentioned previously, it is a rarity that film stands alone in its own academic department within a college or university. The history of academic film study also includes such wide-ranging theoretical perspectives to make some see it less as its own discipline and more as "an amalgam of interdisciplinary perspectives."[86] Dudley Andrew, speculating about the future of cinema studies at the turn of the twenty-first century, wrote that "any census of course catalogs reveals cinema's uncertain location and function from campus to campus, posing questions of general expectations and standards—indeed, putting in question the definition of cinema studies."[87] Since then, the move toward a more inclusive term "media studies" has even more severely challenged the notion of a singular film studies discipline, and, more profoundly, may signal its death if it ever was a discipline to begin with. The study of television, computer games, commercials, the internet, and various other media overlaps in so many ways with the techniques scholars use in the interpretation of cinema that film studies may just fall into a larger, yet-to-be-defined disciplinary category. Andrew, a decade after his earlier thoughts, ultimately came to say that since there was "agreement neither about the shape and size of its territory nor about pertinent work that should be undertaken there, the promise of a [film] discipline, no matter what we name it, has become rather fanciful, the rhetoric of academicians."[88]

The ultimate purpose of this book is not the categorization of film studies as a discipline, a field of study, or by nature an interdisciplinary field. However, the fact that film studies can exist as its own department or as a course within another department accentuates the need to identify consistencies in writing expectations for such courses across the many disciplines film courses find themselves within. What matters for my purposes is the social construction of norms dictating what constitutes quality writing about film, and these norms exist whether or not anyone can

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[85] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," 389.
[86] Blakesley, *the Terministic Screen*, 3.
[87] Dudley Andrew, "The 'Three Ages' of Cinema Studies and the Age to Come," *PMLA* 115*,* no. 3 (2000): 341.
[88] Dudley Andrew, "The Core and the Flow of Film Studies," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4 (2009): 883.

agree over categorical terminology, or whether or not an introductory film course resides in the communication department or the English department. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson write that cinema studies may still be "being renamed [and] merging with new and old fields and disciplines," but the "intellectual debates, institutional practices, and cultural activities and objects that have long preoccupied so-called film scholars now form the basis of an increasing not decreasing number of courses, programs, and departments."[89] This growth, and subsequent writing taking place in and through the growth, speaks of an activity system with numerous genre systems and genre sets all influenced by socially driven rhetorical norms. To produce quality writing within a genre set, or to communicate successfully within any of these genre systems, participants must recognize and utilize the norms of films studies discourse.

No film scholar has done more than David Bordwell to elucidate the "craft traditions that dictate how proper interpretations are built" in film studies.[90] Bordwell's foundational analysis also has the benefit of recognizing the structural and social nature of film studies discourse. He clearly recognizes how connected knowledge and writing are within film criticism. Bordwell even states his intention to "keep the social nature of interpretation at the forefront" of film analysis "because the two aspects are inseparable."[91] Any analysis, or interpretation, of a film is a product of "problem-solving skills applied to a task largely defined by forces lying outside" any one person's control and is done "according to norms of thought and writing established" through the historical process of disciplinarity.[92] It is the "critical institution" that "defines the grounds and bounds of interpretive activity, the direction of analogical thinking, the proper goals, the permissible solutions, and the authority that can validate the interpretations produced by ordinary criticism."[93] This reality creates a situation in which "it is not enough to discover" interpretations of a film, but also "justify them by means of public discourse."[94]

The craft traditions Bordwell identifies to justify proper interpretations span three "macroinstitutions," which could also serve as labels for genres within a professional critic's genre set since each of these macroinstitutions

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[89] Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, "The Academy and Motion Pictures," in *Inventing Film Studies*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), xxviii.
[90] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 13.
[91] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 33.
[92] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 33.
[93] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 33.
[94] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 34.

follow similar interpretive strategies within the professional film studies genre system. The macroinstitutions include journalistic criticism, essayistic criticism, and academic criticism. According to Bordwell, the conventions of film criticism across these macroinstitutions utilize a common "goal which the institution of criticism sets the film interpreter," namely to produce "a novel and persuasive interpretation of one or more appropriate films."[95] Included in this definition are the following problems anyone writing in film studies must address:

1. The problem of *appropriateness*, which must address what makes "the chosen film a proper specimen for critical interpretation."
2. The problem of *recalcitrant data*, which must address how the "critical concepts and methods" used by a critic will render aspects of the film interpretable in an acceptable way.
3. The problem of *novelty*, which must address how the interpretation is either a) initiating a new critical theory or method, b) revising or refining an existing theory or method, c) applying an existing theory or method to a fresh instance, or d) pointing out significant aspects which previous commentators have ignored or minimized.
4. The problem of *plausibility*, which must make the interpretation sufficiently persuasive through rhetorical strategies.

It is clear to see how some of these problems are tacitly addressed throughout standard film studies courses. The different films instructors choose to show in class, along with those written about in textbooks and course readings, provide a baseline knowledge to gauge appropriateness which students can then transfer to other, similar films. Cinema courses also provide instruction, sometimes explicitly, in certain critical theories, along with readings which apply those theories to particular films. Many undergraduate film courses, for example, require a foundational reading on feminism during a unit studying gender and film.[96] This, along with explicit instruction in the formalist language of cinema (genre, *mise en scene*, acting, sound design, etc.) in conjunction with students reading chapters on those topics in a text like Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art* gives students a baseline familiarity with solving the recalcitrant data problem.[97]

However, it is harder to notice how faculty currently address the problems of novelty and plausibility other than through tacit instruction.

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[95] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 29.
[96] For example, Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3, (1975): 6-18.
[97] Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*.

Students may, through assigned readings, gain some knowledge about how professional scholars make these rhetorical moves. However, these problems connect so closely to the practice of writing that they exemplify Michael Carter's claims about writing being integral to process knowledge and the ways of doing within a discipline.[98] Answering these problems also involves more deep learning strategies than those associated with surface learning. Smith and Colby summarize the difference in this way:

> A surface approach involves minimum engagement with the task, typically a focus on memorization or applying procedures that do not involve reflection, and usually an intention to gain a passing grade. In contrast, a deep approach to learning involves an intention to understand and impose meaning. Here, the student focuses on relationships between various aspects of the content, formulates hypotheses or beliefs about the structure of the problem or concept, and relates more to obtaining an intrinsic interest in learning and understanding.[99]

Warren Buckland calls for more deep learning in film studies classrooms, and teaching film students different ways to impose meaning on what they watch while plausibly connecting their meanings to the meanings of others through writing creates a clear deep learning environment in the classroom.[100] In fact, Bordwell writes that the craft of film criticism "consists centrally of ascribing implicit and symptomatic meanings to films," making the goal "assigned to the interpreter . . . to produce a persuasive and novel interpretation, in a process that is at once psychological, social, and discursive."[101] What Bordwell means is the process of film interpretation is not only an individual, psychological response, but also involves a recognition that these interpretations happen within a community of other interpretations, and must be "written up, articulated in language" in order to hold persuasive power.[102] Learning how to invent arguments that fit within the social context, and then writing about them, creates and produces the deep learning environment.

Bordwell recognizes the importance of rhetorical invention to film studies and utilizes classical rhetoric to elaborate on the way professional

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[98] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines."

[99] Tracy W. Smith and Susan A. Colby, "Teaching for Deep Learning," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 80, no. 5 (2007): 206.

[100] Warren Buckland, "Film and Media studies Pedagogy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film and Media Studies*, ed. Robert Kolker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 527-548.

[101] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 40-41.

[102] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 41.

film scholars approach the problems of novelty and plausibility. He highlights *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio* (inventing, organizing, and stylizing arguments) as integral to the reviewing and analytical process, and shows how professionals use examples, enthymemes, and *topoi* to produce interpretation. For example, the "canonical enthymeme" in journalistic criticism follows this pattern:

1. A good film has property *p*
2. This film has (or lacks) property *p*
3. This is a good (or bad) film[103]

Part of the invention process is knowing and identifying the properties that can fill the *p* slot, since "only a few properties" will be accepted as plausible arguments, such as "important subject matter, realistic treatment of the subject, a logical story line, spectacle, intriguing characters, a valid message, and novelty within sameness."[104] Bordwell also highlights *topoi*, or what he terms the "stereotyped arguments that the audience will grant without question," as a means of invention.[105] Knowing these topics aids in the invention of arguments, and ultimately, in solving the overriding problems of academic film criticism and interpretation.

Bordwell's findings clarify the interrelated nature of the "ways of doing" in film studies with those of other disciplines within the humanities. This reality ties to Michael Carter's notion of "meta-disciplines" and "meta-genres." Carter surveyed and analyzed faculty-developed outcomes statements across his university to find patterns in the ways of knowing and doing across disciplines. His findings "showed that certain ways of doing were repeated in general terms across a variety of disciplines," and that these ways of doing could be categorized into four meta-disciplines, each of which focus on a particular meta-genre: 1) social science uses the meta-genre of problem solving, 2) hard science uses the meta-genre of empirical inquiry, 3) humanities uses the meta-genre of research from sources, and 4) arts uses the meta-genre of performance.[106] Film studies and literature both fall under the meta-discipline of the humanities, and as such rely heavily on the meta-genre of research from sources.

One of the interesting findings in Carter's research was that the humanities meta-discipline, which stresses research from sources, tends "to describe that research not as an end in itself but as a means to an end defined

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[103] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 41.
[104] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 37.
[105] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 37.
[106] Carter, "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines," 403-406.