**Further Advice on Structuring your Film Analysis**

Choosing an audience and forum should help you decide what to say as you introduce your film analysis to the target readers and bring in relevant context to make it seem worth discussing in the here and now, but don’t let all of that distract you from the essential task at hand: figuring out what you want to say about your film. The framework below might help with that part of the job.

1. **What is my film *about*?** This doesn’t mean “what happens?”—that’s plot—but what is the *conflict*? With these films it amounts to “what **moral dilemma** is the main character facing?”

Examples:

* + “This youth needs our help” versus “This youth might be a danger to my kids.” What are the reasonable limits of Christian charity in such a case? What are the sometimes unexpected rewards of moral courage? (*The Blind Side*)
  + “Thou shalt not kill” versus “Uncle Sam needs you”: Is killing ever justified? (*Sergeant York*).
  + “I want to stand up to racism” versus “I want people to like me.” What is the appropriate way to handle racism socially? (*Dear White People*) [This film actually investigates other questions, as well: How can we establish trust across racial lines? How do we define our own racial loyalties when we belong to more than one race? Most complex films have multiple lines of approach. Just pick one you care about and tackle that one.]
  + “Love your enemies” or “an eye for an eye”: what is the best approach to dealing with the lingering effects of a violent act—forgiveness or revenge? (*Five Minutes of Heaven)*

1. **What statement** is the filmmaker making with the film? In other words, how is the moral dilemma resolved, and what does the film seem to be saying about that? Sometimes this is pretty obvious (which can be an artistic weakness but isn’t always), but sometimes filmmakers try to present more than one point of view fairly. Answering this question will give you your **thesis**.

Example: By pairing one man who craves forgiveness with another man who craves revenge, the Irish film *Five Minutes of Heaven* clearly repudiates the old eye-for-an-eye principle by showing how seriously the refusal to let go of a grudge can damage everyone in a conflict, both the innocent and the guilty.

1. **How can I support this thesis** with details from the film? This should will form the bulk of your paper. Support could include specific plot points, specific lines of dialog, descriptions of visual elements in the film (landscapes, costumes, particular groupings of people, a particular facial expression, etc.), or details about the acting.

Example: To support the thesis stated above for ***Five Minutes of Heaven****,* you could briefly discuss the relevant plot points that show (1) a failed attempt at orchestrating a reconciliation, (2) a fierce physical fight that almost kills both combatants, (and in that paragraph I’d also give a close description of that scene, with a church steeple appearing just before we see the nearly dead bodies on the ground), (3) dialog that is crucial to changing the angry man’s understanding of the contrite one, (4) a scene of the angry man with his wife and daughters that helps motivate him to let go of his corrosive vendetta, (5) the scene when the angry one finally forgives (and a description of how the forgiven man’s knees buckle as he sinks to the street with relief).