

In any course, the **Discussion Board** represents an incredibly important area of engagement for students and faculty. At its best, the forum is an engaging and active space where students offer their views on key course concepts and test those views with rigorous responses to their peers. It also offers faculty the opportunity to encourage deeper levels of critical thinking through robust commentary that can sometimes develop into a sustained dialogue – in the specific forum, and throughout the class!

With these points in mind, we have provided some exemplary model discussion responses. Note that the annotated student responses are actual responses by students – we've just added specific references to key areas.

#### **Week Four Discussion: The Cinematic Auteur [Student Post]**

I would consider Michael Bay an auteur. **[Here, the student identifies an auteur]** In our course material, *Film: From Watching to Seeing*, an auteur is explained as, the author of the film, imprinting it with his/her personal vision (Goodykoontz, Jacobs, 2014). I admittedly do not like most of Michael Bay's films, however in my mind, I have a pretty good guess what I am in store for when I go and see one of his films. **[This demonstrates good critical thinking. Bay is not generally considered an auteur, but the student identifies the qualities that make an auteur in relation to Michael Bay]** Bay is the director of the *Bad Boys* films, as well as the more recent *Transformers* series. The movies are heavily driven by CGI and special effects, more pointedly, explosions. The running joke about Michael Bay is, if he were to have directed *Titanic* instead of Cameron, he would have sunk the ship at least a half a dozen more times. This really shows in his over the top use of explosions in his *Bad Boys* films as well as the seizure inducing transformations in *Transformers*. Even in his slower paced films, such as *The Island* and *Pearl Harbor*, his trademark use of special effects is apparent, either in the combat scenes focusing on the WWII era, or action in the conflict involving the escaped clones, respectively.

I tend to agree with the auteur theory. I think the mindset that certain directors have a propensity towards special effects, or rigorous dialogue, etc... is pretty spot on. Of course, agreeing with the theory gives almost all the credit or failure of a film (artistically) to the director (Goodykoontz, Jacobs, 2014). **[Here, the student makes a connection between the theory and the text]** I do think a lot more goes into than just the director's vision; however I think that he/she is the overriding factor, no matter how big the stars are in the film.

Arguing against the auteur theory is pretty straightforward. There are immense wheels that need to turn to make the process of filming happen. Actors, cinematographers, make-up artists, wardrobe, caterers, etc...all play an integral role in the filming process. Allowing one person to take credit for the majority of the whole process seems fairly flawed. **[This is a well-reasoned argument against auteur theory]** With that being said, the director is not always considered the auteur in the filming process. Writer/actors that garner enough clout in the filming industry, choose their own directors for some of their films, making their personal vision more of a stamp instead of the director of the film (Goodykoontz, Jacobs, 2014).

Using the auteur theory as a marketing tool has done very well for the box office. Once the director's name has star power within itself, that can be used in turn to play on potential viewer sentiments, as in, "if you liked this film by (enter name here), then you love this one! The proof this works is in the monetary amount spent and collected, through advertising a director's name, such as *James Cameron's: Titanic*. Just to make sure you're not confused with anyone else's *Titanic*. While I stated before I tend to agree with the auteur theory, I also think that using it misrepresents a lot of hard work done by a lot of people. While it is an easy way to give reviews on a movie, it is not without its flaws. Michael Bay, while not my favorite director, can easily be graded on the three criteria of an auteur: Technical competence, distinguishable personality, and interior meaning (Goodykoontz, Jacobs, 2014). **[Here, the student uses the textbook definition to support his argument]** I think that the very nature of being a critic is subjective inherently. So, I never really pay attention to many of the film critiques. Many critics think that Michael Bay films are not "serious" enough to garner their high marks,



or more introspective look. That with in itself is a flaw in the critique system in my opinion.

Reference:

Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (2014) *Film: From watching to seeing* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).  
San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education, Inc.