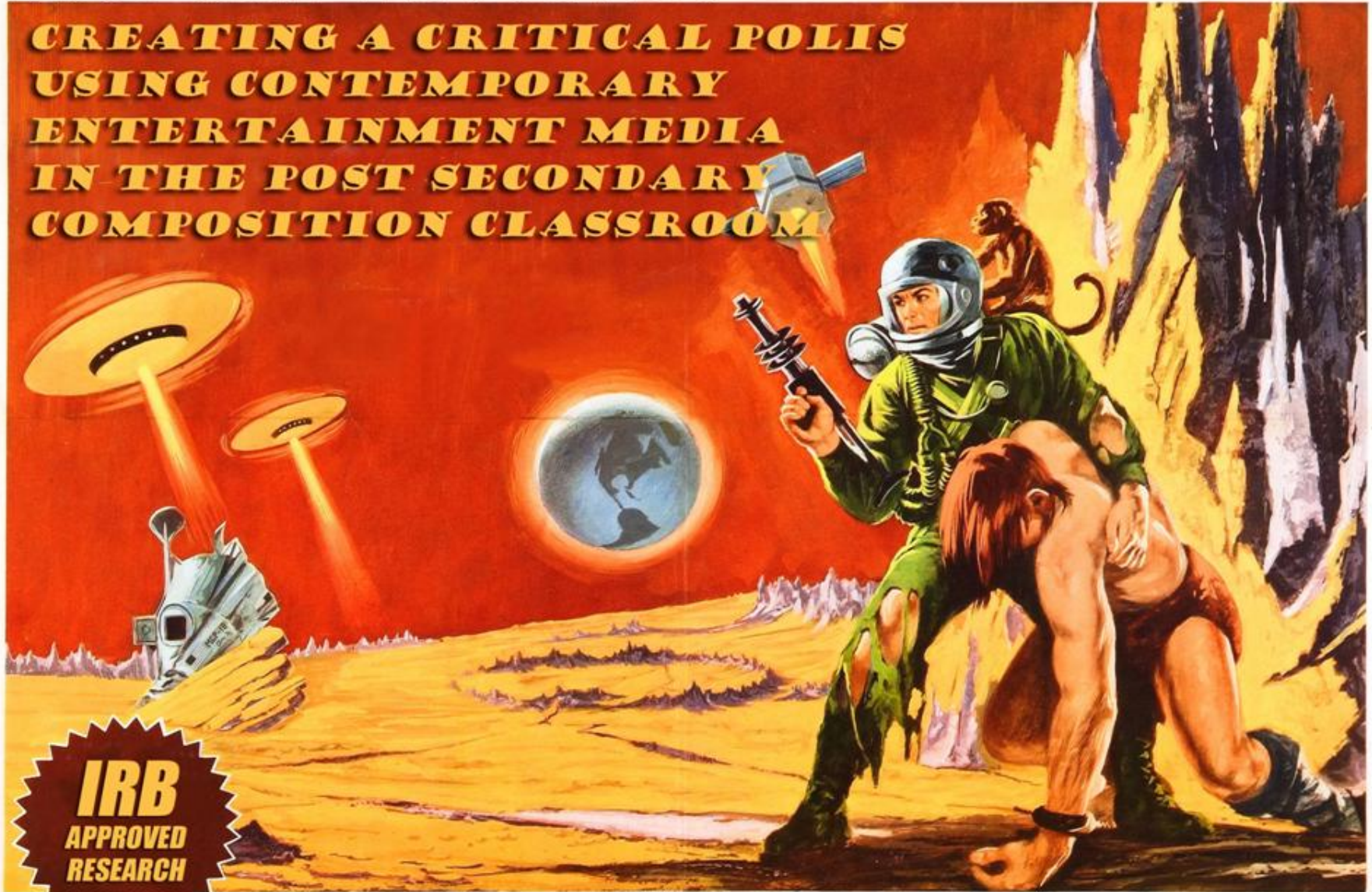


FEMINIST ALIENS, BLACK VAMPIRES, AND GAY WITCHES:

TECHNICOLOR

**CREATING A CRITICAL POLIS
USING CONTEMPORARY
ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA
IN THE POST SECONDARY
COMPOSITION CLASSROOM**



IRB
APPROVED
RESEARCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PRESENTATION: OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: Introduction

Roadblocks, Goals, and Research Questions

Chapter 2 – Literature

Critical Pedagogy, The Polis, Media/TV, Identity, and SF Theory

Chapter 3 – Methodology

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Chapter 4 – Data Presentation

Documenting Movement and Categorizing Data

Chapter 5 – Data Analysis

Making Connections, Critique v. Pleasure, Identity, and Reflexivity

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Alternatives and Future Work

CH. 1 INTRO: ROADBLOCKS

Roadblocks to Achieving Critical Pedagogy Goals

Students are experienced consumers of pop culture but they are not critical consumers.

Students erroneously equate the activity of criticism with rejection and derision.

Categories of identity are not accurately reflected in mainstream media, and often those misleading representations are accepted at face value by students.

CH. 1 INTRO: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY GOALS

Questions for a Critical Pedagogy of SF

What do we want our students to take away from these courses?

Why is it important to create a critical polis?

How do theories in cultural studies and concepts of identity fit into courses seemingly focused solely on developing skills in effective communication?



CH. 1 INTRO: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To what extent does using television and film in the post-secondary composition classroom aid students in developing critical thinking around critical categories of identity, regardless of their relative subject positions and individual identities?

How does the SF genre of television help achieve the goals of the post-secondary composition classroom?

How does the instructor's relative subject position impact students' ability to access and interact with the messages in the media?

Can students make critical connections between what they see as entertainment and what they experience in reality?

How can we help students analyze television critically without asking them to abandon the inherent pleasure of its consumption?

CH. 2 LIT REVIEW: KEY LITERATURE

Critical Pedagogy

Karen Kopelson

Performative Pedagogy

Douglas Kellner

Postmodern Identity

Donna Qualley

Reflexivity and
World-Travelling

The Polis

Mark Longaker

Economics and the Polis

Christy Friend

Sophistry: Who is Speaking?



CH. 2 LIT REVIEW: KEY LITERATURE

Identity

Heidi McKee

Who is Doing the Work?

Donna Haraway

Plural Perspectives and
Subjectivity

Eve Sedgwick

Challenging Binaries

Media/Television

Henry Giroux

Critical Consumption
of Culture

Danielle Mitchell

Normalizing Oppression



CH. 2 LIT REVIEW: KEY LITERATURE

Origins of SF

“SF is concerned mainly with the role of science and technology in defining human—i.e., cultural—value” (Csicsery-Ronay 388).

Key Features of SF as a Genre

The Alien Other

“Monsters have a double function. . .marking the boundaries between the normal and the pathological but also exposing the fragility of the very taken-for-grantedness of such categories” (Graham 39).

The Alternate Reality

The fiction within the fiction: Making a safe space for exploration

CH. 3 METHODOLOGY: DETAILS

Participants

Courses

First Year and Advanced
Composition across four
semesters

Demographics

Typical ISU students – individual
demographic data not collected

Participation

Voluntary with 108 students total
agreeing to participate

Researcher's Role

Objectivity Versus
Subjectivity

Performative Pedagogy



CH. 3 METHDOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION

Assignments

Major and minor assignments with special focus on the Rhetorical Analysis of Television assignment

Questionnaires

Beginning, middle, and end of course

Email Correspondence

Electronic proposals and informal emails

One-on-One Conferences

In-Class Discussions



CH. 4 DATA: SPECIFIC TV ARTIFACTS

Firefly

“Heart of Gold”

Star Trek

“Our Mrs. Reynolds”

“The Cloud Minders”

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

“Space Seed”

“Chimera”

Xena: Warrior Princess

“Dax” “Rejoined” “Field of Fire”

“Blind Faith”

Stargate: SG-1

“Hathor”

“Emancipation”

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation

“Getting Off”

“XX”

“Sound of Silence”

Six Feet Under

“I’ll Take You”

Burn Notice

“Friendly Fire”

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

“New Moon Rising”

CH. 4 DATA: DOCUMENTING MOVEMENT

	A. Beginning the Semester	B. Some Movement	C. More Movement
1	Actively resistant to concept that media might shape critical categories	Less overt resistance to concept Attempt to complete assignment as required	Demonstrate that assignment might have value outside of course
2	Passive resistance to concept, assignment	Attempt to complete assignment as required	Demonstrate acceptance that media might be doing more than entertaining or that assignment might have value
3	Willingness, genuine confusion/ignorance about concept, assignment	Demonstration of accepting that media might be doing more than entertaining	Insight into a critical issue previously unaware of, perhaps evoking emotion
4	Willingness, naïve awareness of concept, assignment	Insight into a single critical issue previously unaware of, perhaps evoking emotion	Demonstrate understanding and ability to communicate issue
5	Strong desire, conscious awareness of concept, assignment	Demonstration of understanding and ability to communicate issue	Demonstration of increasing sophistication in articulation of issue
6	Strong desire, previous experience communicating about concept, assignment	Demonstration of increasing sophistication in articulation of issue	Fully realized, sophisticated theoretical communication about issue

CH. 4 DATA: CATEGORIZING DATA

Goals for Critical Thinking

1. Critical thinking as a whole
2. Thinking specifically about critical categories of identity
3. The ability to communicate about critical issues: discussing stereotypes, identifying the fiction, and applying theory



Goals for Composition

1. Making claims and supporting arguments
2. Comprehending rhetorical issues: audience, purpose, context, authorship
3. Developing sophistication in language choices and expression

CH. 4 DATA: CRITICAL THINKING

Critical Thinking as a Whole

“Examination of queer theory within SF has fundamentally transformed my orientation towards, and understanding of, my personal identity. I recognize the ways in which my own identity is emergent rather than fixed. This is an intellectually exciting and emotionally freeing realization. Problematization of naturalized assumptions keeps me in redefinition of myself and constantly questioning. This transformation has already yielded personal growth.” (Lucy)

Critical Categories of Identity

“While watching this episode. . . It was extremely obvious which “race” (species) was the norm. The binaries, normal and not normal, were grouped as Humanoids and then those who weren’t were “abnormal.” Because Laas’ honest and trustworthiness was being questioned, Odo’s was being questioned as well just because they were of the same species.” (Rachel)

CH. 4 DATA: CRITICAL THINKING, CONT.

Communicating about Critical Issues

Discussing Stereotypes

“Saffron is portrayed as two different very old stereotypes, a demure wife and a deadly seductress.” (Ben)

Identifying the Fiction

“This shows the importance of . . . understanding other cultures . . . Dr. Carter found this out the hard way by not complying with the customs of the tribes. . . While traveling from area to area remember to take into account others customs or else you just may be sold into captivity.” (Roger)

Applying Theory

“Thinking about patriarchy more generally as a cultural dynamic centrally valuing control and dominance (Johnson 39), it is easier to read “Teenage Dream” as a controlled fantasy, in which heterosexual (and traditional gender performative) ideals are privileged as real and powerful, policing queer ones into a position of almost total silence.” (Lucy)

CH. 4 DATA: COMPOSITION

Making Claims and Supporting Arguments

Earlier in the Semester

“Things are not always as they seem. Anyone would agree that there are two sides to every story.” (Kennedy)

“[T]he only true way to avoid conflict is to not say anything at all.” (Garrett)

Later in the Semester

“In the television show Stargate SG-1, the episode “Hathor” exemplifies the critical category of gender and the females’ wavering struggle for respect, power, and equality while also craving praise and the desire to be wanted by the male characters. . . Here in this fiction a happy ending awaits the long journey of equality.” (Kennedy)

“The episode “Getting Off” [from CSI] . . . shows the poor people as the bad guys. . . People who already feel negatively about underprivileged people will strengthen their negative thoughts. People who have no bias will now have this image of poor people in the back of their mind and this may affect their thoughts about certain things without them even realizing it.” (Garrett)

CH. 4 DATA: COMPOSITION, CONT.

Rhetorical Issues

“Rhetorical issues are the only clues to justify an otherwise unfathomable plot line. An educated, career-minded Lt. McGivers falls in love with the “bad guy” Khan, who attempts to take over the starship Enterprise. The use of historical context provides insight into Lieutenant McGivers’ actions throughout this episode.”
(Kristy)

“Written by the acclaimed feminist Joss Whedon, this particular episode ‘Our Mrs. Reynolds’ readily exemplifies a common characteristic of his works: a portrayal of strong female roles.” (Amy)

Language Choices

Inappropriate Terminology: “colored people” “retarded”

Inaccurate comparisons: “straight or homosexual”

Sophistication in Word Choices: “privilege”

CH. 5 ANALYSIS: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Answering the Research Questions Presented in Chapter 1

To what extent does using television aid in developing critical thinking around identity, regardless of individual identities?

How does SF help achieve the goals of the composition classroom?

How does the instructor's subject position impact students' learning?

Can students make critical connections between entertainment and reality?

How can we help students analyze without asking them to abandon pleasure?



CH. 5 ANALYSIS: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Drama

“The situation in this show is particularly worthy of analysis because of the rich character developments that occur in such a brief amount of time. The half-heart tattoo was only recognized by the woman detective, and this shows the sensitivity that the men lack.” (Jessica)

“I will also explain inaccurate tactics used to gather data for the crime being investigated. CSI is a very popular show that is sending the wrong messages about the procedures of forensic science and also consists of stereotypes. I think it is important to analyze this and prove that what the public sees on television is not reality.” (Anna)

SF

“We have been discussing how differences between people can create problems in society. This episode shows how humans reject others because they are different.” (Kevin)

CH. 5 ANALYSIS: CRITIQUE V. PLEASURE

“This fictional situation mirrors an everyday struggle I face as an androgynous female looking for the answers and my place in the world.” (Kennedy)

“Thank you, Professor Eyestone, for giving me the excuse to watch the show and consider the time I used to watch it ‘productive’.” (Renee)

“My appreciation for speculative fiction has increased enormously. It is an exciting genre because of the possibilities it presents to the viewer—it challenges them to become critical consumers of culture by allowing their imagination to engage in critique within imagined space.” (Lucy)

CH. 5 ANALYSIS: IDENTITY

Drama

“Seeing a Hispanic from a barrio as a Christ-like figure would be different from the stereotypical way of seeing Hispanics.” (Chuck)



SF

“This episode makes the comparison of present day white people to Humanoids, and present day black people to Changelings. White people in America are considered to be the majority and black people are considered to be the minority. In present day, black people are more accepted by white people than they previously were, but tension between the races still exists.” (Susie)

CH. 5 ANALYSIS: REFLEXIVITY

“I think I finally came to terms with just what I want to get out of writing.”
(Ben)

“[Analysis of SF] was difficult for me—but I appreciate it now as a challenge to make me become a better writer.” (Kelsey)

“We’ve absorbed information and have been communicators since we have been born become accustomed [sic] to ‘taking in’ information. We have ‘learned’ to just accept what we’re told, what we see on television, in magazines, and even on campus. . . . I’m sure if that this course wasn’t about identity. . . I wouldn’t have even thought of it as significant. . . I have definitely learned to watch all television more critically, because everything is planned and is subject to being rhetorically analyzed.” (Rachel)

CH. 6 CONCLUSION: ALTERNATIVES

- Changing the assignment order of the rhetorical analysis and the documented essay
- Have students write a second documented research paper after the rhetorical analysis
- Don't give students a drama option, stick to SF artifacts
- Require the category of identity discussed in both the documented essay and the rhetorical analysis be the same

CH. 6 CONCLUSION: FUTURE WORK

Though I present the data and analysis as a final, completed study, the critical pedagogy is anything but. I continue to engage with popular culture and examine my own praxis in light of my continually evolving understanding of what it means to be a “cultural worker” with an ever-changing subject position.

My hope for this study is that it suggests, not a singular way of approaching critical issues, but a trajectory for the future.



PRESENTATION: QUESTIONS

APPLAUSE