

Film Studies Review Challenge

Briefing Document

Right now, we're all consuming media texts – binging on box sets, digging into the depths of Netflix, Amazon, YouTube and the rest (even TikTok!) – more than we did before the pandemic (and we did plenty then). More than ever before, our devices and platforms have become our windows on a world that has shrunk dramatically and is only now slowly reopening. The way we've been watching shows and movies at the moment – alone, with close family, perhaps at a Zoom watch party – is also very different from the ways in which filmmakers and programme makers have traditionally imagined and intended it, in cinemas or gathered with wider family and friends.

As a curtain-raiser to your Film Studies programme at Royal Holloway, we'd like you to choose one of the movies, TV programmes or other content you've watched in recent weeks: something that stayed with you for whatever reason, that stood out of the flow of viewing materials a bit – and tell us why.

Don't write a conventional review of the show: instead, tell us how it affected you, what made it memorable for you at the particular moment you encountered it. Where and how did you watch it? Who with, or were you alone? What was different about that day, if anything, that may have made you react more forcefully to this particular viewing experience? Had you seen the show or movie before, had you chanced upon it or been recommended it by a friend, a reviewing site, or something you'd read or seen elsewhere? What were your expectations of it, if any? Was the experience of watching it in line with those expectations, or different? If different, how? Better or worse? If you'd seen it before, did you notice anything different on this second (or twentieth) viewing? Why do you think you might have noticed that detail this time around?

Answering questions like these reminds us that audio-visual texts are changed by the conditions in which we receive and encounter them – they don't mean the same things to every audience at every time. Whatever the producers may have intended isn't the end of the story! Noticing the specific

ways we respond to films, TV shows or online content can give us important insights into the diverse ways in which we use such content in our lives.

When you're done, email us your thoughts, or bring your piece with you when term starts for a session with one of our Film Studies lecturers to talk through your work.

If you've got any questions or want to send us a write up of your peer-review in advance: email: alfie.bown@rhul.ac.uk We'll get back to you with some of our thoughts. Otherwise, see you on day one.
