

Short Paper 2.3: A Claim for *The Matrix*

engl 111 / sec. Q / fall quarter 2006-07 / chang



Lisa Nakamura, in “Race in the Construct and the Construction of Race,” writes, “Like Gibson’s novels in particular and cyberpunk in general, *The Matrix* both celebrates and critiques technology” (73). The film offers us ways, both glossy and messy, that technology and race, technology and gender, technology and culture intersect, complicate, and at times dominate one another. Central to “Race in the Construct” is Nakamura’s close-reading and analysis of *The Matrix* and its articulation of the role and function of race; she carefully and conscientiously critiques the film’s multiculturalism, “a world in which race is not only visible but necessary for human liberation” (73). She recognizes the potential of the film in describing and imagining a liberatory cyberspace, but she also sees very clear boundaries and limits to the narrative and argument.

For this short paper, you need to watch *The Matrix*. As you watch, consider the questions and issues we have been raising in class about cyberspace, about technology, about culture, about categories like race, gender, sex, sexuality, class, and citizenship. Then, drawing on your readings for both sequences (if you use Nakamura, you must include at least one other text in a significant way), generate a very focused, very specific analytical claim about *The Matrix*. Consider the following questions as a means to developing your claim about the film:

- What does the film argue about cyberspace? About technology?
- What does the film argue about race? (Claim something different or beyond Nakamura’s arguments.)
- What does the film argue about gender?
- What does the film argue about sexuality?
- What does the film argue about class?
- What does the film argue about the mind? The body? How are they articulated?
- What does the film argue about myth?

Your short paper should be 2 to 3 pages and use close reading examples from the film and direct quotes from your readings. Limit also your impulse to just summarize the film, to focus only on plot or character, or to summarize your supporting texts. How do the film and your text and class discussion speak to each other? Also keep in mind that writing about a filmic, visual text is different than writing about a written text—how are you going to frame your argument, what kind of evidence is available to you, and how are you going to think about the visual (as well as the verbal or narrative or aural)?

Targeted outcomes: _____

Turn in: 2 to 3 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, stapled

Due: Tuesday, November 15