Cover Letter

Dear Professor Belli,

         This Project was one I enjoyed putting together and doing the work for. I felt a little more confident with my work after our meeting about the first project. After realizing where I messed up with project one I knew how to structure my paper better and how to analyze what I was presenting. When we were first told about Project two I wanted to do a paper on what I thought the second Blade Runner should be about, I was basically going to write my own script. However you helped me realize that there was not much research entitled in that idea, you told me then to maybe write about something that has to do with my major. I then decided to my project on lighting and the effect it has in Science Fiction films. At first I was going to write about the original Star Wars trilogy, Alien and 2001: A Space Odyssey. I then began researching these films and the lighting involved in them, I was also looking themes and symbolism that tied in to the lighting in these films. I then wrote my proposal and you told me I should include some of the sources I had found. When I added my sources, I also researched a little more as well so I could add some more sources. After the proposal I decided to get a head start and begin writing my paper, while writing I had realized that I was already at about three pages and that was just talking about Star Wars. This worried me a little because on the last project I went two pages over the limit and this was a problem, so I didn't want to make the same mistake twice. Professor Belli then told us that we had to have at least six to eight pages for our paper. I then decided to only write about the lighting in the original Star Wars trilogy because there were pretty good sources on about lighting in that film. I talked to Professor Belli about it and she gave me the Ok to do that. I then began working on my presentation. It was difficult to decide what specific scenes I was going to talk about. I was also having problems deciding if I just wanted to show pictures or show that scene as a clip. I decided to use pictures because I have a ten minute time limit and I didn't want to go over. I chose two scenes from A New Hope, two from Empire Strikes Back and three from Return of the Jedi. At first I had pretty lengthy descriptions about the pictures and scenes I was talking about, I felt like that was wrong so I showed Professor Belli and he said to take out what I was saying and put in the main bullet points and whatever I had written there I could just say in my presentation. This helps my Presentation because now there is not a lot on the slides to distract people from what I am saying which lets people hear and see what I am presenting to them. Also with fewer words I was able to enlarge the images I am showing in the presentation which helps me point out and show what I am talking about. After doing that I added quotes from my paper into the power point to talk about some of the research I found. After that I was basically done with my power point. I then returned to finish writing my paper, I split the three films into three paragraphs and talked about specific scenes that had Science Fiction type lighting like the Blue Lighting effect and I also talked about how certain lighting effects affected the tone of the story and certain themes as well. I also wrote about how these effects connect to multiple themes of the story through the lighting. After analyzing the scenes and adding in the quotes from the minimum five sources I had to then write my conclusion. Writing the conclusion was kind of difficult because I wanted to have the right amount of information/summary without it sounding repetitive. Luckily I was able to write it and all I had left to do was reread my paper. I reread my paper at least five or six times to make sure things sounded right and that the information I used fit with my thesis. After my edit I practiced my presentation a couple of times to get familiar with how I was going to present it. Overall I must say I did enjoy this project and did not feel as stressed as the last one and I think this is because I worked on something that interested me and it was something I knew information about already.

Jonathan Stampfl                Stampfl 1

Project # 2

Final draft

5/14/15

Professor Belli

                                                   Lighting Science Fiction

          Lighting in film is very important to how the movie is made and what it is trying to say to the audience. Lighting creates effects that set the tone to movies, most people don’t realize how important lighting truly is to a film and some people don’t even realize it is even there. Science Fiction films tend to have somewhat of a darker tone to the films because of what the story is usually based on whether it be a post-apocalyptic or a dystopian society, usually these movies look like they have a darker looking setting, darker characters and a darker plot to it. However when you think about it what sets the tone for that is it really just the setting or just how the story is presented or maybe it is the lighting. Lighting creates the effect for what is being seen on screen and it makes the audience feel what they are seeing, whether it be happy or sad. Lighting is what distinguishes the difference between hero and villain, by creating amazing effects that you wouldn't realize unless you really stopped and analyzed what was being presented to you. Three Science fiction films I have chosen to analyze are Star Wars episode Four, Five and Six. I think all three shares certain tones and themes to their films based on how the lighting portrays certain characters and certain scenes, but even if there is not a similarity in tones there can still be a similarity on the type of lighting or effect used to create a different tone. There are specific lighting effects that are only used in science fiction films that affect the tone of the story and help connect the story and themes together.

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     Lighting is very crucial to the filmmaking process and there so many different effects

One can use. However there are very common lighting techniques used in a lot of films, one used a lot in Star Wars is three point lighting. This is when you have three lights a Front, Back and Fill light. One article I read talks about the effects of three point lighting “You can arrange the lights in such a way as to leave darkness between the area illuminated by the backlight and the area illuminated by the fill light, depending on how moody you want the shot to be. This tends to work very well, although even the moodiest films tend to avoid leaving dark shadows on the faces of female talent.”(Janusz Kaminski) this effect is used to create drama by being able to manipulate the shadows in a scene, it is used commonly in sci fi films. Something else used in sci fi films is the overuse of blue lighting. Since sci fi films tend to have a darker tone, there is more of darker lighting used, but the lighting is usually not just dark, but also blue. “A sub trope of Mood Lighting common in Science Fiction and Forensics shows. Shots are suffused with vaguely blue lighting.” (TV Tropes) This adds to the feeling and tones of sci fi films because this lighting feels different or feels strange and that’s what science fiction is something out of the ordinary or something that changes how you view something. This blue light can also be used in brighter lit scenes opposed to just darker scenes, but the effect does work for both and we do see this in Star Wars episode four, five and six.

         Star Wars is possibly the biggest Science fiction film of all time, I like to believe that 2001 a Space Odyssey set the bar for science fiction films and Star Wars is what raised the bar. Star wars has many aspects to the film like amazing sound, great camera work and outstanding special effects, however most people don’t usually mention the lighting in the film. This is because the special effects are so dominant that lighting is barely noticed. Though it is not just

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there, but it is what’s giving the special effects and the film the right tone. Star Wars IV: A New Hope was released in 1977 and it changed the idea of science fiction film. Certain themes in the film are Hero vs. Villain or Light vs Dark and there is also the theme of the destiny of the hero. Believe it or not all of these themes are brought to life with lighting because the lighting helped show these themes and set the tones to match them. We begin to see this almost immediately at the beginning of Star Wars IV: A New Hope. To start the first thing to be noticed is the introduction of Darth Vader. The hallway of the ship he attacks is presented as pure white and when he is first introduced the room is still white, but the lighting is dimmed creating a darker tone. This shows Vader as the villain or antagonist of the film. “The style of lighting used in Star Wars IV: A New Hope is a combination of low-key, high-key and natural lighting.” (Sharnela) this is where we see three point lighting at its best being used. It helped manipulate the shadows and create a more dramatic effect on Darth Vader to show his purpose as the Antagonist of the film. We see the exact same thing when we are introduced to Luke Skywalker, he is seen standing on a rock watching the sun setting, but the lighting used on him is a brighter and bolder tone and this is used to show he is the hero of the story. “One knows the film is considered science fiction, not reality, but the lighting helped it become more believable in a sense. The deep shadows produced doom. The bright lighting had an air of hope. The natural lighting has an everyday effect.”(Sharnela) this uses again three point lighting, but there is also natural lighting being used to add the effect of realism to it, these effects helped introduce the main characters to the audience while still adding theme and tone of the story with it.

           Star Wars Episode V Empire Strikes Back was released in 1980, this was one of the most anticipated sequels in film and science fiction history. This film like the last film continued the

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theme of a Hero vs. Villain, however there was something different about the lighting in this film. The lighting tended to be a little darker than the last film, but there also a bigger use of blue lighting that is famous in science fiction films. “In the early 80s, HMI-lighting (strong lights, with daylight temperature) came and was often used outside, mixed with regular bulbs, giving them a strong blue tint (as they were bluer than they are today), which is often seen in the early 80s.” (TV Tropes) This is seen at the beginning of Empire Strikes Back when Luke is dying on hoth and he sees a vision of Obi Wan Kenobi. The setting is a planet that is a cold atmosphere that is covered in snow; instead of the lighting looking white it is more of a light blue that adds a dramatic effect to the scene. However we see the blue lighting being used again in the most iconic fight scene in film history.  The fight scene between Luke and Vader takes place in a very dark room that has a lot a steam to make the lighting and scene seem more dramatic, The main color of the light was blue and that created the effect that made the characters look as dark as shadows. An article I read mentions how the Director of Photography lit this scene. “Then I decided to light the whole thing from underneath, as the floors had been made translucent. In the black areas I placed Brutes and had shafts of light penetrating the darkness. Then the whole set was filled with steam, which made it photographically very impressive, but physically very uncomfortable, since it was like working in a Turkish bath.” (Peter Suchitzky) Lighting the scene from underneath is why the actors seemed darker because there was little or no light actually on them, this does however make the scene seem more important or intriguing because of how it looks. Add the blue light on to it for more effects on the shadows and the smoke to compliment the lighting and you get not just an iconic scene, but an iconic Science Fiction scene.

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 Star Wars Episode VI Return of the Jedi was released in 1983 and was the last installment of the original trilogy. The lighting in this film kind of returned to the same tone as Episode IV, which was a little brighter and bolder. This film had a good majority of scenes that were outside and this showed the use of natural lighting with the three point lighting as well. The First two films also had natural lighting with certain scenes, but this film used a little more natural lighting especially in the battle of Endor. “The outdoor scenes are definitely full of natural lighting. The low-key lighting is mainly used during indoor scenes where shadows are being utilized. The various lighting techniques used throughout the film is what made this trilogy a success.” (wranglerv33) Natural lighting helps this scene because it takes away all these effects that are clearly made for the film and gives the film a sense of realism. The natural lighting in this science fiction film doesn’t just help bring the story to life, but it also adds the sense of reality to it, which creates a better understanding and interpretation of the film. We also see the Blue lighting that haunts sci fi films at its best again in the second fight scene between Luke and Vader. This film had a different Director of Photography then the Empire Strikes Back and it shows in the actual fight scene. This scene had a background lighting that was blue, but this time the actors had lighting on them and it looked a lot like three point lighting. However you can see that the way its lit Luke being the hero has more light on him compared to Vader having little to no light on him. This brings the theme of Hero vs. Villain into the lighting. The use of a blue light is there still to just create a more dramatic tone to the scene and the theme. In the beginning of Return of the Jedi we see Luke at Jabba the Hutt’s palace and he is dressed in all black and he almost looks like a villain. However the lighting used on him is a direct spotlight which like the first film gives the audience the knowing that he is still the hero and the chosen one. However we

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see the same effect at the end of the film with Vader who lays dying is lit as a hero having finally coming back to the light side and choosing his son over the dark side. The theme of Hero vs. Villain now becomes a theme of just good conquering evil.

 There are specific lighting effects that are only used in science fiction films that affect the tone of the story and help connect the story and themes together. Lighting in film is an important aspect of the film making process, it affects more of a film and its story than people realize. The same is done for science fiction films where there are certain lighting techniques used to make the story and film itself stand out. Star wars does this very well; they use multiple different lighting techniques that work well with the genre of science fiction. It also shows how these techniques effect the story overall instead just one scene, it basically brings the entire story together through the use of lights. Some of these effects are the positioning of lights to create more dramatic effects with shadows or using a certain color to add a specific tone to the scene or story. In the end lighting is not just a way to light up a scene, but a way to help tell the story being presented to the audience by creating or heightening the tones of the story through the effects of lighting.

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