Essay 3: Argumentative Synthesis
ENGL 1101 (Josh Sewell)

Length: 3-4 pages minimum (1000-1200 words), excluding the required Works Cited.
Due Date: Thursday, April 25 (submit an electronic copy to the appropriate CourseDen folder before coming to class; no hard copy required this time).
Late Penalty: Essays are penalized one letter grade each day they are late. Work that is more than three days late will not be accepted.

PURPOSE:
In the argumentative synthesis, you will gain an understanding of how various texts and media on related topics inform and interact with one another in conversation. Additionally, the assignment invites you to join a critical conversation by using the analytical skills you gained from the first two essay assignments and synthesizing multiple sources toward an original argument.

DESCRIPTION:
Select two texts – one film and one article – that address one of the topics we’ve discussed in relation to nostalgia and/or a cultural issue linked to it. Then, develop your argument by using one text to “read” or interpret the other or by comparing and contrasting both texts’ views on your chosen topic/thesis.

Choose one of the prompts below to develop your essay:

- Throughout the semester, we have discussed how various forms of pop culture can comment on nostalgia, specifically how it connects to larger social issues such as race, class, sexuality, gender, etc. Consider how this occurs in Back to the Future (or another film of your choice, pending approval) and construct a specific argument discussing how the film addresses one of these topics and to what purpose. Make sure to also utilize ONE of the articles available on CourseDen/backup website (or a related article from a scholarly database like GALILEO) as you formulate a complex “so what?”

- Throughout Back to the Future, many of the story’s major themes are communicated through key scenes. Incorporating what you’ve learned about mise-en-scene, perform a close reading of one scene from the film (or another of your choosing, pending approval) and construct a specific argument discussing how it successfully serves as a thesis statement for the entire movie. Make sure to also utilize ONE of the articles available on CourseDen/backup website (or a related article from a scholarly database like GALILEO) as you formulate a complex “so what?”

- WILD CARD! Don’t like these prompts? Make up your own. Just remember you must analyze one film and one article, craft a debatable thesis, and I must approve your topic in advance. (In other words: No pre-approval, no grade. Proceed at your own risk.)

PROCEDURE:
1. Introductory Paragraph
   In the introduction, you will present a brief overview of the critical conversation in which the two texts you’ve selected participate. You should begin by introducing the general topic and then narrow your focus by introducing and summarizing the main arguments of both texts. Finally, conclude your introduction with an argumentative thesis statement that articulates ONE of the following: (a) what readers gain by using one of your texts as a “lens” through which to “see” the other; or (b) what examining these two texts comparatively shows us that we might not otherwise have seen.
2. Thesis Statement
Your thesis should articulate a specific argument that engages critically and intellectually with the texts you’ve presented in the intro. Remember, the argument isn’t simply what these texts are “about,” but rather what these writers, artists, filmmakers, etc. motivate us to think about a particular issue or subject and where we might go from there. Take a side. Articulate your own stance. Offer your own interpretation or perspective, informed by your sources.

3. Supporting Argument/Body of Essay
Each body paragraph should include the three components of the 3 Ied Monster model…

- a clear topic sentence that can be debated (Identify)
- specific supporting examples from the text (Illustrate)
- a brief explanation after each example stating how and why it proves your topic sentence (Interpret)

Each topic sentence should make an argumentative claim that further specifies the assessment of the source text articulated in the thesis statement, and as such should evaluate a particular rhetorical, compositional, organizational, stylistic, logical, etc. choice made in that text. Evidence, meanwhile, will take the form of quotations (or paraphrases) and scene analysis from the source texts that support and/or illustrate the claim made in the topic sentence. The analysis will explain how each piece of evidence supports, illustrates, and otherwise “proves” the argued evaluation. Consistently analyze your source texts throughout, avoiding personal response, anecdotes, and/or heavy summary.

3. Conclusion
Re-emphasize and expand upon your own argument. Reflect on why this topic is important beyond the scope of your own essay. Why should your reader care? What is at stake? Reiterate the value of considering your source texts together. In other words, leave your reader with both a sense of the critical conversation reflected in your essay and a way to enter that conversation themselves.

RESOURCES:
1. Overall Help: In addition to office hours, I strongly urge you to take advantage of the University Writing Center. I cannot emphasize how important it is to make appointments there.

2. Help During the Writing Process: Remember the handouts on CourseDen and the backup website. Just because we don’t talk about them every day doesn’t mean they’re not still important. Use them as tools to brainstorm a basic structure for your argument, but feel free to adapt (please adapt!) as needed in order to maintain logic, clarity, and correct grammar in your writing.

3. MLA Help: Be sure to use the Purdue OWL website in formatting both you in-text citations and works cited page. Remember you must cite every reference to your source, including any material summarized or paraphrased. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism!

Grading rubric available on CourseDen and the backup website.