Assignment: Do the Right Thing

Summary:

In this paper, you will write an analysis of how the neighborhood Bedford-Stuyvesant is shown in Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing. You should use specific examples from the film to discuss the view we get of the neighborhood as shown in either the book or film. Form a thesis based on visuals, reactions/descriptions of the characters, and your own analysis of the storyline to show the reader what you’re thinking.

You should also use some published analyses of the film (there are plenty of them) from either books or major newspapers/magazines that appear in print (online versions of these are fine) to add context to your own analysis.

Objectives:

- Refine summary writing skills
- Refine skills in analysis and description
- Practice writing essays
- Practice using specific details and examples to develop a point
- Practice with MLA citation format

Format:

Your review should be about 4-5 pages in length with a Works Cited page at the end. The goal here is not simply whether or not you liked the film, but to engage in a deeper discussion of how it shows the urban experience in a single neighborhood, focusing a few key themes or contexts and what the film says about them.

For contrast, you should reference at least three (3) articles or book chapters that focus on Do The Right Thing. Only one of these can be a review: the other 2 must be academic essays or book chapters that focus on the film’s significance. You should use the information in these essays to form your own opinions about the film. You should then focus on key themes in the film. Note that you can use the chapter from Murray Forman’s The Hood Comes First (PDF on the course website) as one of the 3 articles.

Sources and citations

Citations from outside sources should be done using the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, which is standard for the humanities. At a minimum, you’ll have 4 sources: the 3 essays/books you are looking up (and citing) and the film itself. All sources should be listed on the Works Cited page at the end of the paper.
See the Lehman College Library and/or the Academic Center for Excellence in 205 of the Old Gym building for more in-depth assistance on the MLA citation format. Also see Purdue University’s OWL (Online Writing Lab) for detailed instructions.

You are expected to use sources appropriate for college-level research. In summary, mainstream news/magazine articles, books, and scholarly journals (including ones retrieved through internet databases) are fine. Not acceptable are Wikipedia, random websites/blogs, Facebook entries, self-published books and zines, etc. If in doubt, ask me. Papers with improperly cited sources will be penalized.

Deadline and Submission: E-mailed copies are due Monday November 20 by midnight Eastern Standard Time at my Lehman e-mail: hank.williams@lehman.cuny.edu. I will respond that I have received it within 24 hours: the return email I send you is your proof of submission. Late papers will be penalized 1/4 letter grade per day late: I go by the time stamp on your email. Papers should be submitted as MS Word formatted documents only. Attach the file to your email to me. Do not submit PDF files, links to Google Drive or Microsoft documents. Those will not be read.

How to do well on this assignment: Re-watch and take good notes on the film. Think about what you’re seeing and try to describe it accurately. Start early and plan to write multiple drafts of your work. Proofread carefully to eliminate spelling and punctuation errors and consider visiting Lehman’s writing center for assistance. Carefully review the MLA format and be sure that you use the required number of sources (minimum of 3), cite accurately, and that the format of your Works Cited page is excellent.

Grading: Will be on the scale of A-F and based on the following:

- Clarity of thesis and how well it is presented/defended
- Thoroughness of explanation and use of examples
- Clarity and style of writing: paragraph structure and transitions
- Mechanics (punctuation, spelling, correct word choice)
- Proper amount, quality, and use of sources (including citations).

Questions? E-mail me at: hank.williams@lehman.cuny.edu or see me during my office in Carman 398.