

RLG101H FILM ANALYSIS THEORIES: BELIEF

Here is some information and advice that may help you use theories from Nye's chapter on "Belief" to analyze the film you have chosen.

1. Reductionist theories (p. 108–9)^[1]_[SEP]

There is not enough information about any specific reductionist theories (e.g., from Freud) to be useful. However Nye's overall summary of such theories generally could be helpful. It also might be challenging to apply reductionist theories to the film you've chosen, because the films for this assignment are not "religious" and reductionist theories are specifically about interpreting supernatural phenomena (e.g., gods, spirits, demons, etc.). Here are two possible ways in which these theories might still be helpful:

- a) There are *some* films that are not generally religious but in which something supernatural happens (e.g., Mufasa speaking to Simba from beyond the grave in *The Lion King*).
- b) In films where you do not find anything supernatural, you could consider using a reductionist approach to understand phenomena that are beyond human perception, and that you could perhaps argue function in human life in ways that are similar to the ways in which concepts of god(s) and other supernatural phenomena function (in *The Lion King*, e.g., it's possible to apply a reductionist approach to the notions of both "hakuna matata" and "the circle of life").

2. Cognitive vs. affective beliefs (p. 117)

It is usually helpful to think about *both* cognitive and affective beliefs in relation to a particular character in the film. Do these two beliefs line up or not? What do these two beliefs suggest about what the film is trying to teach us? With Timon and Pumbaa, e.g., their cognitive belief is "hakuna matata" – and at first this matches their affective belief. When Simba needs their help, however, their affective belief appears to shift away from "hakuna matata." Why does this shift matter? What does it suggest the movie is trying to teach us?

3. Habitus (p. 125-6)^[1]_[SEP]

Please pay attention to the definition of "habitus" on p. 125. The original idea comes from Bourdieu, and Nye also discusses ways in which Bell uses the idea. The critical elements of Nye's summary of habitus can be found on p. 126. There are two main (related) questions to ask here:

- a) How do a character's beliefs and actions appear to arise from (or how are shaped by) specific contexts, environments, etc.?
- b) Are the same (or similar) beliefs practiced in different ways by different characters from different backgrounds? (Nye gives the example that the belief in "the sanctity of all life" can and does mean very different things in different religious communities).

With both of these questions, the point then is to ask: what does any of this *mean*? How is the film using the notion of habitus to promote a particular message? (And what is that message?)