Chapter 10: Ideology and Meaning in Film: Life in Surround Sound

Study questions

1. In a small group, list as many ‘superhero’ movies as you can think of.

2. Make a list of as many films as possible that you have watched recently. Thinking about the issues of gender, ‘race’, class, age, disability and sexuality, would you say that any of these films implicitly contain discriminatory messages?

3. Watch a children’s film and take notes on its ideologies. Try to distinguish between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’, ‘surface’ and ‘passive’, and ‘dominant’ and ‘subversive’ messages.

4. Analyse a specific scene that seems to position the viewer to identify with the main character(s). How does the film achieve this?

5. Re-watch the same scene as above, but turn the volume down so there is no sound. Note down the film techniques that are used to achieve audience identification and briefly describe how they encourage the viewer to accept certain ideas.

6. How many of the films listed for Question 1 above have male protagonists (main characters) who are to be identified with? How many have female protagonists? Is it difficult to think of examples for one of these categories? What does this suggest?

7. Think about the kind of films you watched when you grew up. Might any of these have influenced the ideas you hold today? Can you pinpoint any specific examples?