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“Hollywood’s” American Dream

Having recently completed my final project, I discovered that the American film industry highlights and promotes many different themes in relation to the American Dream. Although we analyzed one film in class, this project expanded on the use of feature films in promoting the themes and ideas that most Americans encounter in their daily lives, such as family, inspiration, and hard work leading to success. This project proved just as effective in displaying the major themes we studied this semester, as I was ultimately able to visualize each and every topic.

Although it was quite difficult to narrow my film selection, I was able to arrange the chosen films into smaller groups that worked together to promote ten single, overarching themes. The major themes I extracted and believe are the most significant and representative of the American Dream are: 1) Ideal Beauty 2) Family 3) Safety 4) Wealth 5) Inspiration 6) Superiority 7) Self-Made Man 8) Follow your Dreams 9) Opportunity and 10) The Pursuit of Happiness. Displaying each of these themes in text directly before playing the associated video clips was an effective method that leaves the viewer with a complete and clear idea of what we as Americans like to believe the American Dream represents.

This creative project allowed me to truly visualize the major themes we discussed and analyzed in class through film. I was able to meet my goal of generating one cohesive, Americanized idea of the American Dream, while also discerning that these themes are all universal in their application. No matter one’s race, ethnicity, religion, or culture, these themes are embedded within and help guide us to achieve a rich and useful life. They do not solely represent the “American Dream,” but rather “The Dream.”