

Breaking Bad Film Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this film analysis is to allow you to identify how strain theories function in real life and practice your abilities in applying theory.

Instructions: Complete this assignment as you watch the first episode of Breaking Bad. This assignment serves as your attendance points for 3/16. You will be graded on a PASS/FAIL basis. So long as you submit a response to each question (with effort), you will receive full points. Once completed, upload the assignment to the submission page in this week's Canvas module.

1. Provide a brief summary of the first episode of Breaking Bad (no more than 5 sentences). Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher, is rather displeased with his life and lives with his pregnant wife, Skyler, and their son, Walter Jr., who has cerebral palsy. He comes to find out that he's been diagnosed with lung cancer that is inoperable. He later goes on a ride-along with his brother in law, Hank, to see what a meth lab bust looks like in action. He sees Jesse Pinkman while on the ride-along and concludes that he is the mastermind behind the operation; Walt seeks him out to partner up and make money. Jesse takes a sample of what was made with Walt to sell to his colleague, but things go awry when Jesse gets taken hostage back to Walt.
2. Using Merton's Strain Theory, identify which of the five adaptations Walter is. In 2-3 sentences, describe why he falls under that adaptation. Walter White is both a ritualist and an innovator based on Merton's Strain Theory. He saw that he wasn't going anywhere with his teaching position, but continued with teaching, and wanted to provide for his family when he eventually passed away from an inoperable lung cancer. He saw an opportunity to be able to financially support his family by manufacturing and selling methamphetamines.
3. Using Merton's Strain Theory, identify which of the five adaptations Jesse is. In 2-3 sentences, describe why he falls under that adaptation. Jesse can be described as an innovator according to Merton's Strain Theory. Jesse came from an upper middle class family and was able to graduate high school, even with his poor academic standing. He became ambitious about making money and the drug environment in the area. He wanted to make as much money as he could by selling drugs but found out that Walt had a wealth of knowledge and would help him create something that would grant them that wish.
4. Provide one example of *failing to positively achieve goals*, *noxious stimuli*, and *the removal of positively valued stimuli* in Walter's story in the first episode. Describe each of these in no more than two sentences. Walt's job choice can be seen as **failing to positively achieve goals**. We can see that he is miserable working the jobs that he is to make ends meet and support his family. He gets fed up with working at the car wash and kind of goes off on his boss while quitting. Walt's diagnosis of lung cancer can be seen as a **noxious stimulus**. A noxious stimulus is defined as something that can cause major stress and frustration in one's life. He looks at his diagnosis as a kick-starter to make more money so that he can provide for his family when he's gone. Walt's life or lack of

life left can be seen as a **removal of positively valued stimuli**. During his time at the hospital, Walt dissociates while the doctor is talking to him, but he clearly hears that his condition is inoperable and that he has about two years left even with the help of chemotherapy.

5. Based off what we learned about Strain Theories, what might have served as an intervention to prevent Walter from cooking meth? For me, I think that if Walt told his wife or family about his condition early on, they would have been able to prevent him from cooking meth.