FEEDBACK ON RED PAPER 1

[THESE ARE THE MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS THAT WERE MADE ON YOUR PAPERS. LOOK AT YOUR ESSAY AND DETERMINE WHICH OF THESE APPLY. MANY ARE RELEVANT TO BLUE AS WELL AS RED PAPERS.]

Did not address the topic directly. You need to show that you understand K’s concept of intended and unintended messages.

A topic like “class” is not a message. A message must be a statement that can be proven true or false, e.g., “The upper classes are superior to the lower classes.”

All of the intended messages must go to support the thesis. Remember we are assuming that a novel or film is like an essay that is designed to support the thesis.

As in any argument, there are certain assumptions the author/director wants the reader/viewer to accept. These will vary according to the audience.

An assumption is usually unstated but the reader must assume that it is true in order for the other arguments to be accepted. For example, Segal wants you to assume that the wealthy are stuck up, aloof and formal whereas poor people are informal and friendly. He uses this assumption to suggest that Ollie is a good rich boy because he is not stuck up. He also uses this assumption to “explain” Jenny’s language, etc.

Cf. the Harvard boy in “Good Will Hunting.” He is what Ollie should be but isn’t.

A message can’t be an assumption, but it also can’t be a fact. You can’t argue that one of Segal’s messages in the book is that Ollie’s dad doesn’t want Ollie to marry Jenny because this is a simple fact of the novel (like Oliver’s being a male) and is not something that the author wants to prove.

So you need to be careful about confusing intended messages with assumptions and facts
that are explicitly stated in the novel.

You also must avoid judging the messages. Your job is to identify them. A contradictory message implies a judgment because contradictions destroy arguments. But your argument to prove a contradiction should be based on the facts of the text and not your own values and opinions.

Titles of books are underlined or in italics. Film titles are placed in quotation marks.

A character in a film or novel can make contradictory statements. That is not a problem.

A problem arises when the author presents contradictory messages. So you will have to prove that a character always speaks for the author if you wish to prove that the messages the author presents are contradictory based upon what a character says.

The red topic is supposed to be an objective analysis using Kushman’s concepts of intended/unintended message.

You need to use the model of the essay to analyze the novel or film. Hence, you should use the theme of the novel as the thesis of an essay. So the thesis is not just another message. It is the controlling idea.

Given the model of the film/novel as an essay, all arguments as to the intended messages must revolve around or be related to the theme of the novel. All arguments related to the unintended messages must show that the intended messages are either contradictory or incomplete. This is the reason I gave you the thesis: love conquers all, etc. So you didn’t have to prove that. It was given.

You need to use the material from class lecture/discussion and handouts. You can’t ignore or contradict what we give you in class without giving further arguments to defend your position. This is a part of the problem you are solving in your paper.

On the other hand, your task is to extend class discussion. If you do not add anything to class materials, you will be graded accordingly. You can’t just repeat what was given.

A number of papers presented three arguments that essentially said the same thing. If you use the same or similar examples to prove what you claim are two separate points, you
have a problem.

You can’t talk about the characters as if they have a real life other than what Segal presents. They are his creations, not real people.

Red papers as well as the Blue must back up all statements with arguments and supporting facts. You can’t simply make statements, e.g., “Italians don’t do things like that,” without proof. This is critical for both topics.

If you are making a supposition or an inference, just say so and back it up. But you can’t just prove your points by picking things out of the air.

Remember that everything we learn about Ollie, Jenny, Ollie’s Dad and Phil is told to us by Ollie. So we are forced to believe that he (the mature, adult Ollie) more or less speaks for Segal.

But Ollie and Jenny are often ironic. Irony is the case where a person says one thing but means another. For example, when Jenny says that Ollie looks rich and stupid, we are supposed to take that statement as being ironic, i.e., she doesn’t really mean he looks “stupid.” (He has already told us he looks “rich.”) So what Segal wants us to believe is that Jenny believes he looks “rich and smart,” and this, of course, is supposed to flatter or at least interest him.

In the film, this inference is consistent with the fact that she already knows who he is and so we later assume she must have known he was on the Dean’s list, etc. In the novel, it is not clear whether she knows who he is. However, the book he orders from her, however, is a fairly difficult upper division text, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, so we can infer that Segal wanted us to see him as smart. (We don’t know he is a jock then.)

Irony is used quite often in the book beginning with Ollie’s opening statement. It is less important in the film. Many of you looked at his or Jenny’s ironic remarks and interpreted them much too literally. Hence, your arguments were off.