

## Intro -

Hi! I'm Jaivon Freeman, I'm a Senior majoring in Video and Sound. This is my work titled, "Why Pro Wrestling Should Be Considered Art" it's an 18 minute video essay where I discuss what the title suggests. I've recently gotten back into it after taking a long hiatus from it when I was a child, and now as an adult I've begun appreciating aspects of pro wrestling that I overlooked as a child. With this project, I wanted to go over these aspects and connect them to the art world, more specifically theatre. I also wanted to give an overview of these aspects in hopes that others who have no knowledge of pro wrestling or think of it as silly and nonsensical can see the amount of work, creativity, trust, intimacy, and care that goes into pro wrestling.

This work is intended to live online. I plan on editing this a bit more and I made a promise to a friend that if my defense goes well I will upload it on Youtube. My only concerns are copyrighted clips and audio from WWE and other wrestling companies I can work around. I created this work using adobe software like Premiere Pro and Audition for recording and video and sound editing. I went with these materials because they are materials that I've used for previous video projects. I feel most comfortable with these materials and even when I had a technical issue with my hard drive and lost some of my progress, picking back up and finishing my work.

Over time my project changed and even now I still expect to change some things. To create this video I started the research process and created a script as well as recording the audio. I had an idea of implementing little things from pro wrestling in the video to really get the vibe such as narrating as if I were an announcer or maybe talking about certain topics in the video as if I were cutting a promo in a similar way a wrestler would. It's something I still think would be pretty cool and I would like to do for a future video or this one when I inevitably change some things. I also decided to include archival footage as well as my own footage from attending wrestling shows. I planned to make the video a mix of entertaining and informative, but decided to keep this one informative because I believed it fit this topic more, but adding entertaining elements is something I also plan on trying out as well. Another idea I thought would be interesting, is to have prints of wrestling photography that I could take at a wrestling event, but life got in the way and I just couldn't pull it off. It's something I still am interested in and would like to do, especially hear from the people in these crowds and why they love pro wrestling and maybe even some wrestlers.

When I started this, I was worried about covering too many topics just due to what I've learned about pro wrestling and due to the multitude of topics that could even be their own video essay. An example of things I wanted to include that I would like to turn into their own videos are things such as the "Attitude Era" of pro wrestling that took place here in America that revolved primarily around World Championship Wrestling or WCW, World Wrestling Federation or WWF which is now WWE and Extreme Championship Wrestling or ECW. Or the numerous companies in Japan and the history and culture of wrestling in the East. Topics like those for Women's wrestling, Independent Wrestling, Pro Wrestling territories, and much more.

Some of the things that I took inspiration from are a video series from a wrestling group called "The Elite" containing 357 videos where I detail how this series plays a massive part in the evolution of professional wrestling. I'm not currently at 357 but watching the series and learning about the backstage area and all the work of what goes into pro wrestling was something that I decided to use because not only of its impact but because others who don't even know this series exists can learn from it like I did and see how they changed the business.

I was also inspired by another video creator by the name of F.D. Signifier and his video titled, "The WWE's Complex Black History". I go over it in my work but it details the WWE's issues when it comes to Black representation or lack thereof that I believe also perfectly plays into the video series created by "The Elite". It's a really good video that inspired me because the black experience is something I also like to touch on in my work and with the way black culture is used in pro wrestling is something I would even like to discuss in a future video. It's something still prevalent today with a company like WWE recently facing backlash from their own fan base due to the lack of black champions.

And another thing I was inspired by was a reading that really helped my understanding of professional wrestling titled, "*Work and Shoot: Professional Wrestling and Embodied Politics*" by Broderick D.V. Chow. I was inspired by this reading because Broderick goes over topics such as cooperation behind the illusion of violence, the backstage politics, wrestling as a performance of resistance, and pro wrestling's historical and cultural history. It was a reading that helped me better understand the secrets of pro wrestling

and connect it to theater. Things like cooperation and intimacy came up a bit in this reading and even the connection between pro wrestling and Carnival Shows.

Like I stated earlier, my hope with this work is to show others who have no knowledge of pro wrestling I can see the amount of work, creativity, trust, intimacy, and care that goes into pro wrestling because for so long professional wrestling has operated under the guise of “Kayfabe” which is just the agreement between fans and wrestlers that things taking place aren’t real and is the illusion of violence. It’s something that helped keep the illusion alive to fans who weren’t so knowledgeable but in a way keeping kayfabe began harming pro wrestling. In this digital age, privacy is almost a privilege and fans begin to see the curtain pulled back but fans also loved it. It’s happened in the past where kayfabe is broken and it’s not a big deal but with fans falling in love with the people behind the characters it showed that pro wrestling is in a completely different world now. I also believe that pulling this curtain back might also persuade people into enjoying pro wrestling who may not have any interest in it. Looking at it from an art stand point highlights the importance of things such as intimacy and care because of not only the impeccable feats of athleticism that these performers are able to achieve, but also how quickly things could go wrong that could resort in minor to life threatening injuries.

I made my decisions seen in this video based on my enjoyment and what I wanted to include and with the help of my mentor (if they are all there) and a few panelists. I decided to leave some areas in the video with a black screen to focus on what is being said, which is something I was inspired to do from a smaller video essay project I completed in another class. I believe this was really helpful in narrowing down my ideas when I was worried about including too much that could shaft away from my core inquiry. I knew it was complete and I was happy with how it turned out after rewatching it and feeling like this is something I would click on youtube and watch. I know I will have thoughts of changing it because of new experiences I might have or new information learned, but as of now there are only a few tweaks I want to add and I see myself uploading this because I feel happy and content with it. I feel like it was important to make this video also for me because I originally only thought about getting back into it out of boredom and seeing how I view it now as an adult. But in making this I learned a lot about myself. This semester has been pretty hard mentally and being able to connect back to something I loved as a child has been amazing. I originally only thought about getting back into it out of boredom and seeing how I view it now as an adult. I don’t have any specific questions I hope to hear, I’m open to all feedback and to hear everyone’s thoughts about pro wrestling.