EQUILIBRIUM PARAGRAPH:

Another example of the thematic development in dystopian films can be seen in the 2002 film ‘Equilibrium’ directed by Kurt Wimmer. A major theme which is conveyed in this film is fear of technology and loss of freedom or privacy due to governmental control. ‘Equilibrium’ is set in a dystopian city-state of Libria. After a Third World War devastated the Earth, a totalitarian state emerged whose ideology determined human emotion to be the root cause of conflict. All emotionally stimulating material is banned and "sense offenders" are ruthlessly persecuted. Everyone is required to take daily injections of Prozium, an emotion-suppressing drug. The film follows John Preston, a warrior-priest and officer in the Cleric who enforces these laws. Preston stops taking his prozium injections and as he starts “feeling” starts to notice that the restrictions imposed on the citizens of libria in the name of safety are in reality oppressive. The laws put in place by the government in order to prevent a Third World War have resulted in severely impinged on privacy and personal freedom. This can be seen in the film in the way that no citizen is allowed to have pets, marriage is for reproduction rather than love and all objects which contain emotional content are destroyed. In the opening scenes for example we see Vincent Van Gogh’s Mona Lisa being set on fire and books of poetry by W.B Yeats being collected for destruction. The theme of social control and loss of privacy is further shown by the fact that large monitors across the city spread the word of the government leader named “the father. In Preston’s house there is a huge TV screen that spreads the same message. There is a very real feeling throughout the film of being watched. Every action is noticed and reported to “Father”. This is clearly shown when Preston’s younger son sees another child crying and asks if he should “report him”. Preston replies “without question”. The monitoring of the citizens through this technology and the restriction placed upon the lives of those in Libria helps convey the theme of loss of privacy. The themes of this film are a direct result of the concerns of the era in which it was made. During the early 2000’s a major world concern was in regards to terrorism and also the increasing availability of nuclear technology. In February 2001, the United States of America and the United Kingdom bombed Iraq on the pretense that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction ready for deployment and posed a great threat to the world. The 2001 September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States saw a US “War on Terror” emerge which also resulted in many precaution measures put in place in America to keep its people safe. These initiatives included the 2001 Patriot Act where the CIA was given the power to remote access citizens’ cell phones. This film is a clear reflection of the concerns many Americans had following the 911 attacks as to the extent the government would go to in order to protect its citizens but also the implications that might have in terms of personal freedom. As shown, the themes of a film change over time in order to reflect the real life fears or concerns which face society in the era in which it is made. In this case Wimmer is asking audiences to consider how much freedom they are willing to give up in order to feel safe and the potential ramifications which could occur if government controls are not kept in check. Wimmer also stated in an interview that the film conveys how people have become almost “numb” and “insensible to the environment around us” as a result of oversaturation by the media and mass use of medication. This can be seen in the film through the Librian’s use of prozium and clearly reflects the theme of fear of technology. The film shows that is that technology can change us in such a way that we become “less human”, consciously or unconsciously. Medication can dull the senses to such an extent that people have no feeling and no opinions at all, becoming almost robotic. The widespread use of medications to fix any issue we can think of is a huge concern. Rather than deal with emotional issues or let the body heal naturally people more commonly are choosing an assortment of pills to ‘fix’ the issue.