

# STUDY GUIDE



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## NOBODY'S WATCHING

A film by JULIA SOLOMONOFF

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, United States / 2018 / 102 min  
English and Spanish with English subtitles

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[www.pragda.com](http://www.pragda.com)

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## BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Julia Solomonoff at <https://pragda.com/film/nobodys-watching/>.

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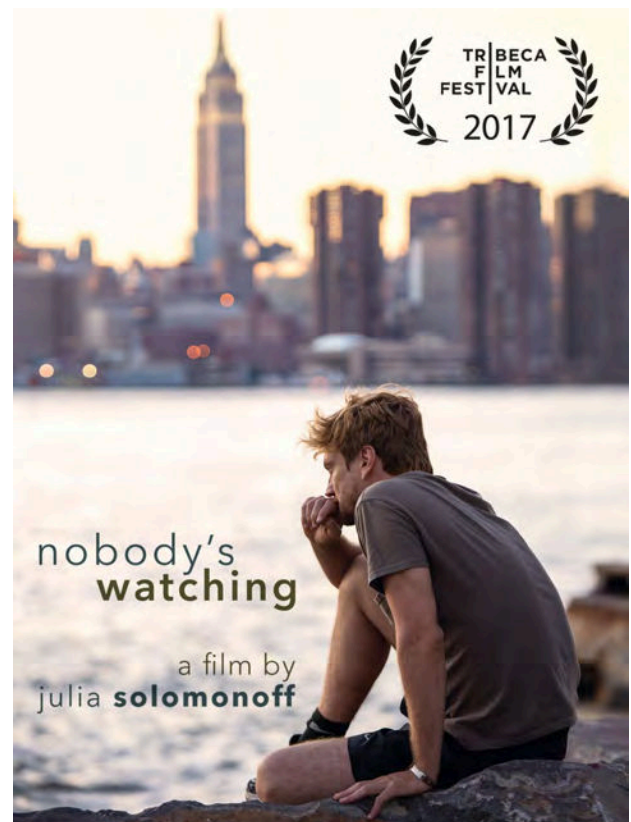
### INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *Nobody's Watching*:

What happens when a man who is accustomed to being the center of attention finds himself becoming invisible? When a life busked from cash in hand jobs trips into freefall? Julia Solomonoff's delicately textured character study follows Nico, the former star of an Argentinian soap opera, who trades autograph hunters for anonymity and moves from Buenos Aires to New York to take a role in an indie movie. When the project stalls, he chooses to stay believing that his talent will help him find success. Too blond to play Latino and his accent too strong to play anything else, Nico falls through the cracks and must juggle odd jobs to survive. Unwilling to return home and be seen as a failure, Nico manages to stay afloat thanks to his ability to pretend to be something he isn't.

*Nobody's Watching* is a fresh and unexpected take on the immigrant tale, where the journey is not to get a Green card but confronting the true reasons for leaving home, and redefining one's identity in one's own terms.

- ❑ From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.
- ❑ Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- ❑ How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- ❑ Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/nobodys-watching/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



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## AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

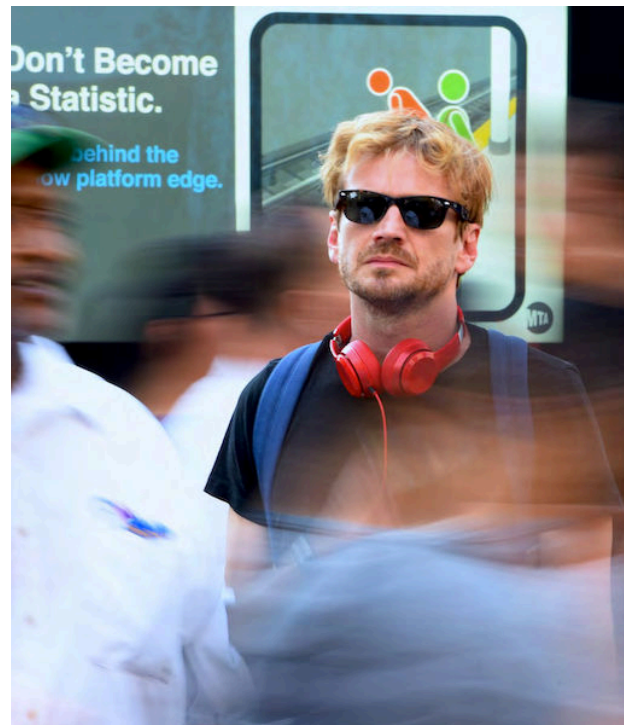
### NARRATIVE

- ❑ Nico was a celebrity in Argentina but is a nobody in New York. What are the ways in which we see Nico struggling with his life in New York? What are the challenges he faces? Analyze two scenes that illustrate this.
- ❑ How does the film successfully evoke empathy in the viewer and make you empathize with Nico in particular? Pick two scenes where you felt profound empathy for him and explain why.
- ❑ What do you make of the relationship between Martin and Nico? Think about the first scene of them in the car together in Argentina and then towards the end of the film when they meet. How does their relationship change?
- ❑ We get snippets of Nico's life back in Argentina. Based on what you saw in the movie, what do you think his life was like there? Provide examples from scenes in the movie.
- ❑ Why did Nico leave Argentina? Was it because of his relationship with Martin or to pursue an international acting career? Do you think that Nico made the right decision to come to New York? Explain.
- ❑ We see Nico refuse money from his friend for babysitting her son; yet, we see him shoplifting from time to time. Reflect on Nico's character and value system. What are the culturally specific aspects of his moral universe?
- ❑ How does Nico's relationship to Theo change from the beginning of the film to the end of the film? In your answer, consider Nico's reaction when he loses his babysitting job.
- ❑ Why do you think Nico decides to return home? What tensions are resolved or unresolved by Nico's return? Do you think it is a suitable ending to the film? Explain.
- ❑ What obstacles does Nico face throughout the film? Are these obstacles related to his status as an immigrant or are they what any aspiring actor may face? Explain.
- ❑ The audience never finds out what happens to Nico. Why do you think the director decided to end the film that way?

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### CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- ❑ How would you best describe the cinematography of the film in contrast with other films that focus on the LGBTQ+ community?
- ❑ Even though the film is a narrative, it contains several documentary elements. Can you identify them? What do they add to the film?
- ❑ There are several sequences in the film in which filmmakers use a handheld camera. What feelings does the handheld camera help evoke?
- ❑ Is the editing slow or fast paced? Why do you think the director chose this pace for the film?
- ❑ The film uses ambient sound. How does sound contribute to the mood of the film?
- ❑ Think about the close-up shots throughout the film. How often do they appear? What is their main subject? What purpose do you think these shots have?
- ❑ There are several shots of the New York city skyline. What does the skyline symbolize?



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## THEMES

- ❑ Analyze how gender roles relate to the types of jobs Nico does to earn money.
- ❑ How would you compare *Nobody is Watching* to other films portraying the LGBTQ+ community?
- ❑ Nico is an actor, but in New York, he doesn't get the acting opportunities he wants even though he is acting all the time in his daily life. Analyze this tension in terms of what it tells us about reality and artifice.
- ❑ In one scene, we see Nico at a traffic light. He imitates the actions of the cyclist in front of him. What does this scene tell us about Nico as an artist?
- ❑ The director chose to tell an immigration story from the point of view of an aspiring artist. How does this affect the narrative? What aspects of the immigration story are unique to other films you have seen on this topic?
- ❑ Think about the scene when Nico and his friend travel the streets of New York on Halloween and consider their reaction to American culture. Although the film is set in New York, we learn a lot about Argentinian culture. What are some aspects of Argentinian culture we learn about?
- ❑ We see vulnerability in male characters other than Nico. Thinking about Theo's father and Martin, how is masculinity depicted in the film? Reflect on the impact of patriarchy on men and masculinity in general.
- ❑ We see women in powerful positions throughout the film. How is this strength depicted in the film? Relate these portrayals to feminist values and objectives.
- ❑ What does the life of an artist depicted in the film tell us about the value of art in the modern world? And what does this depiction tell us about modernity in general?
- ❑ Nico is portrayed as both a celebrity and a failure. Considering the tension this creates in the film, what does this tell us about success in general?
- ❑ There are several scenes in which we see men negotiating their masculinity. For instance, think about the scene in which Nico, Theo, and Theo's father are home alone. What does this scene tell us about masculinity? Reflect on patriarchy and the impact it has on men and their ability to express their vulnerabilities.
- ❑ Is the immigration story affected by Nico's race / ethnicity? Take into consideration the scene in which he goes for an audition but is rejected because he doesn't "look the part." Also, think about the scenes of Nico on the playground with the other Spanish speaking nannies.
- ❑ What does the title of the film mean to you? How does the way Nico looks impact his immigrant experience? If he were a darker-skinned Latino, how would his experiences be different? Would he be looked at differently, for example, in the scene in which we see him shoplifting?

