

DRAFT

English 250—Introduction to Film

Dr. Kaloustian

Prompts for Film Response #2—*Casablanca* and *Double Indemnity*

Directions: Film Response #2 is due on Monday, Oct. 4. Your Film Response should be a well-structured essay about 3 pages in length and either address one of the prompts below or one of your own devising that you have cleared with the instructor in writing (email it to me). Grading criteria will generally follow those indicated in the syllabus, but possible additional points will accrue to those essays that show evidence of using the film analyses in our Norton Reader (or online sources on Blackboard); or which make solid use of film studies terminology; or which respond meaningfully in some way to concepts from lecture and class discussion, etc. You should also contextualize what you are arguing about any given film by referring to specific scenes (using time signatures) and, where appropriate, dialogue; but guard against spending your whole essay summarizing the plot.

Remember to document your sources; in other words, if you quote, paraphrase, or summarize from any secondary source, please use appropriate in-text citation in your essay (including parenthetical citations with page numbers as appropriate), and if you use a source not in our Norton Reader or in one of the Module folders or in Course Materials, please submit a works cited as part of your essay.

1. Discuss narrative technique in *Casablanca* or *Double Indemnity*. In other words, how do these movies tell their story? For example, consider the use of flashback or non-chronological sequences. What is the function of these flashback sequences? How do each help to propel or frame the narrative? You could discuss transitions between scenes, voice-overs, and visual metaphors such as props or settings.
2. Discuss the women characters in either *Casablanca* or *Double Indemnity*; or compare and contrast the women characters in these two films. What claims can be made about the ideology of each film with respect to women?
3. It has been said that every film has a certain worldview. Write an essay that compares and contrasts the worldviews of *Casablanca* and *Double Indemnity*.
4. Discuss *Casablanca* as a film of wartime propaganda.
5. Discuss the triangular relationship between the characters Rick Blaine, Ilsa Lund, and Victor Laszlo in *Casablanca*.
6. Discuss the character of Sam in *Casablanca* with respect to race and how race is otherwise handled in the movie.

7. *Casablanca* is seen as the quintessential Hollywood film, timeless, a classic. What ingredients make it so? Or, conversely, if you wish to argue that the film is over-rated, here is your chance to do so.
8. Umberto Eco suggests that *Casablanca*'s enduring appeal is in part because of its dealing in archetypes. Discuss Eco's structural analysis of *Casablanca* in terms of its archetypes.
9. Discuss the impediments to, and intersections of, love, friendship, and altruism in *Casablanca*.
10. *Double Indemnity* is often heralded as one of the best films noir ever made. What is film noir, and how does *Double Indemnity* exemplify this film genre or technique?
11. Discuss the use of the following cinematography techniques or features of *Double Indemnity*: voice-over narration; flashback sequences; fades, cuts, pans, focus and close-up shots, separation shots; and lighting.
12. Discuss the concept of the *femme fatale* in *Double Indemnity*. What would a feminist interpretation of the film say about the depiction of Phyllis Dietrichson?
13. Discuss the theme of fatalism in *Double Indemnity*. How do the dialogue and visuals of the film enhance this theme?
14. Discuss the relationship between Walter Neff and Barton Keyes in *Double Indemnity*.
20. *Double Indemnity* is cited as a turning point in Hollywood films in its sympathetic identification with the protagonist, Walter Neff. Discuss the moral implications of this aesthetic technique.
21. Compare and contrast William M. Cain's novel *Double Indemnity* with the Billy Wilder film version.