

FILM 301

Research Paper Information

Fall 2018

Purpose: The purpose of writing the research paper is to allow you to explore more deeply some aspect of the aesthetic, social, historical, technical, or cultural issues we have discussed and written about in class related to our readings and films. Despite the fact that this paper is longer than your others, you nevertheless will still be attempting to make one specific point about your subject matter and to argue the validity of that point. This means that although your paper will likely have a good deal of factual information in it, your ultimate purpose will not be to present facts, but rather to use those facts to make an argument. The kinds of questions you will want to consider as you select your topic and write your paper are, What is important about the subject I've chosen? Is its importance primarily aesthetic, cultural, historical, technical, social, or something else? What is the point I want to make about my subject?

Subject and Method: Choose three films (no more or fewer) that have a common thread among them (i.e., they treat a similar theme or issue, feature the same actor or actress, were made by the same director, were made in the same year, etc.). They can include one of the films we have discussed in class if you wish, but this is not a requirement. Discuss a particular aspect of those films that you find significant, specifically in light of our focus in class on the historical aspect of American film. Some possible questions and suggestions to consider as you choose your films and decide upon an approach to take to discussing them:

- How do these three films, taken together, effectively illustrate a specific period in American history?
- How do these three films, taken together, illustrate the significance of a particular film genre or filmmaking technique?
- How do these three films, taken together, illustrate the significance of the work of a specific director, actor, screenwriter, cinematographer, or other member of the filmmaking crew?
- Discuss the significance of three films from distinctly different time periods that have a common thematic or topical thread.

If you have another proposal you'd like to ask me about, feel free to do so. I can help you with film titles if you discuss your topic with me.

Length: 2,500 words (not including list of works cited)

Sample Topics (Ideas to Get You Thinking):

- American attitudes toward the Vietnam war as depicted in *The Green Berets*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Casualties of War*
- The evolution of the American western film as illustrated in *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *Unforgiven* (1992)
- Male-female relationships as portrayed in Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*, *The Seven-Year Itch*, and *The Apartment*

These are just possibilities to give you some ideas. I'd be glad to talk to you individually about topics and films.

List of Resources Due: Thursday, October 25. **Send your list to me via e-mail.** If they are web links, copy and paste the URL into your message.

Optional Courtesy Deadline: Monday, November 5. If you hand in at least the first three pages (or more) of your paper by November 5, I will review them and turn them back to you by November 15. These pages should be in finished, printed format.

Final Deadline: Thursday, November 29. You will turn in a hard copy **and** a Word attachment via e-mail.

Number of Sources: At least five. The films you watch and discuss do **not** count as any of these sources. **Do not cite or otherwise utilize encyclopedia articles, Cliff Notes, Masterplots, or similar sources, as references. Do not cite Wikipedia, filmsite.org, the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), or similar online sites, as references.** (You can, however, read them for personal background information.) See me before you turn in your paper if you have any questions about the suitability of a source.

Style and Format: Please use the MLA style for your paper. Consult one of the following sources:

- “Documenting Sources in MLA Style: A Bedford/St. Martin’s Supplement,” 2016
- Also available online at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Sources: All sources cited **must** be photocopied and submitted with the paper (with the exception of anything quoted from the films themselves). You need to copy **only** those pages from which you actually cite. **Please highlight the passages** (on the photocopies) that you cite.

Some Helpful Databases:

- *Dissertations and Theses*
- *J-Stor*
- *Literature Resource Center*
- *MLA International Bibliography*
- *Project Muse*
- *Research Library*
- *Communication and Mass Media Complete*
- *Film and Television Literature Index*
- *Film Literature Index*

There are other sources of similar information, and access to electronic databases in particular changes frequently. **If you can't find what you're looking for, talk to me or ask a reference librarian!**

Audience: Remember to write to an audience that exists beyond the walls of our classroom. You should imagine yourself writing to an audience that is thoughtful and well educated—perhaps readers of *The New Yorker* or *The Atlantic Monthly* or the Opinion or Calendar sections of the *Los Angeles Times*.

