**MFS 470**

**Senior Project and Proposal**

**Dr. Champion**

**Spring 2021**

Each student will write a proposal for a senior-level project, complete the project, and present the project to the campus community.

The proposal will be submitted and approved by Dr. Champion and will serve as the basis for your senior project and presentation. The finalized proposal is due Wednesday, February 17th in class. Your proposal must be presented as a hard copy and also posted to Moodle.

See Course Calendar in the syllabus for important dates. The Honors Day presentation is Thursday, April 29th. The finalized project is due Monday, May 6th in class.

Depending on the type of project you plan, there is no strict format for the proposal. However, the following guidelines will be helpful in crafting the proposal and planning for the primary research or production.

For research papers:

A senior research paper should have a clearly articulated and original research question, a literature review, an appropriate methodology for research, and a conclusion based on your original research. The best papers are those that make original contributions to the existing literature.

Final papers must be 16 to 20 pages long and submitted in an acceptable academic style (e.g., Turabian, Chicago, MLA, APA). All papers will be submitted through “Turnitin” on Moodle.

The research must be related to media and film studies.

Requirements may differ depending on the approach. For example, historical papers often do not require long literature reviews, but they demand examination of many primary sources. Critical analyses, on the other hand, usually need a theoretical lens and extensive literature review. Depending on your approach, Dr. Champion can give you more specific guidelines.

Your proposal should include your research question, a justification for this research, a literature review, and a proposed method for analysis. Proposals should be written in the same style as the final paper will be.

For film productions:

A film project may be either a short fictional film or a short documentary film. The finished project will be held to high standards regarding ambition, originality, narrative, technical considerations, performance, etc.

For fictional narratives, the goal should be a film between 8 and 12 minutes in length. For documentaries, the project should be between 8 and 20 minutes. Longer documentaries (i.e., feature-length) might be approved on a case-by-case basis, if the subject justifies it.

A film should conform to traditional storytelling conventions, regardless if it is fiction or true. The characters, goals, and conflict must be identifiable. You should structure your stories based on the models you have learned to date. Three-act structure is recommended for screenplays, and the four structural stages should guide documentaries (tease, exposition, rising action, climax/resolution). Any questions raised must be resolved. If questions are not completely answered, your audience must at least understand why they are not answered.

However, do not let this rule constrain your vision. Make the film you want to make, but make choices that your audience will understand. See Dr. Champion for more information.

Be sure to chose a manageable topic. A simple yet well crafted film is much more satisfying to make and to show to others than a big production that is sloppy, boring, or pretentious.

For narratives, a finished screenplay is required with this proposal.

For documentaries, thorough research may be required, including contacting subjects, acquiring various elements, etc. Begin this process immediately.

The final project should be submitted as a high-resolution .mp4 file.

Below are proposal guidelines for film projects:

Title and Tagline – Give your film a unique title and add a short sentence that serves to create interest for your audience. During this proposal stage, you may decide on a temporary or “working” title. After developing the project further, you may decide to change the title, but you must get approval from your supervisor.

Format – Identify the form that your film will take and where it will primarily be shown. Examples of formats include a stand-alone short film, a feature film, a pilot episode (for a situation-comedy, drama, or web series), a short documentary, or a feature documentary. Briefly discuss the ideal exhibition for this project, such as a film festival, a local television station, a national television network, a wide theatrical release, special events at college campuses, a website, etc. Also consider if and how this project can support itself financially and potentially earn money for investors.

Objective – Write a brief sentence or two addressing the overall goals of your project. At its core, most short films are designed to “entertain” audiences, but add more specific information about how this project will accomplish this goal. For example, various genres of film entertain in different ways by evoking certain emotions. Other projects, like a documentary or a news series, may be designed to “educate” audiences about specific social issues and challenge them to act.

Target Audience – Identify the primary group of people whom you would like to show this film. You might reference demographics such as age, gender, race, income level, education level, etc. You also need to address psychographics if possible. These include political affiliation, values, buying habits, sense of humor, etc. You may also mention other films or shows that may be comparable to your project and that most readers will know.

Treatment – Briefly describe the narrative. At the very least, make sure the reader of this proposal understands the characters and the narrative situation. If this is a fiction project or a documentary about an event that has already happened, discuss the story’s beginning, middle, and end. If this is a documentary about an event that is in the process of happening or an exploration of a character, offer an educated guess or possible scenarios about the direction of the story.

Along with a brief narrative description, this treatment section should address the style and approach you plan to take. If you are producing a comedy film, for example, do you anticipate using high-key lighting and conventional editing styles, or will you go for a more edgy, dark comedy? If you are producing a documentary, will you use interviews, narration, and archival material, or will you use a more observational style to capture action as it happens?

Production Method – Discuss what kind of crew, equipment, and locations you will need. Will you shoot a single-camera film on location? Or a multi-camera program in a studio? Will you need to travel to interview subjects? What props will you need to purchase or create? Be specific about what jobs need to be accomplished in pre-production, production, and post-production, and who will do them. For example, do you need a casting director to find actors, a location scout to find locations, a camera operator with experience rigging automobiles, an editor with graphics experience? For a documentary, what kind of access will you have with your subjects?

Production Schedule – Once you have defined the items above, formulate a schedule with dates that will keep you on track to finish your production. Discuss your production schedule in advance with fellow classmates, and form a strategy that will allow you to crew for each other. You may need to alter dates slightly during the course of your production, but only with approval by your supervisor.

Budget – Write up a simple budget (or attach a spreadsheet) that lists the major expenditures necessary to complete this project. This budget will be tentative during the proposal stage, but it gives you (the producer) and your supervisor/executive an idea of the potential costs involved. As you move forward with pre-production, you must submit budget updates to your supervisor for approval.

Multimedia, commercials, music videos, and other projects

If you plan to present an alternative senior project, you will need to work with Dr. Champion to synthesize a proposal. Client-based projects, such as commercial campaigns or music videos, for example, may use a proposal format similar to film productions, addressing objectives, target audience, production plan, etc. Multimedia research projects may use a proposal format similar to research papers.

Please note, MFS is not a performing arts major. The senior project itself needs to be something media-based that can be submitted and stand alone as a unique project. Theatrical plays, multimedia presentations, etc., may be better suited in other majors.

**RULES AND SAFETY**

***The following are not permitted* without the prior approval of the instructor**:

-moving cars or any type of motorized vehicle

-stunts, weapons, or fight scenes

-animals

-drones

-nudity

-fire

-smoke and pyrotechnics of any kind (including cigarettes and lighters)

-actors under the age of 18

-filming in, on, or near water (even as shallow as 1 inch)

-filming in the middle of a street (sidewalks are OK)

These components must be cleared and signed off on by the instructor **before you shoot.** ***Filming on or near railroad tracks is strictly forbidden.***

***NOTE: Many objects can be considered a weapon if they are used as a weapon. A pencil can simply be a pencil, but if it is being used to stab someone in the eye, then it is a weapon and needs to be approved. Professor Corna or Professor Champion must see the actual weapon in person before you use it for your shoot OR rehearsal.***

Think and plan out the situations you will be shooting in and stay alert at all times. Shooting a film can be dangerous.

Any accident or damage **must** be documented in writing and signed by a witness. A copy must be given to your instructor the next day. If you are faced with a change in production plans that raises new safety or ethical issues, CALL your instructor and discuss it. If you are uncertain as to how to proceed or cannot reach your instructor, postpone the shot/scene until a later time and continue shooting scenes that pose no safety problem.