**MFS 260 – African American Cinema**

**Final Project Guidelines**

**Dr. Champion**

**Fall 2022**

**The Research Paper/Project** is an independent project that you will undertake under my guidance. The assignment will ask you to select an important filmmaker, film, or specific theme, based on assigned readings and films, and to situate that subject in context of African American cinema. If you chose to write a paper, it will be between 6 and 8 pages in length. In lieu of writing a paper, you may choose to create a digital presentation in the form of a video essay, a multimedia presentation, or a film production. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness and originality of your ideas, the accuracy of your research, and quality of your writing and presentation.

Begin thinking about this project immediately. Use the Moodle forum to post your ideas and proposals. It is very important to discuss your ideas and progress with Dr. Champion often.

Due Date: Proposals should be approved by Dr. Champion by October 24th. Before that date, set up a time to meet with Dr. Champion to get feedback. *The earlier, the better!!!* There is no formal proposal format, but type up something with enough detail so that the end product is clear.

The final version of your project will be due December 7th at class time.

**I. PAPERS**

Here are the guidelines if you choose to write a paper.

1. This paper assignment requires you to select a topic related to African American cinema and to develop a critical or historical thesis.

You may choose to examine a feature film, a director, an actor, a broad historical movement, or a general theme that runs across multiple films. You may draw your topic from the distant past or recent films and events. You are not limited only to material we have covered in class.

You can either choose to engage in films critically or historically.

Critical work involves studying films, reading others’ interpretations, and providing your own interpretation. Students who choose a critical analysis will likely enjoy watching films closely, describing scenes and characters, and thinking about their meanings. For any interpretation you formulate, you will need to describe scenes in order to support your arguments.

Historical work can involve some critical analysis, but it is mostly about context as much as content. If you want to do a historical project, you will likely be more interested in “behind-the-scenes” research. You might try to find out what a film’s producer or director intended, what prior films or events influenced them, how audiences reacted to a film, how a film or filmmaker contributes to a larger historical movement, etc. A simple biography will not suffice. You must use the facts and evidence that you learn from the past to form your own interpretation of the past and how it is relevant today.

1. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

Your paper will need to contain a clear thesis statement in the opening paragraph. You are basically posing a question or telling your reader what you want to explore in your paper.

Your opening should be followed by a brief review of previous scholars and what they have said or written about the topic. This section is an opportunity to set up your own research. You might be building on someone else’s opinions, arguing against them, or some combination of both.

The main body of your paper should stay focused on your thesis. This section will likely be the bulk of your paper. You can assume your reader has not seen the films that you are discussing or read anything that you are citing, so use great detail in your descriptions.

To conclude your paper, you may briefly reiterate your thesis, but avoid being too repetitive. Your conclusion is not meant to be a summary of your paper. Instead, add your personal insights or opinions that you have gained through your analysis.

Papers should be between 2000 to 2500 words, which roughly works out to be between 6 and 8 full pages, with standard margins, 12-point font, double-spaced.

Use MLA style for all citations (if you strongly prefer a different writing style, please speak with Dr. Champion first). See examples on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website. All ideas and wording that are not your own must be attributed properly.

Although this course is not a writing class, please be as professional as possible. Your writing will also be graded for spelling, grammar, and formatting. You should take advantage of the Writing Center, located in the Humanities Center 102. They offer one-on-one assistance for student writers. Peer tutors spend thirty minutes to an hour per appointment, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have. Visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.bsc.edu/academics/arc/writing.cfm> for more information, drop in during regular hours (M-Thurs, 3:30-10 & Sunday 5-10), or email [writingcenter@bsc.edu](mailto:writingcenter@bsc.edu) to make an appointment.

See the attached detailed rubric to get an idea of how papers will be graded.

All papers must be submitted via Turnitin on Moodle by December 7th at 2:00 pm.

Students will briefly discuss their major thesis and conclusions with the class during our Final Exam time.

**II. DIGITAL PROJECTS**

In lieu of writing a paper, you may choose to create a digital presentation in the form of a video essay or documentary production. You may form groups of 2 or 3 students, but each student must demonstrate their contribution to the final product.

1. Similar to the paper guidelines, this assignment requires you to conduct a critical or historical analysis. You may choose to examine a feature film, a director, an actor, a broad historical movement, or a general theme that runs across multiple films. You may draw your topic from the distant past or recent films and events. You are not limited only to material we have covered in class.

You can either choose to engage in films critically or historically.

Critical work involves studying films, reading others’ interpretations, and providing your own interpretation. Students who choose a critical analysis will likely enjoy watching films closely, describing scenes and characters, and thinking about their meanings. For any interpretation you formulate, you will need to describe scenes in order to support your arguments.

Historical work can involve some critical analysis, but it is mostly about context as much as content. If you want to do a historical project, you will likely be more interested in “behind-the-scenes” research. You might try to find out what a film’s producer or director intended, what prior films or events influenced them, how audiences reacted to a film, how a film or filmmaker contributes to a larger historical movement, etc. A simple biography will not suffice. You must use the facts and evidence that you learn from the past to form your own interpretation of the past and how it is relevant today.

The attached rubric is designed for grading papers, but to get an idea of how digital projects will be graded, pay attention to the sections for Introduction, Main Body, and Conclusion.

1. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR DIGITAL PROJECTS

Your final project should be 8-15 minutes in length and will take the form of a digital file which can be presented on a computer and uploaded to the Internet. The goal is not only to conduct research and present it to the class, but to proudly show it to anyone who might interested in what we are studying.

The final file format should be a .mp4. If you use PowerPoint or other presentation materials, they can be converted to .mp4.

If you need any technical help, please ask Dr. Champion early in the process.

MFS 260 – Paper Grading Form Name:

Your paper is graded based on two major criteria: conceptual (70%) and technical (30%).

The conceptual component is a subjective evaluation from the instructor, based on your demonstration of understanding of key theories and your analysis of the texts (i.e., the films). A major goal of this assignment is the thorough understanding of specific theoretical approaches rather than a general summary of theories.

The technical component of your grade is based on the rubric below. A check (✓) indicates an adequate performance. A double check (✓✓) indicates an outstanding performance. The following marks correspond to the following point deductions:

NI = Needs Improvement (-1)

X = Needs Rewriting (-2)

XX = Completely Deficient (-4)

LANGUAGE MECHANICS

Proper spelling.

Strong vocabulary and word choices.

Proper punctuation (periods, commas, quotation marks, foreign characters, etc.).

Use tenses consistently. Generally, use present tense to describe action in films (e.g., “Director Robert Wiene uses depth in the frame to build suspense…” Use past-tense verbs when referring to actions that took place in the past (e.g.,” Eisenstein was a proponent of the new Communist government.”). When describing the text from books, you may use either past or present tense, but keep it consistent (e.g., “Bazin states…” or “Bazin stated…”).

Avoid passive voice and using forms of “to be” (is, there is, there are, etc.).

Construct articulate sentences. Avoid fragments and short, choppy sentences, but at the same time eliminate

excessive adverbs and adjectives that do little to contribute to the sentence’s purpose.

THE INTRODUCTION

Include a brief, interesting beginning, focused on the theme of your paper.

Include a statement of the theme or argument of your paper.

Include a literature review or summary of the major ideas from pertinent scholars, historians, and critics.

MAIN BODY

Organize your paper into a logical structure (e.g., by theme, or by film, or by date).

Make connections between the concepts, films, and people you are analyzing.

Provide evidence to back up your arguments (accurately researched)

CONCLUSION

Provide a short conclusion based on the evidence you have presented.

Avoid repetitive summaries or statements that do not reflect evidence from your primary sources (although

you may offer a brief statement on potential ramifications of your evidence or limitations of your study).

CITATIONS

Use the proper citation format (either parentheticals, footnotes, or endnotes) and Works Cited list for all

sources. Use Italics for books and feature-length films in the body of your writing.

Include attributions so that the source of each quote is clear.

When referring to a source more than once, you may abbreviate it after the first citation as long as the source

is clear to the reader.

Do not rely too heavily on quotations from theorists or historians. Reserve direct quotes for film dialogue or

from directors, actors, etc.

Avoid using block quotations unless they are vital for your reader to see. If block quotes must be used,

follow MLA format.

PAGE FORMAT, PAPER LENGTH AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Number the pages in your paper on the top right

Page margins must be consistent—1-inch margins on top, bottom, left, and right.

Use standard type and font (e.g., Times New Roman 12) and double-spacing.

Follow the guidelines for this assignment (2000-2500 words).

Include a title page or header which includes your paper’s title, your name, course number, professor’s name,

and date.

TOTAL GRADE:

CONCEPTUAL:

TECHNICAL: