Film Genres:
Investigating the Mystery Film

Course Description
This course will delve into the genre of the mystery film, long one of the most popular genres in cinema. We will seek out clues that establish hallmarks of the genre, as well as those films that push its limits. The course will investigate the mystery at the heart of detective films. Critics have suggested detective stories work to restore order in the world but that narrative arc raises questions of what sorts of order are presented: Is it political? social? And what happens if a solution is not found? You can thus see how sleuthing will discover that mystery films are not just mindless thrills. Our investigation will interrogate films such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and *Rear Window*, Christopher Nolan’s *Memento* and *Insomnia*, as well as suspects such as *Gosford Park*, *The Third Man*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Usual Suspects*, *Chinatown*, *Zodiac*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. We will map out characteristics of the genre, as well as why such films are often labelled “thrillers” or “suspense.” We’ll also take a look at films that bend the genre, blending mystery with parody, spy films, horror, etc.

Course Goals
The class will help students understand the significant elements of the mystery genre; have knowledge of the historical development of—and different trends within—the genre; and appreciate important critical and theoretical statements about mystery films.

Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, you will be able to

- Identify and define major features of a significant moving image genre;
- Identify and use basic concepts of film analysis;
- Use appropriate terminology for film analysis, applying these terms correctly in class discussion and critical writing;
- Analyze how culture, gender, class, and identity work in moving image narratives;
- Use close reading skills in analyzing both films and critical texts;
- Apply research skills incorporating use of academic databases, cinematic resources, academic resources (online and in print), and film reviews;
- Demonstrate skill in identifying relevant resources for developing a research topic exploring a film/theory/theme, resources such as books, articles, book chapters, and reviews.

General Education
Successful completion of this course provides General Education credit for the A3. Build Knowledge in the Humanities and B4. Develop Information Literacy outcomes.

**Texts**

There are no books to buy for the course. However, you will be responsible for watching the assigned films ahead of time, so make sure you line up your providing source ahead of time. Most are available through Netflix, Amazon Instant Video, and YouTube; you can also check through your local library (if you have an account, some libraries participate in a plan where you can watch some movies online). Rentals are generally $3-$4; please see the list below. Some of you might be resourceful and find other means of watching the films. Regardless, you are responsible for viewing each title, so make sure you have your methods chosen in advance.

In addition to screenings, there will be a few essays to read for each class; these will show up as attached files as you work through the Brightspace lessons. Note: for the films you write on, you will need to watch those movies more than once, so purchase or a second rental might be necessary.

- **Chinatown** ($2.99 rental on Youtube, Amazon; Amazon Prime)
- **The Maltese Falcon** (1941 version) ($2.99 rental on Youtube and Amazon)
- **The Third Man** (Netflix; $3.99 rental on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Zodiac** (Amazon Prime; $2.99 rental on Amazon/Youtube)
- **The Usual Suspects** (free with ads on Youtube and Amazon)
- **Vertigo** ($3.99 rental on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Rear Window** (1954 version) ($3.99 rental on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Memento** ($2.99 rental on Youtube/Amazon; $3.99 on Amazon)
- **Insomnia** (2002 version) ($2.99 rental on Youtube/Amazon)
- **Shaft** (1971 version) ($2.99 on Youtube/Amazon)
- **Devil in a Blue Dress** ($3.99 on Youtube/Amazon)
- **Silence of the Lambs** (Netflix; $3.99 on Youtube/Amazon)
- **Copycat** (1995 version) ($3.99 on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy** (2011 version) (Netflix; $3.99 on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Blow-Up** (1966 version) ($1.99 Youtube)
- **The Big Lebowski** ($3.99 on Amazon/Youtube)
- **Gosford Park** ($3.99 on Amazon/Youtube)

**Technology Requirements**

A reliable computer and high speed internet connection are ESSENTIAL and thus REQUIRED for this course. Registering for an online course implies you understand and agree to this requirement. Please note that, should something happen to interrupt your internet access at home, you are responsible for finding acceptable access to the course.

This course is delivered through the Brightspace platform, a set of web applications designed to work with modern web browsers. Recommended browsers are Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Microsoft Edge, and Mozilla Firefox. Mobile browsers that work include Android 5.0, Apple iOS, and Windows 10. Internet Explorer is no longer supported.
When on the Brightspace website for the course, if you look at the menu on the top, you will see “Help” at the right side of the menu. If you click on it, it will take you to the help pages. There is also a LiveChat icon on the Brightspace homepage itself where you can also turn for support.

In terms of the video/film side of things, your computer will need speakers and/or a headphone. Your computer and browser will need to be able to play video clips and online streaming films. Many videos will be embedded in Brightspace; others you will need to access through a browser such as Google Chrome (https://www.google.com/chrome/), Apple Safari (https://support.apple.com/downloads/safari), Microsoft Edge (https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge), or Mozilla Firefox (https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/). You will also need to create a login through URI’s Microsoft 365 account; please see: https://web.uri.edu/its/office-365/. At time of writing, all films are available through Youtube (https://www.youtube.com/) or Amazon (https://www.amazon.com/).


The URI IT desk has always been immensely helpful and even more so during the pandemic. If you are experiencing technical difficulties, you can call the Help Desk at 401-874-4357 or email them at helpdesk@uri.edu. They also conduct video appointments through Zoom; you can schedule an appointment at sdwebex@uri.edu.

Accessibility:
Chrome: chrome://settings/accessibility
Edge: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/4538354/microsoft-edge-new-accessibility
Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=G7Z7U5HDT6DDQFH
Youtube: https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/6087602?hl=en
CLASSROOM PROTOCOL:
For this online course, Brightspace is our “classroom.” Please refer to the Brightspace tutorial video embedded on our course homepage (START HERE) for a detailed screencast on how this course will run via Brightspace, which tools you will need, and how to use those tools. I’m also requiring all students to enroll and complete the online mini-course on Brightspace; please see instructions for enrolling at https://web.uri.edu/its-covid19/using-brightspace-2/.

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time forum postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions. If you’ve never taken an online course, “hanging out” on Brightspace will take some getting used to, and it will be easy to forget about the course from time to time. I recommend you get in the habit of daily attendance online to maximize your successful completion of the course. Please refer to the Class Calendar below in this syllabus and on the Brightspace site for details on how and when you will be expected to contribute to the course.

ONLINE LEARNING:
The best way to begin this course is to view the START HERE video on our Brightspace page, read the syllabus, and go through the “Students Getting Started in Brightspace” mini-course: please see instructions for enrolling at https://web.uri.edu/its-covid19/using-brightspace-2/.

In terms of the class itself, the syllabus is your map to this course.

This course is divided into five weeks with two Lessons per week. Each Lesson on Brightspace contains the learning objectives for that lesson, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities.

Class Policies
This course will be entirely conducted through our class Brightspace site. As this is a summer course, each week will be the equivalent of just over two weeks in a normal Fall/Spring semester, thus intensifying everything about the course. As we do not physically meet, watching the videocast presentations, posting in our class discussion forums, and completing the Brightspace assignments (online quizzes) will constitute the equivalent of going and participating in class. To ensure everyone is up to speed regarding these online tools and techniques, all students will need to complete URI’s Brightspace Online orientation by July 3 (find instructions here: please see instructions for enrolling at https://web.uri.edu/its-covid19/using-brightspace-2/). Questions and issues regarding the technical side of the Brightspace site can be directed to the Office of Online Learning: email: online@uri.edu; phone: 401.874.4274.

This course is divided into five weeks with two Lessons per week. Each Brightspace Lesson contains the learning objectives for that lesson, assigned readings, videos, and links to other important content on the internet, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities. Every
Lesson will center around discussing a pair of linked films (thus, two Lessons per week equals four films each week!); each Lesson pair will have an assigned set of reading available through the Brightspace Lessons. You will need to watch the films on your own and then log-in to the Brightspace site for my video presentations and to participate in our online class discussions. You will also need to complete the identified assignments.

Posting Requirements
As you can see in the class calendar, there will be two units/discussion threads each week. Before you participate in the relevant discussion thread (and you will need to participate in each), you will need to watch the films, read the assigned texts, and watch the appropriate videocasts.

To receive full attendance/participation points, you must participate in two of the weekly class film discussions at least 3 different days per week. Our weeks will run from Sunday evening at midnight to the following Sunday at midnight. Yes, you will need to post on 3 different days of the week, not just post 3 times on one day; at least one of these posts should be a response to another classmate. All posts that receive credit will be substantive: they should be thoughtful (“what struck me about the film was its use of shadows”), provide details from films/essays/videocasts (“for example, in the scene at the warehouse”), and provide original, considered interventions (“I think the use of shadow helps support the dark emotional tone in the film”); posts responding to other students likewise will usefully extend the conversation either by continuing a line of thought (“Shadows are also important in the scene where, etc”) or respectfully providing alternative arguments/evidence (“I like the argument about shadows but I wonder about the bright lit scene at the end”). Posts that are fluff (“Great/terrible film!”), don’t provide evidence or elaboration of points, or don’t engage with other students in a detailed fashion (the infamous “good point!” and nothing more posts) will not receive credit. Your posts should be at least 5 sentences long (over is fine), use appropriate vocabulary (that of cinema studies), discuss the films/essays in detail by discussing specific aspects, and be proofread and edited so they are easy to read. So: 3 substantive posts each of participation in both distinct discussion threads totaling 6 posts per week. Posts in the first thread will be due by 11:59 PM on Thursdays, those in the second by 11:59 PM on Sundays. Please see the rubric at the end of syllabus regarding how comments will be graded.

ASSIGNMENTS/QUIZZES/EXAMS NOT SUBMITTED BY THE DEADLINE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO. Please back up your work on a flash drive, email to yourself, and/or store in a cloud. It is a good idea to have a back-up plan in case of computer problems, e.g., a friend’s computer, a library computer, etc.

Netiquette:
As this is an online class, we will want to make sure that our interactions are conducted in such a way as to maximize effective and productive interactions. I’ve adopted the guidelines below from Arizona State University but they provide an excellent set of things to keep in mind on our discussion threads.

Be Scholarly
- Do: Use proper language, grammar, and spelling. Be explanatory and justify your opinions. Credit the ideas of others through citing and linking to scholarly resources.
- **Avoid:** Misinforming others when you may not know the answer. If you are guessing about something, clearly state that you do not know the answer.

**Be Respectful**
- **Do:** Respect privacy, diversity and opinions of others. Communicate tactfully and base disagreements on scholarly ideas or research evidence.
- **Avoid:** Sharing another person’s professional or personal information.

**Be Professional**
- **Do:** Represent yourself well at all times. Be truthful, accurate, and run a final spell check. Limit the use of slang and emoticons.
- **Avoid:** Using profanity or participating in hostile interactions.

**Be Polite**
- **Do:** Address others by name or appropriate title and be mindful of your tone. Treat people as if you were in a face-to-face situation.
- **Avoid:** Using sarcasm, being rude, or writing in all capital letters. Written words can be easily misinterpreted as they lack nonverbal cues such as facial expression, body language, or tone of voice.

**Class Grade.**
Short paper (5-7 pages): 25%
Final paper (8-10 pages): 40%
Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Class Attendance/Participation: 20%
Quizzes: 5%

**Grade Scale**
A=93-100%
A-=90-92%
B+=88-89%
B=82-87%
B-=80-81%
C+=78-79%
C=73-77%
C-=70-72%
D+=68-69%
D=60-67%
F-59% and below

**Documented Disability**
If you have a documented disability, please contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Please be sure as well to take advantage of the resources available at Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 874-2098.

*The Academic Enhancement Center and Writing Center:*
The work in this course is complex and can be challenging. To make the most of your time and effort, it's a good idea to visit the Academic Enhancement Center (AEC) or the Writing Center in Roosevelt Hall. AEC tutors and academic counselors can answer questions, clarify concepts, check your understanding, and show you how to study more effectively. Please contact AEC for information about consultations: https://web.uri.edu/aec/.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in Roosevelt Hall 009, supports ALL writers, across ALL disciplines, at ALL stages of the writing process. Our goal is to help you become a better writer, not just write a better paper. One-on-one and group appointments are available with friendly, supportive, highly trained student tutors who have experience working with students at all levels in all subject areas. To view the current schedule or to make an appointment, visit https://uri.mywconline.com/ (you will have to set up a quick account). Find more info at http://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/.

- Other Campus Resources
  - Counseling Center: https://web.uri.edu/counseling/
  - Enrollment Services: https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/
  - Career Services: https://web.uri.edu/ceps/career-services/
  - Student Services: https://web.uri.edu/memorialunion/student-services/

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses and are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes students are honest in all academic work. Cheating is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), unauthorized communication during an examination, or the claiming of credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). Plagiarism is the failure to give credit for another person’s written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.

If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following website: https://honor council.georgetown.edu/whatisplagiarism, the URI Student Handbook, and University Manual sections on plagiarism and cheating at http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student’s own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
• Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
• Unauthorized communication during exams;
• Unauthorized use of another’s work or preparing work for another student;
• Taking an exam for another student;
• Altering or attempting to alter grades;
• The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
• Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;
• Facilitating or aiding another’s academic dishonesty;
• Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please note the following section from the University Manual:

8.27.17. Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student’s academic dean, the instructor’s dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor’s dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final. Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer’s handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. You can also consult the following website:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html.

If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

Please note: Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published “Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations” which can be accessed in the University Student Handbook.

Class Calendar
All readings are available through the Brightspace site for the course. Quizzes are generally due by Thursday and Sunday at 7 PM (please see the calendar below for specifics). As each week is equivalent to just over two weeks in a normal term, there will be two units per summer week.

Week One, June 27-July 3—Intros: Screen Chinatown; Introduce yourself to the class and complete URI Brightspace Online Orientation (see Class Policies section above) by Thursday, June 30. Posts due by June 30.
Generic Beginnings: Screen The Maltese Falcon (1941 version) and The Third Man; Read Rick Altman, from Film/Genre; W.H. Auden, “The Guilty Vicarage.” Quiz due on Sunday, July 3. Posts due by Sunday, July 3.
Week Two, July 4-July 10—**Contemporary Takes and Structuring Detection**: Screen *Zodiac* and *The Usual Suspects*; Read David Bordwell, from *Narration in the Fiction Film*; Victor Shklovsky, from *Theory of Prose*; Tzvetan Todorov, from *A Theory of Prose*. Posts due by Thursday, July 7.


**Masculinities and African American Sleuths**: Screen *Shaft* (1971 version) and *Devil in a Blue Dress*; Read Philippa Gates, from *Detecting Men*. Conceptual map and paragraph for annotated bibliography due in Eli Review on Sunday, July 17. Quiz due on Sunday, July 17. Posts due on Sunday, July 17. **Short papers due on July 15**.

Week Four, July 18-24—**Detecting Gender: The Female Sleuth**: Screen *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Copycat* (1995 version); read Philippa Gates, from *Detecting Women*. Feedback to groupmates’ conceptual maps due in Eli Review by Tuesday, July 19. Posts due on Thursday, July 21. **Annotated bibliographies due on Friday, July 22**.


Week Five, July 25-July 31—**Parodies and Finales**: I will provide feedback on both the short essay and annotated bibliography by the beginning of the week. Screen *The Big Lebowski* and *Gosford Park*; read Peter Graham, “From *Mansfield Park* to *Gosford Park*”; Marc Singer, “‘Trapped by Their Pasts’”; Emily Dill and Karen Janke, “‘New Shit Has Come to Light.’” Posts and Quiz due on July 28. **Final essays due on July 31**.

**Essay Assignments**

**Short Essay**

For your first essay, you will explore one film we have watched in class, building on what you have learned in class. Your essay should consider not only character and theme but also the technical cinematic devices (camera work, editing, etc). Rather than disparate points, be sure to blend your points together into a single, coherent argument, one clearly identified in your essay. Supporting evidence from the film in question is vital, so you will need to watch it several times, taking notes. Your essay should be 5-7 full pages. I strongly recommend for focus and development reasons that you discuss no more than 3 key facets and that these components are linked together in your master argument. Remember: the focus here is on your argument and reading of the film, not on summarizing all the details of someone’s else’s interpretation. Also, a major component of your grade for this essay will be using detailed analysis (not summary!) of specific shots and scenes to make a larger case. Papers will be assessed according to the rubric in the syllabus and will be submitted as a Word file to the Brightspace page by **Friday, July 15**.
**Annotated Bibliography:** By the second half of the term, you must select a research project based on class discussions and reading. You use the techniques learned in class and will research the library’s academic search engines such as JSTOR, Project Muse, the Film & Television Literature Index, etc. You should use the library’s main catalog to find relevant books and articles. You might also use relevant video/film clips (utilizing YouTube or Vimeo). You will then compile an annotated bibliography, a list of possible references that provides some reflection and digestion of each entry. Your bibliography should have at least 5 entries with a paragraph of at least 100 words each. This paragraph should not only summarize the source, but should also think through how this source might be used in your project. You should also consider the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose of each reference entry. Bibliographies will be assessed according to specific, thoroughness, and discussion of how each entry might be of use to your final project. Bibliographies should be submitted as a Word file to the class Brightspace page by **Friday, July 22.**

**Peer Review**
For the Annotated Bibliography, we will use the peer review process. As writing is a process in which all of us are forever working to improve ourselves, we learn in this process not only by endeavoring on various writing tasks but also by providing feedback to others on their own endeavors. Indeed, giving such feedback greatly aids in our own understanding of the task at hand, successful strategies to employ, potential pitfalls to avoid, and the like. Or, in other words, when we review others, we teach ourselves.

Peer review will thus enable us to provide feedback to one another—and to help develop our own writing techniques. As we review and give feedback to each other, we will follow a pattern of describing, evaluating, and suggesting: identifying what a draft does/is trying to do, discussing the effectiveness of the writing strategies in meeting the assignment, and offering advice on ways to improve.

We will use the app Eli Review. We will lead into the Annotated Bibliography by creating a “mini-assignment” that concentrates on a core aspect of the main assignment, the conceptual map. You will prepare the conceptual map early and, using Eli Review, receive peer feedback as well as providing it to others yourself. Participating in this process allows you to make sure you are on track for the main writing tasks, as well as developing deeper understanding of techniques in accomplishing this task through giving feedback and getting helpful advice from others. You will find that you get best results from the feedback process through enthusiastically participating: in providing feedback to others, you will discover that you develop a better idea of how to improve your own research topic. Please keep in mind that will also score one another on the helpfulness of the feedback you receive; participation in peer review will be factored into the overall class participation grade. I will be on the app and will monitor submissions and feedback.

**Eli Review (Concept Map)**
Based on our discussion of concept maps, construct a map addressing topics you are interested in pursuing for the Annotated Bibliography/Long Paper. Your map should contain at least 15-20 concepts and should demonstrate how they might be linked together. Your map should take the form of a standard electronic format (you might construct it using Word or you can write a hard copy version and take a jpg picture) that you can upload to Eli Review. You should also devise a
short paragraph (at least 150-200 words) articulating the mainlines of how the ideas link together; you should identify the main question you would like your project to investigate--this question should pursue the logical relations between the mainlines identified in your concept map: what connecting idea would you like to research/think through further? Upload both the concept map and the paragraph to Eli Review by midnight (11:59 PM) on Sunday, July 17. Through the app, you will be sorted into groups. You will need to provide feedback (the app will guide you how to do so) to each of your groupmates by Tuesday, July 19. Please note: this task feeds into the Annotated Bibliography assignment above and as such will help improve your work on not only that assignment but also for the resulting Long Essay. As such, I will not assign a separate grade for this Eli Review task. However, failure to submit the Eli Review assignment and/or not providing feedback to your groupmates will result in a deduction of one letter grade from your Annotated Bibliography score.

Long Essay
Your second and final essay will have you compare two detective films (these can be films we have not watched in class). Papers should be 8-10 pages in length. Your essays will be like the first but will make a coherent and sustained argument comparing the two movies. Again, your essay should discuss both thematics (motifs, characters, etc) and cinematic form. Be sure to support all points you make with evidence from the films. **Your essay should make use of at least two articles or chapters that were not part of our assigned readings (but those you covered in your annotated bibliography are fair game).** These essays might be used to help you read a scene or narrative/cinematic device by “borrowing” or translating a reading (for example, you might use the way Philippa Gates reads *The Silence of the Lambs* as a model for considering similar issues in another film) Or they might serve as something to argue against (you could frame a reading of a detective film by arguing that W.H. Auden’s theory of detection is all wrong for an American context). Or you might use the essays to help underscore the significance of your own essay’s argument (as an example, you might use Todorov’s or Irwin’s account of detection to argue for the intellectual resonance of any detective’s work). Remember: **the focus of your essay should be on developing your own argument, not in providing summaries of the films/essays you researched.** Papers will be assessed according to the rubric below and will be due as a **Word file** to the class Brightspace page by Sunday, July 31.
# Rubric for Asynchronous Discussion Participation

Name__________________________________________

Asynchronous discussion enhances learning as you share your ideas, perspectives, and experiences with the class. You develop and refine your thoughts through the writing process, plus broaden your classmates’ understanding of the course content. Use the following feedback to improve the quality of your discussion contributions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Unacceptable 0 Points</th>
<th>Acceptable 1 Point</th>
<th>Good 2 Points</th>
<th>Excellent 3 Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Participates not at all or only one post per week.</td>
<td>Participates 2-3 times on the same day.</td>
<td>Participates 4-5 times but postings not distributed throughout week.</td>
<td>Participates 6 times throughout the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Assignment Posting</strong></td>
<td>Posts no assignment.</td>
<td>Posts adequate assignment with superficial thought and preparation; doesn’t address all aspects of the task.</td>
<td>Posts well developed assignment that addresses all aspects of the task; lacks full development of concepts.</td>
<td>Posts well developed assignment that fully addresses and develops all aspects of the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-Up Postings</strong></td>
<td>Posts no follow-up responses to others.</td>
<td>Posts shallow contribution to discussion (e.g., agrees or disagrees); does not enrich discussion.</td>
<td>Elaborates on an existing posting with further comment or observation.</td>
<td>Demonstrates analysis of others’ posts; extends meaningful discussion by building on previous posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Contribution</strong></td>
<td>Posts information that is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion.</td>
<td>Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion.</td>
<td>Posts information that is factually correct; lacks full development of concept or thought.</td>
<td>Posts factually correct, reflective and substantive contribution; advances discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References &amp; Support</strong></td>
<td>Includes no references or supporting experience.</td>
<td>Uses personal experience, but no references to readings or research.</td>
<td>Incorporates some references from literature and personal experience.</td>
<td>Uses references to literature, readings, or personal experience to support comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity &amp; Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Posts long, unorganized or rude content that may contain multiple errors or may be inappropriate.</td>
<td>Communicates in friendly, courteous and helpful manner with some errors in clarity or mechanics.</td>
<td>Contributes valuable information to discussion with minor clarity or mechanics errors.</td>
<td>Contributes to discussion with clear, concise comments formatted in an easy to read style that is free of grammatical or spelling errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of postings that demonstrate higher levels of thinking:
- “Some common themes I see between your experiences and our textbook are….“ (analysis)
- “These newer trends are significant if we consider the relationship between ….“ (synthesis)
- “The body of literature should be assessed by these standards ….“ (evaluation)
Literature and Film Rubric

*A papers will* have all that freshman comp good writing stuff in spades: well-organized, nice sentence variation, smooth transitions, no mechanical or surface errors, strong (and non-repetitive) introduction/conclusion, and all the rest. They make a tightly focused, well-developed, and well-argued case for a single clearly stated point (Translation: has a great thesis that is tightly focused; thesis is then obsessively and deeply developed/backed-up throughout body of paper). These papers are not content with the obvious but instead endeavor to get to the heart and complexities of a literary work or film, thus making a substantial argument. *A papers are* well-supported and thoughtful with evidence from the text. They smoothly blend in evidence with the author’s own writing; however, the emphasis is always on the writer’s ideas and voice. They consistently demonstrate a deep and thoughtful familiarity with the work that allows the reader to walk away from a reading feeling that they have been taught by the author.

*B papers will* also be generally well-written with few glitches. They will offer a strong and nicely developed argument with good support for their points. The focus is generally strong. Evidence, with few exceptions, will be handled in such a way as to maximize the impact of the author’s case and writing. *B papers demonstrate a strong grasp of the literary work/film, and nicely work out its subtleties. Particularly at the upper-levels of the B range, what separates B from A papers is a matter of degree. B papers might lack the extreme tight focus and the consistently strong argumentation of the A. The points and overall argument of the B are not nearly as striking as that of the A, and might not display the same consistent thoroughness in discussing its ideas.*

*C papers will* not be as nicely written, for writing glitches intrude to a degree that starts to disrupt the author’s discussion of the literary/cinematic text. *C arguments sometimes have a faintly familiar feel. Frequently, they have some difficulties with focus, development, and organization. Use of evidence is not always smooth and the author’s ideas are sometimes obscured. C papers might trot out quotations without providing any explanation of how they support or connect to the author’s ideas; in a similar fashion, C papers might also be characterized by assertions and allegations that are never backed up by discussion or evidence. These essays might also have trouble keeping the focus on the author’s own voice and ideas. C papers might also have an occasional fumble with demonstrated familiarity with the literary text/film (that is, they might get some big stuff wrong or mischaracterize some basic facts/tendencies).*

*D and F papers will*, to different degrees, be handicapped by glaring writing problems. Arguments will be sketchy at best. Familiarity and comprehension of the film/literary text will be in question. These papers might be very underdeveloped and/or off-topic. Papers that make use of an undocumented source (i.e., plagiarize) will receive an automatic zero.