

Film Studies Program

Film and Video Production Guidelines

In certain courses that explicitly designate on their course outlines, a short film or video may be produced in lieu of a longer research paper. The following are guidelines set forth by the Film Studies Program for the procedure and rules governing this assignment choice by a student. For the purposes of this document, "film" will designate either a film or (digital) video.

1. Written permission for pursuing this assignment must be procured in advance of any work done toward the making of the film. It is the student's responsibility to set an in-person meeting with the professor in which the student can explain her or his vision of the film, how it relates to the course material, and what written and visual texts she or he plans to examine in the course of constructing the film.
2. The film that the student envisions and ultimately produces must directly address the central theories and concepts of the course in a specific and developed manner. In the conversation, the student must make clear to the professor what exactly she or he imagines this relationship to be. It is the professor's responsibility to let the student know at this stage whether the project is overly general or does not meet the basic requirements of the course in any manner.
3. After a successful meeting, and after receiving written permission for beginning the film, the student must construct at least a three-page proposal for the film, an annotated bibliography for the written sources (whether from the course or require additional research, this aspect of the assignment is at the discretion of the professor, and should be designated in the course outline), and a working storyboard. All will be submitted by deadlines established by the professor, and all will be graded by the professor.
4. The student is encouraged to confer with the professor at regular intervals in the course on the making of her or his film, but must do so if the direction of research and content shifts in a new direction. These meetings will alert the student and professor to any potential problems in terms of meeting the basic requirements of the course.
5. If the student's final film differs from that initially set forth to the extent that it no longer satisfies the basic requirements of the course, it will be not be considered passable, even if earlier stages of the process (initial meeting, proposal, etc.) were acceptable and received passing grades (50 and above).
6. Students should submit a 5-page essay that accompanies the film, analyzes the film and makes clear links to the essays employed in the making of the film. The student should use the essay to explore some of the written sources used in making the film and clarify any and all ambiguities about the film's status as material that satisfies the course requirements.

Three-Page Proposal: This option is designed for those students interested in exploring one of the topics of this term of the course in greater detail, and doing so through film. In many ways, the set of assignments for the film or video could be the most challenging and labour-intensive of all assignments you do in your course work. But, similar to the research paper, here you will be able to delve into a particular topic in more detail than you could in shorter essays or assignments. It also will provide valuable experience in theory and practice, inviting you to work through theoretical concepts visually and aurally. If you choose to pursue this option, you first must arrange a meeting with your instructor to discuss your project at least a month before the normal deadline for the research paper or essay. This will give you a sense of whether your approach and film are viable for the course. You should meet regularly with your instructor to consult on the development of both your film and the accompanying essay. Your film could take the form of a documentary, narrative, and/or experimental film. Please state this clearly in your proposal. The parameters for how you define your film's topic are open, but must meet the following criteria:

- The film must directly address the central theories and concepts of the course in a specific and developed manner, and your proposal must explain clearly how you will accomplish this task. Proposals and films that do not meet this basic requirement will not pass.
- As a part of your preparation, your proposal and film must reference three sources from this term's readings and include these sources in an annotated bibliography. You may use more than 3 sources, but this is the minimum requirement.
- The proposal should identify in detail how your film will work through a specific theoretical concept or set of concepts. You should also include as a part of your proposal a working storyboard, or some other outline of the scenes and the likely order in which they will be filmed. Your annotated bibliography included with your proposal must not only describe your working list of sources, but why you envision them as useful for your film. Please discuss the specific requirements for the annotated bibliography with the professor.
- Along with your film, you must construct and turn in an explanatory essay that demonstrates a clear understanding of the concepts you have sought to represent through your film. The explanatory essay, therefore, should be an analytical one, and include a clear thesis and introductory paragraph, a substantial and focused analytical discussion of the texts you examine, a conclusion that synthesizes your argument, and a Works Cited page written according to the guidelines established by The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.
- The proposal and bibliography must be a minimum of three full pages, and the explanatory essay 5 full pages. Both should be typed in 12-point font (Times or Times New Roman), with standard formatting (no unusually large margins, etc.)

Additional Suggestions:

1. The student should contact Technical Services as soon as permission is procured to reserve any necessary equipment. Time and space are limited. Time management is one of the keys to producing a successful film and is vital to the success of the project, as is clear communication with your professor.
2. Consider submitting your film to the Western Undergraduate Film Society Film Festival in the Spring. Screening your film before a larger audience gives you the opportunity to receive valuable additional feedback on your project.