

***Side One*** *– Critically/Close Read for Tuesday, 12/1*

This component is based on part 2 of the course (film theory and history), but also draws to some extent on part 1 (textual analysis). The aim of the independent study is to encourage students to engage in some depth with a cinematic tradition that is unfamiliar to their own culture.

Students must produce a script for a complete short documentary production exploring an aspect of film theory or film history, based on the study of films from more than one country. The documentary should be targeted at an audience of film students in the 14 to 18 years age range. Among the topics students may choose to investigate are:

• genre • theme • direction • use of sound • mise en scene • editing • lighting • cinematography

The topic should be discussed primarily in cinematic terms.

The prime voice of the documentary must clearly be that of the student, who will also act as the narrator, on- screen host and/or voice-over. Students must ensure that any comments or ideas they attribute to celebrities or others, such as experts, are fully supported by detailed references in the annotated list of sources.

Students at SL must make reference to a minimum of two films in their independent study. The chosen films must originate from more than one country. At SL the study is not necessarily comparative.

The independent study must be presented in the form of a written dossier composed of the following three items.

• Rationale

• Script

• Annotated list of sources

The rationale must offer a brief, reasoned explanation of the concerns of the topic in no more than 100 words.

The script must clearly indicate the relationship between the audio and visual elements of the documentary, employing an established documentary format such as “side -by-side” columns for video and audio components. All descriptions of video and audio elements must be both detailed and specific. Scripts must be 8–10 pages long at SL, using an accepted size of paper (for example, A4 or US letter) and must use 12-point Courier font (not in block capitals) and single spacing. It is important that the student treats a topic of film history or film theory in cinematic rather than literary terms.

The annotated list of sources should refer to all materials used in researching the topic and all materials used in the documentary itself, including films from which extracts will be shown and quotations from experts or academics. Annotations should give the source and/or location of the reference. A comment on the relevance of the source must be included.

Assessment of this component is based solely on the written script and the rationale. Actual films or film sequences are not acceptable.

The materials produced for this component must not be submitted as part of the production portfolio. As part of the learning process, teachers can give advice to students on a first draft of the independent study. Advice on improving the work can be given, but this first draft must not be heavily annotated or edited by the teacher. Constant drafting and redrafting is not allowed, and the next version handed to the teacher after the first draft must be the final one.

May 2015 Subject Reports, Group 6 Film, Independent Study

***Side Two*** *– Critically/Close Read for Tuesday, 12/1*

**The range and suitability of the work submitted**

Candidates submitted a pleasing range of films and topics with more capable candidates showing how earnestly and deeply they had engaged with examining aspects of cinema theory or history required for this component. Many also took the opportunity to pursue personal film passions in some depth.

Some confusion over different film cultures persists. The best advice is that candidates base their judgement on the country where the predominant production company (in the case of co- productions) for the films originate. Candidates are increasingly more comfortable with the two column format and the formal requirements for this component. Candidates should be reminded that no time column is necessary, that references to YouTube or web URLs in the visual column are also unnecessary for an examiner and that portrait, not landscape, is the required page format. Teachers who do not pass on the mandated formal requirements to their candidates are excluding them from scoring in the top two markbands.

The most sophisticated projects, which showed a personal interest and passion of the candidate on a variety of individualized topics, were rooted in a rich understanding of film theory and demonstrated a sophisticated use of the AV format.

**The strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of individual areas**Rationales are often a poorly understood and executed aspect of the independent study. It is essential that candidates get their rationales "right" in context of framing the spine and direction of the argument in the script. It is very rare to find a great script that has a poor rationale. The names of films are on the coversheet and do not need to be repeated in the rationale which is only supposed to be 100 words. Therefore every word should be meaningful in posing and clarifying the argument. A good rationale is one that is anchored in cinema history or theory, is expressed in film language and is clear and achievable. It is essential that teachers spend a lot of time in helping candidates frame rationales that achieve these aims.

The best independent studies were those that explored three to four sub-points in examining and expanding on a topic. An example would be a topic on gender representation of the femme fatale in noir films which then analysed the use of lighting, framing and angles and the cinematic depiction of the "fate" of these characters. When this is done across a number of films, there is more than enough depth and scope for a reasonable independent study. It also provides variation and complexity to the argument which will help the candidate to score well in the "scope and depth" aspects of the markbands.

Candidates should also be highly mindful of establishing links between audio and visual aspects through text analysis. The visuals are not there as a kind of "visual wallpaper", but act as cinematic proof of the argument being developed. This is probably the biggest failure with regards to format. The best candidates provided rich detail in both columns so that it was easy for the reader to "visualise" the documentary.

Weaker candidates tended to fill both columns with extended descriptions of plot or character, lacking foundation in film language, rather than analysing how these scenes unveil the central thesis being developed. A really good example of how the task is meant to flow is Martin Scorsese's *Journey through American Film* or *My Voyage to Italy*. He speaks in an engaging accessible manner, but always firmly rooted in film and the camera moves judiciously from talking head in a studio to the scene being analysed, highlighting relevant details at precisely the right moment.

Candidates should be reminded that the annotated bibliography, while part of the formal requirements, is also key to developing the research base for the argument. Even poor sources can be criticised here in light of what a candidate has discovered. Too many candidates either ignore this completely, use it as a kind of tick box shopping list or write the most cursory of comments like "read this to understand more about the French New Wave". Candidates have a lot of sources at their disposal to complete this task and a more judicious and thorough use of them will have a strong effect on improving the quality of analysis.

It was a delight for an examiner to read a paper where a candidate “ran” with the topic. What is meant here is that candidates went way beyond minimum requirements in referencing films. Yes, four (in the case of HL) and two (for SL) films were examined in depth, but many candidates made wide ranging references to the cinematic history in various cultures of how their specific question had been treated. Such an approach really enriched the scope and depth in the treatment of the argument and revealed a depth of passion for film.