**Paper 2 Assignment Sheet: *Contagion***

ENGL 1302-49, Spring 2012

In this unit we move away from historical catastrophe to explore what fictional representations of disaster say about 21st century American culture. Our primary text for this unit will be the Hollywood thriller *Contagion,* released in 2011. Ostensibly a fictional account, the film raises important questions about how disaster touches deep-seated human emotions, triggers oft-repressed behavior, and illustrates humankind’s interconnectedness, for better or for worse.

**The Assignment**

The Barney and Scheck article we discussed in class offers a recap, or *synthesis,* of the critical and popular conversations surrounding plague and other deadly epidemics. Your task for this essay is to reflect on *Contagion* in a way that fits into this conversation. In order to do this, you will need to watch the movie critically—and, ideally, more than once—in order to offer a logical, thoughtful, and accurate summary and evaluation of the film. While your analysis will need to offer some information about what the film *says,* your primary task will be toexamine what it *does,* that is, how its genre (as a film and as fiction) works to represent disaster differently than would a documentary about an actual disaster.

**Paper Requirements**

* The paper should propose and support an argumentative thesis about how *Contagion* fits into the plague discourse Barney and Scheck describe.
* The paper should accurately describe and reference scenes from the film to support the thesis.
* In addition to *Contagion* itself and the Barney and Scheck article, the paper should reference one additional source to support the thesis. This may be a source from a classmate’s presentation bibliography or a scholarly source from Fondren’s databases. If you have any questions about whether a source is appropriate or not, please ask the instructor. For this paper, you may not reference other film reviews or your notes from classmates’ presentations—you should go directly to the secondary sources themselves. All sources must be properly documented using MLA format.
* The paper should be **750-1,000** words long.

**Evaluative Criteria**

* A successful paper will persuasively argue a clear and sophisticated thesis about *Contagion*. It will support that thesis with a series of strong points that progress logically and offer thoughtful, detailed summary and evaluation.
* In addition to the assigned film and article, a successful paper will utilize one additional, appropriate source to support its argument. It will integrate all sources effectively and document them correctly.
* A successful paper will demonstrate the stylistic conventions of academic writing: an engaging introduction, strong topic sentences, concise word choice, varied syntax, and a conclusion that does more than summarize the paper’s contents.
* A successful paper will demonstrate thoughtful revision.
* A successful paper will meet the length and format requirements.