**ENG 154: Interpretation of Film**

Paper 1 – Cinematic Element Interpretive Argument & Analysis (15%)

**Format:** 12pt Times New Roman, double-spaced font. ***Microsoft Word Docx file.[[1]](#footnote-1)***

**Due:** Friday, 2/16 by 5pm, via TurnItIn. Minimum: 800 words. Maximum: 1200 words.

**Assignment:** Your first paper requires you to form an interpretive argument regarding the intellectual meaning of *one* of the film’s we have watched so far in the course (list below). Your argument and analysis must focus on *one* of the first two cinematic elements (either mise-en-scène or cinematography). The goal is to identify how your chosen cinematic element contributes to the overall meaning of the filmic text. You should focus on at *least* one scene in particular, though you may choose to do more. You do not need to cover every aspect of your chosen element, but should instead seek a balance between breadth and depth. Your argument should be about the film’s intellectual meaning, *not* your understanding of its plot or evaluative opinion of the film. You might consider focusing on a specific theme (gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc) and how the film engages with it. Does it subvert our expectations? Should we critique its failure to challenge certain norms? Does it reveal a new way of looking at a particular issue or aspect of inequality? This paper must be a minimum of 800 words, but should not go over the 1200 word maximum. You may choose to analyze mise-en-scène or cinematography in the following films:

*A Trip to the Moon* (George Méliès, France, 1902, 16 minutes)

*Slash/Back* (Nyla Innuksuk, Canada, 2022, 86 minutes)

*Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958, 128 minutes)

*The Lonedale Operator* (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1911, 17 minutes)

*Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960, 90 minutes)

Since this is a close analysis–rather than research–assignment, you are not required to use any additional sources. Further, you do not have to cite the textbook, since you are likely just using terms to help you with your analysis. If you do feel you take either an intellectual idea from the textbook (unlikely) or anything from an outside source, you must cite it in MLA format. You should include both a parenthetical citation and an MLA works cited page with the full citation. For a great guide on MLA formatting, see: <https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html>

**Advice:** Firstly, you will likely need to view your chosen film at least once again in order to write this paper. Secondly, remember that an interpretive paper should develop an *argument* (if you cannot imagine the opposition, the paper is not argumentative enough) about the film’s meaning. When choosing which film to write about, try to consider which you are most interested in intellectually. Picking the film you like the most or least can be a trap that makes your paper too evaluative rather than critical analysis! When forming your ideas and rewatching the film, do not worry if you find the film creates multiple or even paradoxical/contradictory meanings. Rather than shy away from such complexity, this is your opportunity to embrace it and produce a nuanced and compelling argument.

**Logistics:** You will turn your paper in on the course Blackboard page via **TurnItIn**. It is due by **Friday, February 16th,** by **5:00pm**. Your paper will be graded digitally and returned to you, via your SU email, by March 1st. When your paper is returned, please read the comments and endnotes in addition to your final grade. As stated in the syllabus, you are expected to be familiar with the university academic integrity policy (see: <https://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>).

Note that TurnItIn will check if your writing was produced with the inappropriate help of A.I. tools. Please do not use ChatGPT or other A.I. resources to write this assignment. If you are struggling with a certain element of the paper, whether forming your argument, organizing the ideas, providing enough detailed evidence, or with spelling or grammar, please reach out to me!

**Late Policy:** Late papers are accepted, but extensions must be verified before the paper’s due date.

\*\*Everyone is entitled to a 72-hour extension (i.e. until the start of our class Monday, 2/19) with no penalty. This is a no questions asked extension…but you *must* let me know if you would like to take it. If you want this extension, you must check with me by the end of our class Monday, 2/12).\*\*

If you have Center for Disability Resources accommodations, you still must confirm this extension with me via email. Documentation for unplanned extensions and/or emergency circumstances may be required.

For every day your paper is late and unexcused, you will be docked a third of a letter grade. For example, an A- paper that is late by **one** day receives a B+, but after **two** days receives a B. After a week, papers are considered egregiously late and will receive failing grades as well as no feedback.

1. I give you feedback via Microsoft Word’s “Track Changes” feature, so please submit a .doc/.docx file. It is of course fine to work on whatever word processor you wish, just please do *not* submit a PDF. Thank you! [↑](#footnote-ref-1)