English 345: Cine/Technology
Presentation Assignment and Guidelines

Assignment

Students will work together in groups of two or three to create a 15- to 20-minute analysis of a selected clip from a course film. The presentation should focus on the formal, thematic, or ideological significance of the clip. While the presentation involves collaborative analysis of a scene, group members do not have to agree in their interpretations, nor do they have to offer "the final word" on the film. In fact, engaging multiple, sometimes conflicting, readings of a scene prevents us from reducing a work to a single meaning or theme. Presenters will use visual aids (PowerPoint, film clip, images, transparencies, handouts) to structure their remarks and underscore key points. Groups should conclude their presentations with two or three questions for class discussion. Because oral presentations and film analysis can prove challenging, groups should meet with me to discuss their ideas before the presentation date.

The presentation assignment has several goals. It requires groups to apply concepts from course readings to a specific film. The process of breaking down the elements of a scene and developing an interpretation of those elements in dialogue with others will allow group members to practice close reading, a skill they will draw upon when composing the midterm, the article critique, and the take-home final. Since students will discuss *Man with a Movie Camera*, *Metropolis*, and *Modern Times* in their midterms, the presentation represents an opportunity to receive feedback on ideas-in-progress. In addition, presenters will learn as they teach others and contribute multiple critical perspectives to class discussion.

Guidelines

- **Structure the presentation around an argument**. Begin your analysis with a claim about why the scene functions as it does--the rest of the presentation should offer support for your argument.

- **All members of the group must take an equal role in the presentation**. Each group member must be actively involved in discussing the scene and developing an interpretation. Each group member should speak for roughly the same amount of time during the presentation.

- **Coordinate the presentation with your partners**. Each group member should know what the others will cover and when they will cover it.

- **Remember your audience**. What questions, discussions, and texts will be fresh in their minds? What issues will interest them? What terms are they likely to understand immediately? Which will you have to explain in more depth?

- **Make the presentation easy to follow**. Your presentation does not have to follow the chronology of the scene. Rather, your argument should determine the order of your points. Effective presentations will sequence information in a meaningful manner, with each point building upon the previous one and setting up the next. Regardless of how you structure your discussion of the scene, you should include basic information: the scene you will discuss, your argument concerning the scene, the points you will address, and who will cover each point. Throughout the presentation, use transitional phrases to signal shifts between ideas.

- **Cite references clearly**. If you summarize, paraphrase, or quote from reading packet authors, use signal phrases such as "Jordanova persuasively argues" or "Phillips defines intercutting as."   Such phrases allow the audience to differentiate your ideas

from those of another critic. When you quote directly from a course author, give a page number so that audience members may review the source later.

- **Speak slowly and loudly**. Your audience only has one chance to hear your presentation.

- **Speak from notes**. Although you may worry that nervousness will erase your memory, do not write out everything you plan to say on paper or on your PowerPoint slides. Speakers who do so tend to look only at their papers or visual aids, not their audience.

- **Avoid lacing your speech with "um," "uh," "like," and "you know."** Also refrain from performing the shifty-footed, hand-wringing dance of the terrified orator.

- **Incorporate visual aids effectively**. Whether you use a clip, PowerPoint, transparencies, or a handout, your visual aids should be readable and have a clear connection to the presentation. If you use a presentation outline, be sure that the outline matches your points. If you distribute a handout with key points and quotations, let the audience know when to look at the handout. Remember that visual aids help the audience to follow your points; they do not represent a transcript of your remarks. You want the audience to listen to you rather than tune you out as they read a text-heavy visual aid.

- **Do your homework and have a backup if you plan to use technology**. Our classroom comes equipped with a projector, VCR, DVD player, and computer, but you must learn how the equipment works before you use it. If you use PowerPoint or an electronic handout, save files in at least two formats (floppy, uploaded to Dante, email attachment, etc.) and bring a transparency or prepare to write on the board if the equipment fails. Most of the time, you won't need to use your backup plan, but having one will decrease your stress.

- **Conclude effectively**. Before turning to questions, end the presentation with a statement that lets the audience know how the scene advances our thinking about the film. Do not say, "that's all" or "we're done." These statements diminish everything you have said.

- **Ask and answer questions**. Formulate discussion questions that allow the class to expand upon points introduced in the presentation. Before posing your own questions, remember to take questions from the audience. To prepare for Q & A, write a list of questions your audience will likely ask. Better yet, practice in front of friends and have them question you.

- **Have fun**. While you need to advance an interpretation of the scene, the format of the presentation is up to you. You may debate alternative readings of the scene, poll audience members during the presentation, perform moments from the scene to illustrate points, or incorporate other interactive elements into the presentation.