English 1A Pathways Fall 2015  **Film Club Project**

**Overview:** Although we are all used to seeing movies primarily as entertainment, actually *studying* films is one way to study life, and discussing and writing about films is a good way to understand how people communicate ideas and values, too.

So, working with two or three of your classmates, you will watch and then study a film that will expand your understanding of movies as a form of public discourse as well as personal expression. You will also learn something about global citizenship, as most of these films are not from Hollywood. Some of the films also explore creativity and sustainability, the other two pathways themes.

**The Assignments**

1) **Topic proposal**: Study the list of options, choose 1-3 films you’d like to read, write them down, and come to class prepared to negotiate for your choice. If you want to pitch a film not on the list, you need to tell me about it *before* the class period when we do this together. Note: if you are absent that day, you probably will NOT get a film you want. Be there! **DUE**

2) **Progress Report**: This report will be short, just a few paragraphs to tell me how the project is going so far. I will ask focused questions for each different film. You can also report any problems or questions that have come up. A separate assignment sheet will offer details. **DUE**

3) **Conferences** The groups will meet with me (one group at a time) in my office or in class to discuss in-class presentations. You’ll bring a written outline of your in-class presentation, and be prepared to discuss visual aids and any multi-modal components such as video clips. Conference sign-ups will be the previous week. **DUE**

5) **Multi-modal Presentations** These will be fairly short presentations, approximately 5 minutes for each student in the group. “Multi-modal” means it should include some visual (probably audio/visual) component. Collectively the group will discuss major themes in your film, tell us something about the filmmaker, and discuss how the theme argument is presented (if applicable). You will also summarize the film’s critical reception and cultural impact. Finally, you will tell us what you thought about the film personally. A separate assignment sheet will offer details. **DUE**:

6) **Written part of the oral presentations** Basically this will be a written version of the group’s presentation, though each portion will be written by a different student and graded individually. (500 words from each student) **DUE**

**Details on Student Presentations**

* Duration: You will have about 10-15 minutes, depending partly on how many people are in the group and partly on the film clips you might show or passages you might read.
* Planning: Groups will meet with each other frequently and with the professor at least once before making their presentation.
* Written portion: You will turn in a group topic proposal before the presentation identifying who will cover which topics. Then students will submit short individual written reports of their portion of the presentation (500 words each person) on the day presentations begin. Be sure to cite your sources!
* Feedback: The professor and your peers will respond to and evaluate your presentation.

**Topics for the Presentations** You will be working in teams, but each team member will have a topic to research and write about individually. Generally, the topics that should be covered include the following (though some will apply only to some of the films).

1. Provide background about the creative team responsible for the film: generally the screenwriter and the director: Summarize key biographical details (from reputable sources, please!). Discuss the impetus and development of the film project. If it is adapted from a book and/or based on a true story, discuss the adaptation. This information can come from articles, reviews, and interviews (in print, on You Tube, etc.). Select interesting quotes and other information to share. Feel free to include excerpts from video clips of interviews or public presentations. Don’t let these clips take over your presentation, though.

2. Critical Reception/ Viewer Response: Report on what the critics (professional film reviewers) said about the film, looking for a range of opinion if possible. Did it win awards? Start a controversy? Launch or ruin a career? What are its strongest elements (cinematography, dialogue, story, acting)? You can also report on the response from regular viewers, including yourselves: share what audiences appreciated about the film, disliked, or argued about. Keep the section about your own responses brief, though, to leave enough room for your research.

3. Discuss how a key theme or conflict develops in the work and explain why it matters, both to the writer and to us now. Beyond plot, what is the film *about?* [Note: actual discussion of plot must be very brief!] Discuss how the characters’ experiences tell us something significant about the human experience in general. How does the story balance what is universal to humankind and what is particular to this society and this time? For documentaries, this is where you would explore the film as an argument.

4. Other topics: If there is a fourth group member, consider what else could be said about this film. If it was developed from a book, play, or some other source, you could discuss adaptation. Is there a follow-up story, particularly if this is a documentary or a work that focusses on an ongoing problem? Can you tell us about a related film that adds to our understanding of this film, maybe by comparison or contrast. For example, the Chinese film *Not One Less* would be an interesting counterpoint to Kenyan film *The First Grader*¸ as both show how difficult it can be to get even a basic education in an impoverished rural area. )

**Films You Can Use:** See the class website for the list of films you can use for this. Note: I will consider other films, but you have to give me a written rationale at least 3 days before we will choose films in class.