

FM3 Small-Scale Research Project: Guidance
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The requirements (see pages 17 - 18 of the *AS/A Film Studies Specification, Examinations from 2009*)

The small-scale research project, worth 40% of FM3, comprises:

- (i) an annotated catalogue (approximately 10 to 15 items) – 15 marks
- (ii) a presentation script (1000 – 1500 words) – 25 marks

Please note:

- (a) there is **no longer** any requirement for a **separate evaluation**.
- (b) **No commentary** accompanies the catalogue (as was the case up to and including the 2006 examination series). The annotations replace the need for a commentary.
- (c) Candidates may **not** choose as a **focus film** any films they have specialised in elsewhere in the specification (i.e., either at AS or A2).
- (d) There is a **misprint** on page 37 of Specification, relating to the total marks for FM3: Level 1 mark range is '0-39' and not '0-31'.

What needs to be produced for the Small-Scale Research Project?

The Small-Scale Research Project should either be stimulated by a single film (such as *Die Hard: With A Vengeance* as an example of an industrialised franchise) or stem from a topic-based concept (such as 'Cinéma Déraciné – French Film of the 90s'). Whichever approach is taken, paramount should be student involvement, excitement, passion and enthusiasm.

Small-Scale Research Project

This is designed to allow students to develop research skills within a contained and manageable structure (that does not encourage unwieldy or unfocused approaches) through reference to one of the following contexts:

Star/performer – focusing on an individual or group of individuals. It is envisaged that this will allow 'star-study' but will also engage with historical developments, cultural features, fandom as well as issues of performance.

Genre – this may focus on a single genre or a range of genres and is designed to develop investigations that consider film as a structured product that is designed to relate to other similar films. Approaches here may include genre-study (codes, conventions, stars, etc.), genre as a tool of industry, evolution in genres, genre as national cinema and genre as a cultural product.

Technology – focusing on the impact or development of a particular technology. This will include direct approaches such as the development of CGI, the coming of "the talkies", or the attempts at realising the world through colour as well as indirect approaches such as tracing Early Cinema's use of the Close Up, following the impact of bullet-time editing or the adoption by Hollywood of wire-flying techniques.

Social, Historical and Political Contexts – focuses either on the social and political contexts of production (such as McCarthy era films) or on the commentary offered by films on particular social and political contexts (such as the Iraq war). Topics dealing with representation issues most obviously suggest a social, historical and/or political context.

Auteur – focusing on the auteur (in the broadest sense) either individual, collaborative, or any less conventional approaches. It is important to realise that 'auteur' is the context for an area of investigation and not an area of investigation in itself. Thus, being an auteur affects the way 'auteurs' perform their creative role and it is an aspect of this creative role that may become the area for investigation (such as Hitchcock's continual use of the blonde). Themes and representations are easily addressed by the context.

Institutional – this may focus on a national cinema context (particularly one that is directly controlled or sponsored), a Studio context or a body of work produced 'institutionally' such as the films of the Empire Marketing Board.

The Area of Investigation

The range of **areas of investigation** is deliberately as wide as possible to encourage candidate ownership and enable candidates to feel their interests and passions can lead to a project that will be lively, engaged, manageable and successful. It is recommended that the area of investigation is expressed in terms of a statement, as opposed to a question, to enable candidates to research in an open way. From the candidate's point of view, projects can be anchored by starting with detailed exploration of relevant extracts from the 'Focus film' and 'related films'. Examples of such *areas of investigation* include:

star/performer

- Area of Investigation: the characteristics of Rhys Ifan's performance across different directors and production contexts
- Focus film: *Enduring Love* (Film Four/Film Council/Pathé/Free Range/Inside Track/Ridgeway 2004, *Dir.* Roger Michell)
- Related films: *Twin Town* (Polygram/Figment/Agenda/Animimage, UK 1997, *Dir.* Kevin Allen), *Notting Hill* (Polygram/Working Title, US/UK 1999, *Dir.* Roger Michell), *The Shipping News* (Buena Vista/Miramax, US 2001, *Dir.* Lasse Hallström).
- Area of Investigation: meaning(s) brought to a film by Juliet Binoche
- Focus film: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Saul Zaenetz, US 1987, *Dir.* Philip Kaufman)
- Related films: *Les Amants du Pont Neuf* (Artificial Eye/Christian Fechner, Fr 1991, *Dir.* Leos Carax), *The English Patient* (Buena Vista/Tiger Moth/ Miramax, US 1996, *Dir.* Anthony Minghella), *Chocolat* (Brown/Golden/Holleran, US 2000, *Dir.* Lasse Hallström).

genre

- Area of Investigation: the shaping of the gangster genre by the films of Martin Scorsese.
- Focus film: *Mean Streets* (Taplin-Perry-Scorsese, US 1973, *Dir.* Martin Scorsese)
- Related films: *Goodfellas* (Warner, US 1990, *Dir.* Martin Scorsese), *Casino* (Universal/Sylalis/Legende/De Fina/Cappa, US 1995, *Dir.* Martin Scorsese).
- Area of Investigation: the perceived Communist threat and the rise of the American Science Fiction film
- Focus film: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (TCF, US 1951, *Dir.* Robert Wise)
- Related films: *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (Wade Williams Productions, US 1958, *Dir.* Ed Wood), *On the Beach* (UA/Stanley Kramer, US 1959, *Dir.* Stanley Kramer).

technology

- Area of Investigation: development of CGI in animation and its impact on audiences
- Focus film: *Toy Story* (Buena Vista/Walt Disney/Pixar, US 1995, *Dir.* Jerry Hopper)
- Related films: *Toy Story 2* (Buena Vista/Walt Disney/Pixar, US 1999, *Dir.* John Lasseter/Pete Docter/Ash Brannon), *Shrek* (DreamWorks/PDI, US 2001, *Dir.* Andrew Adamson/Vicky Jenson).
- Area of Investigation: the development of colour film techniques
- Focus film: *Gone With the Wind* (MGM/Selznick International, US 1939, *Dir.* Victor Fleming)
- Related films: *The Black Pirate* (Technicolor, US 1926, *Dir.* Albert Parker), *Flowers and Trees* (Walt Disney, US 1932, *Dir.* Burt Gillet), *The Sheltering Sky* (Palace/Sahara/TAO/RPC/Aldrich Group, UK/It 1990, *Dir.* Bernardo Bertolucci).

Social, Historical and Political Contexts

- Area of Investigation: German film's reflection of Germany before and after reunification
- Focus film: *Kings of the Road (Im Laufe der Zeit)* (Wim Wenders Prod, W.Ger, 1975, Dir. Wim Wenders)
- Related films: *Run Lola Run (Lola Rennt)* (Columbia TriStar/Bavaria/German Independents/X Filme, Ger 1998, Dir. Tom Tykwer), *Downfall* (Momentum/Constantin/Bernd Eichinger, Ger/Au/It 2004, Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel)
- Area of Investigation: films dealing with the Vietnam war as a symptom of modern America
- Focus film: *Platoon* (Hemdale/Arnold Kopelson, US 1986, Dir. Oliver Stone)
- Related films: *Forrest Gump* (Panavision, US 1994, Dir. Robert Zemeckis), *Hamburger Hill* (Paramount/RKO, US 1987, Dir. John Irvin), *The Deer Hunter* (Universal/EMI, US 1978, Dir. Michael Cimino)

institution

- Area of Investigation: the Ealing Studio's 'signature'
- Focus film: *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Ealing, UK 1949, Dir. Robert Hamer)
- Related films: *The Man in the White Suit* (Ealing, UK 1951, Dir. Alexander Mackendrick), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (Ealing, UK 1951, Dir. Charles Crichton).
- Area of Investigation: Goldcrest's rise and fall.
- Focus film: *Gandhi* (Columbia/Goldcrest/IB/IFI/NFDI, UK 1982, Dir. Richard Attenborough)
- Related films: *Room With a View* (Merchant Ivory/Goldcrest, UK 1985, Dir. James Ivory), *The Killing Fields* (Goldcrest/Enigma, UK 1984, Dir. Roland Joffé), *Revolution* (Warner/Goldcrest/Viking, UK 1985, Dir. Hugh Hudson).

the auteur*

- Area of Investigation: Luc Besson's move from French film to Americanised movies and the impact on his cinematic style
- Focus film: *Leon* (Buena Vista/Gaumont/Dauphin, Fr 1994, Dir. Luc Besson)
- Related films: *Subway* (Gaumont/Films du Loup/TSF/TFI, Fr 1985, Dir. Luc Besson), *Nikita* (Palace/Gaumont/Cecchi/Tiger, Fr/It 1990, Dir. Luc Besson), *The Fifth Element* (Columbia/Gaumont, Fr 1997, Dir. Luc Besson).
- Area of Investigation: Jerry Bruckheimer's imprint as master of the high concept film.
- Focus film: *Con Air* (Buena Vista/Touchstone, US 1997, Dir. Simon West)
- Related films: *Armageddon* (Buena Vista/Touchstone/Valhalla, US 1998, Dir. Michael Bay), *Gone in Sixty Seconds* (Buena Vista/Touchstone, US 2000, Dir. Dominic Sena), *Pearl Harbour* (Buena Vista/Touchstone, US 2001, Dir. Michael Bay).

*Projects based on the auteur context

In order to enable candidates to explore what is distinctive about auteurs – whether directors, stars, performers or studios – it is recommended that the area of investigation is based on one or two signature features of the auteur's work, or (as in the examples above) significant aspects of the auteur. This allows candidates to explore how those features are distinctive and make meaning primarily in relation to the focus film but with reference to two other films as well. This approach consequently avoids projects which deal with a possibly self-evident question of whether an individual or studio qualifies as an auteur. **Note: the small-scale research project is no longer based on a 'problematic'.**

Research and Annotated Catalogue (10 to 15 items)

With the area of investigation considered, decided on and approved, the next stage is to begin the **research**. Both primary and secondary research should be undertaken. This will then lead to a body of research materials being put together, from which items will be selected to produce an Annotated Catalogue. Each catalogue item should be appropriately referenced and be accompanied by a brief note (around 5 lines), which explains how the particular item is relevant to the area of investigation and assesses the importance of the item to the overall research. A short, closing paragraph will identify significant items not selected for inclusion in the catalogue, offering reasons why.

An **annotated catalogue** for a project that addresses genre through an area of investigation considering the emergence of a 'gothic' genre in American film may well look something like this:

Annotated Catalogue

FILMS

- Item 1: *Edward Scissorhands* (Fox, US 1990, *Dir.* Tim Burton). Very useful as it has all the markers of the new gothic genre on display, and also has a clear relationship with Burton's early films and his later ones.
- Item 2: *The Crow* (Entertainment/Most/Pressman, US 1994, *Dir.* Alex Proyas). The genre was still in cult territory here, and this shows in the comic book feel. Development of genre markers and influence of Burton clear. Useful, but could have easily been one of several other films in this place.
- Item 3: *The Craft* (Columbia, US 1996, *Dir.* Andrew Fleming). This is the film that was the turning point for the genre, where it suddenly not only got mainstream acceptance but also spawned similar films. Very much a teen movie, this shows the changing focus towards a new audience. Invaluable.

BOOKS

- Item 4: Baiss, B. *The Crow: The Story Behind the Film* (Titan 2004). This was a very good piece of research as it not only told the story of making the film it also gave a broad overview of what makes a gothic film. This is possibly the most useful piece in the catalogue.
- Item 5: Smith, J & Matthews, C. *Tim Burton* (Virgin 2002). This gives a clear sense of what Burton's work is all about, and how he practically defined the new American gothic genre. Detailed information on all of his films, and on the thoughts underneath them, this led me to some of the other material in the catalogue and some deselected from it.

MAGAZINES

- Item 6: Tim Burton: Cinema's Prince of Darkness, supplement in *SFX Magazine*, March 2005
Detailed on Burton with a clear emphasis on the gothic elements. Could not miss being included.
- Item 7: Travers, P. Auteur in Angora in *Rolling Stone Magazine* July 1995 An interesting article that looks at Burton as an auteur – some good references to his film and some discussion of his "burtonesque" genre.

INTERNET

- Item 8: <http://www.thetimburtoncollective.com> The Tim Burton Collective is a fan-based site that offers a considerable range of articles, biographical information, and links for Tim Burton. This was the best of the Tim Burton related sites as it seemed authoritative and was also recommended by many other sources.
- Item 9: http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/04/31/lost_in_translation.html Neon Gothic: Lost in Translation by Wendy Halsem - this is a great article by a University Lecturer that served to widen my view of the gothic. Full of film references, it took my research in several unexpected directions (some not so fruitful).
- Item 10: <http://minadream.com/timburton/EdwardScissorHands.htm> this is a quite sophisticated site, but I sense it is still a fan site. Full of information about Burton and the gothic, this was particularly useful for looking at *Edward Scissorhands*.
- Item 11: <http://www.darklinks.com/dmovies.html> Dark Side of the Net – this was a little bit strange (particularly the movie forum) but it did clue me in to a whole range of American gothic films that I hadn't even considered before. Not as relevant to the focus films as the other sites, but good for a general overview.

CONFERENCE

- Item 12: *Deviance & Defiance* The 7th Biannual Conference of the International Gothic Association – Panel 1.3 Gothic Cinema (Thurs 11th August 2005). As I was on holiday in Canada this summer I stumbled across this Univ Montreal event. This was perfect research (although there were parts where I simply didn't understand the panellists!), particularly when I got to talk to John Hogland from Univ of Kalmar afterwards about American gothic films.

MATERIAL NOT SELECTED

Vampress.net (<http://www.vampress.net/forum>) had some useful fan comment on the three films, but it never really got beyond the superficial. *The Crow's Loft* (<http://www.thecrowsloft.com>) was quite detailed and authoritative on the film, but never got into the gothic or genre that much. There were a few film reviews from *Empire*, *Total Film* and *Sight and Sound* that were useful background reading but had no direct relationship with the investigation, and similarly Mark Salisbury's *Burton on Burton* (Faber 1995) was good to see Burton's own words, but there was so much that was outside the project that it really didn't fit.

The presentation script (1000-1500 words)

With the annotated catalogue complete, the next step is to prepare to present your findings in the form of a **presentation script** which may:

- be in note form (though comprehensibly so)
- be bulleted or numbered in an appropriate fashion
- be short pieces of prose with reference to presentation material connecting them (and listing the catalogue items)
- use appropriate headings and sub-headings to divide it up.

It should show where a piece of supporting material from the Catalogue will be used (or where material derived from the Catalogue but designed specifically for the Presentation is employed) and should ensure that Catalogue Items used in the Presentation Script are clearly referenced (by Catalogue number is easiest but full referencing in footnotes/endnotes is also fine).

It is important to note that an essay format is not suitable for this task.

A presentation script may look something like the following – the **opening** of a presentation script on the performance of Michael Caine:

Presentation Script	
Citizen Caine – the performance of Michael Caine	
<u>RUN AUDIO:</u>	Theme music from <i>The Italian Job</i> (Item 3) – 30 seconds then fade out.
<u>PROJECTOR:</u>	BCU Image of Michael Caine's face from <i>Alfie</i> (Item 9) – <u>fade</u> for Video
<u>PRESENTER:</u>	Michael Caine exploded onto 1960's British cinema with his first starring role in <i>Zulu</i> (Item 2) in 1964, and immediately marked himself out as a charismatic and dynamic performer.
<u>VIDEO CLIP:</u>	Battle scene from <i>Zulu</i> (Item 2) – 1'14"
<u>PRESENTER:</u>	My research project looks at the development of Michael Caine's performance across a number of films focusing on the 1960s and 1970s and making clear reference to his more recent work. Two films central to this examination that I will make reference to throughout this presentation are <i>The Quiet American</i> (Item 4) and <i>The Ipcress File</i> (Item 1)
<u>PROJECTOR:</u>	Split Screen freeze frame of Caine in <i>The Ipcress File</i> (Item 1) as young man and freeze frame of Caine in <i>The Quiet American</i> (Item 4) as an older man.
<u>PRESENTER:</u>	In this presentation I will cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caine's acting style• Caine's approach to acting• The meanings produced by Caine's work• Critical opinion of Caine's acting• Caine's British and American work• Caine's own musings on his films
<u>FLIP CHART:</u>	Display bullet points for duration of presentation.

PROJECTOR: Poster of Caine in *The Ipcress File* (Item 12)

PRESENTER: I'd like at this point to quote Caine himself speaking on the Southbank Show (Item 6):

"People are always asking me about....

What you should be able to see from this example is a clear sense of the presentation script as being for presentation, with regular breaks in the spoken delivery to introduce stimulus material from the Catalogue. This extract is approximately 250 words long and covers approximately 2 minutes 45 seconds of time. If I use all of my allotted 1500 words then I can expect my presentation to last somewhere in the region of 12-18 minutes (assuming I show five or six clips of between 60-90 seconds in duration).

Acknowledgement

Much of this material has been extracted and adapted from Casey, Gaffney & White, *A2 Film Studies: the Essential Introduction*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2009). Reproduced with kind permission of Taylor & Francis Books.