Your assignment is to write a 2,500-3,000 word research paper on one of the suggested topics listed below or another topic of your choosing related to silent cinema. Your paper should combine close cinematic analysis, your own original argument, and outside research relevant to your topic. Your research must draw from at least 5 sources not contained in the course readings. You must write on at least one film not screened in class, but no more than two films total.

**TOPIC QUESTION** and **BIBLIOGRAPHY** due in class **Wednesday, May 13**

Your first task will be to propose a **topic question**. For instance, “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and German Expressionism” is a much less effective topic than, “How did the German Expressionist movement in theater and visual art affect the set design and themes of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari?” The answer to that question will provide the thesis statement for your essay.

Your **bibliography** must include **at least 5 sources**, not including material you plan to use from the class readings. **Proper bibliography format must be used!** The bibliography might include books, articles, and reputable websites, as well as DVD interviews and commentary tracks. Try to find sources that cover a range of different perspectives on your topic, such as the personnel involved in the film, the social issues that your film engages, its production history, and/or its original reception and publicity.

**Research Tips:**

- Scholarly articles are often the best sources of information for film/media studies research.
- Good bibliographies combine “primary” and “secondary” sources – that is, sources original to the period when the film was originally released (reviews, interviews, etc.) and more scholarly sources written later.
- If you find a useful article or book, look through the bibliography or footnotes for other possible sources.
- Digital sources are fine; but limit yourself to scholarly materials and/or digital versions of original documents. No Wikipedia or allmovie, please!
- Check the books on reserve for the class, as well as the websites listed on the Links page.

**FINAL PAPER** due in class **Wednesday, June 3**

The essay should include close analysis of your chosen film’s cinematic, narrative and thematic strategies, while also incorporating historical research that places your analysis in a wider context. Your final paper should be a well-written, thoroughly researched and logically structured piece that demonstrates your knowledge of a particular topic and your ability to integrate this information into a close reading of an individual film.

**General guidelines:**

- Write, re-write and re-write again. Papers always improve with continued effort.
- Use proper citation format, including a Works Cited page.
- **Underline** or **italicize** all film titles and book titles; put only article titles in “quotation marks.”
- Read your paper aloud to check for awkward passages and grammatical errors.
- Proofread your paper for typos, spelling errors and grammatical errors before handing it in.
- Number all pages.
Suggested Topic Areas:

FILM GENRES
How do early films help define classic film genres?

Science Fiction: Méliès
Horror: Nosferatu, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Hunchback of Notre Dame, Phantom of the Opera
Gangster Films: Musketeers of Pig Alley, Underworld
Westerns: Battle at Elderbush Gulch, The Vanishing American, The Last of the Mochicans
Comedy: chase films, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd
Action/Adventure Films: The Mark of Zorro, The Thief of Bagdad, The Perils of Pauline
Animation: Windsor McCay, Emile Cohl, early Disney
Biblical Epics: From the Manger to the Cross, Ben-Hur, The Ten Commandments

FILM AND SOCIETY
How do early films intervene in and help frame social issues?

Race, Racism and Race Relations
African Americans: Birth of a Race, Scar of Shame, Within Our Gates
Native Americans: The Vanishing American, The Silent Enemy
Mexico and Mexicans: Ramona, Something New
orientalism: The Sheik, Salome, The Thief of Baghdad

Gender and Sexuality:
vamps: A Fool There Was, Pandora’s Box
motherhood: The Mother and the Law, Mothering Heart, Way Down East, The Goddess
flappers: Are Parents People?, Our Dancing Mothers
marriage/romance: Foolish Wives, Too Wise Wives, Male and Female
queer sexuality: Michael, Different from Others, A Florida Enchantment

Immigration:
The Italian, The Immigrant

Urban Culture:
The Crowd, Joyless Streets, Diary of a Lost Girl, Berlin: Symphony of a City, The Goddess

FILM MOVEMENTS
How was early film integrated with other artistic movements?

Dada and Surrealism: Anemic Cinema, Emak Bakia, Seashell and the Clergyman
German Expressionism: Nosferatu, The Last Laugh, Sunrise, Pandora’s Box
Soviet Montage: Strike, October, Mother

Early Film Theory
Hugo Munsterberg, Vachel Lindsay, H.D., Dorothy Richardson

FILM TECHNOLOGY
How did technological developments influence the aesthetic and/or industrial development of cinema?

Pre-Cinema
 technological developments that lead to cinema: photography, kinetoscope, projection
 social climate in which film first appeared: mass culture, locomotive travel, urban

The Sound of Silents
 early behind-the-screen sound effects
 live musical accompaniment, circulation of cue sheets
 early synchronous sound experiments: the Kinetophone
More Suggested Topic Areas:

**FILMMAKERS, etc.**

How does the career and work of a particular individual illuminate the history of silent film?

**Major directors of the Silent Era**
Georges Méliès, Sergei Eisenstein, F.W. Murnau, Carl Theodor Dreyer

**Early Silent Films by Famous Sound-Era Filmmakers**
Alfred Hitchcock, Walt Disney, John Ford, Josef von Sternberg

**Women in the Early Industry**
directors: Lois Weber, Alice Guy Blaché, Germaine Dulac, Esfir Shub, Nell Shipman
screenwriters: June Mathis, Anita Loos, Jeanie Macpherson, Frances Marion
producers: Mary Pickford

**German expatriates in Hollywood**
F.W. Murnau, Ernst Lubitsch, G.W. Pabst

**Actors**
the rise of the movie star system
the development of film acting styles
the career or persona of a star: Louise Brooks, Rudolph Valentino, Ruan Lingyu