

Hist/HRS 169 –Essay Assignment on Martin Scorsese

As sources for the essay, view **three** of the following films, two from the first category and one from the second; and read the Dougan book on Martin Scorsese or the ‘Scorsese on Scorsese’ book, both available in the Bookstore; you may use an acceptable substitute such as Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness* or Lawrence Friedman, *The Cinema of Martin Scorsese*.

Early Films and Middle Period 1973-92

Boxcar Bertha
Mean Streets
Taxi Driver

Raging Bull
The King of Comedy
The Last Temptation of Christ
Goodfellas
The Age of Innocence

Late Period 1991-2006

Cape Fear
Casino
The Gangs of New York

The Aviator
The Departed

You are of course free to consult printed sources (monographs, encyclopedia articles, etc.) and Internet sources. Your main source is your set of three films; you must cite all three in your essay. You must also cite the assigned Dougan or ‘Scorsese on Scorsese’ book at least **six times** and include it in your Works Cited (or a substitute if you choose to read another book); the best citations would probably be from the words of Scorsese himself. Be sure to include convincing specific references to the films you have viewed. In your essay analyze and dig below the surface: **do not focus on telling me the story of the films you discuss.**

Write a short (1000+ words) essay on one of the following themes in the work of Martin Scorsese:

guilt and sin (religion) (Mean, Bertha, Taxi, Bull, Tempt, Fellas, Fear, Casino, Gangs, Departed)
redemption/salvation (Mean, Taxi, Bull, Tempt, Gangs, Aviator)
the theme of loneliness (Taxi, Bull, Aviator, Tempt, Age, Departed)
the dominance of flawed male characters at the center of Scorsese’s films
visual anthropology (accurate imaging of a specific social/cultural context)
Scorsese’s picture of the mafia (Mean, Bull, Fellas, Casino, Departed)
patterns in Scorsese’s work with Robert De Niro (Mean, Taxi, Bull, Fellas, Fear, Casino)
the meaning/function of violence in his films (almost all the films).
pride and *hubris* leading to a fall (Bull, Fellas, Fear, Casino, Gangs, Aviator, Departed)
the outsider in Scorsese’s work (Taxi, Bull, Fellas, Fear, Casino, Departed, Aviator)
alienation (Existentialist concept) in Scorsese’s films
film as biography; how Scorsese works out his personal issues in his films
sexuality in Scorsese’s films (Mean, Taxi, Bull, tempt, Fellas, Casino, Fear, etc.)
the image of women in Scorsese’s films – nurturers? destroyers? victims? subordinate to men?
editing and camera techniques (e.g., moving camera, quick editing, mise-en-scène)
the evolution of Scorsese’s relationships with the Hollywood studios

You may invent your own theme, but if you do you must discuss your idea with the instructor before starting your paper.

If you prefer, you may write a similar paper on the work of **another famous American director**. John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Ernst Lubitsch, Howard Hawks, Fritz Lang, Orson Welles, Billy Wilder, Frank

Capra, Samuel Fuller, Otto Preminger, Preston Sturges, Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg, Brian DePalma, the Coen Brothers come to mind. The same guidelines apply as for the Scorsese option – six citations from a printed monograph on the subject; view three films; choose a significant theme; and the same writing instructions listed below. If you decide on this, please **speak to the instructor** before beginning your work.

Your essay should be clearly and correctly written. **Grammar and clear expression** will count! You should focus on answering the question and not narrating or summarizing your sources. The first paragraph should define the issue and suggest your interpretation. Several paragraphs making up the body of the essay should develop your ideas and cite characters, events and ideas from the text to back up your interpretation. You must include some quotations from your sources. You should end up with a short concluding paragraph summarizing your argument or bringing in an interesting new perspective.

Focus on developing your ideas and using the text of your sources to back up and illustrate your argument. **Do not plagiarize** material! When you copy words from a source, you must put them in quotation marks and give a reference (a footnote or endnote). When you paraphrase, there is no need to put your words in quotation marks, but you must give a **reference**. For reference form, you may use any reasonable system; but I suggest you use a simplified version of MLA form, which will be explained briefly in class. History majors should use the Chicago style, if possible. Every paper must have a **Words Cited** or **Bibliography** (even if it contains only a single book) and adequate references. All internet sources consulted must be cited in the Works Cited. These instructions are explained in more detail in the ‘Guidelines for Writing Thought Papers’ posted on the website.

A particular warning about use of internet materials and plagiarism. Do not rely exclusively on internet materials. I am assuming that your principal source will be the assigned Dougan book or an acceptable substitute. If you use websites, be sure to cite them with the following: name of website; the URL (web address); and the date you accessed it. Any student discovered **plagiarizing** significant quantities of web or printed material will receive a low failing grade in that assignment.

Enjoy yourself.

GSC: 5/28/08