English 1B Spring 2015 **Critical Analysis Project**

**Overview**: For this assignment, you will write a critical analysis and response to a work of fiction (film, play, or novel) that explores themes related to global exploration, broadly interpreted. I will recommend a list of works—mostly films—that show people exploring other cultures or that allow you to explore other cultures. You will choose one of these works and examine it in its specific historical and cultural context, discussing how it reflects and comments on the concerns and values of the society that produced it.

**Details/Content:**

**Audience:** Write for an educated audience who would be interested in the work and is familiar with it. (Don’t retell the story for them except as necessary to make your points.)

**Length/format:** Approximately 1200 words, typed, MLA format

**Introduce the film or story**, *briefly*, by saying what it is about; identify the filmmaker/writer, when it was made, when/where the story takes place.

**Set the film or story in its specific cultural and historical context**: Tell us what timely issues the film addresses. Identify the film’s or story’s enduring human concerns, as well.

**Interpret a theme and thesis in the work:** Choose a central theme of the work and articulate what the filmmaker or writer is saying about it. This is likely to be complex, so don’t oversimplify it.

**Analysis and Evaluation:** Discuss how well the film or story works and why. **Be specific about the criteria** you are using to evaluate it, and **offer specific details** from the film or story to support your evaluation. Some criteria to consider are these:

* Are the ideas interesting, explored in enough depth, expressed well?
* How engaging are the characters?
* How good is the acting?
* Is the story complex enough to be interesting but not so much as to be confusing?
* How is the cinematography (if it’s a film) or imagery if it’s a book?
* Special effects (if any)?
* Choose 3 or 4 criteria--it’s a short paper. In all cases your discussion should explain how each element you examine contributes to (or detracts from) the overall effectiveness of the work.

**Procedure**:

**Select a title** from the list posted on the course site, based on your own interests and background. Note: Don’t choose one you have already written about in another class. Expand your horizons!

**Write a topic proposal** telling me briefly which one you chose and why (1 short paragraph). DUE:

**Watch/read the work**, and **read what others have said about it**, especially professional critics (at least 2). You should cite at least one in your paper and respond to it. It is also good to read what the filmmaker/writer/director has to say about it, if you can.

**Write a 1-page outline that includes your thesis.** This will be submitted for comment and graded as a homework assignment. DUE:

**Write a full rough draft** in proper MLA format, clearly citing your sources, print out two copies, and bring them to the peer review on the assigned day. DUE:

After the peer review, consider the advice you got and **revise the paper**.

**Print** out the paper, after **submitting your final draft to Turnitin.com**. Staple the final draft to the peer review sheet and the rough draft you got comments on. **Submit the stapled bundle** at the beginning of class on the day it is due. DUE: