

Overview

An extended essay (EE) in film gives students an opportunity to undertake an in-depth investigation into a topic in film of particular interest to them.

Students should undertake the study of at least two films in consideration of their chosen topic.

Complex skills are involved in the interpretation of film. The EE requires students to develop and demonstrate a critical understanding of how and why film texts:

- tell stories
- create emotional responses
- give information.

In the spirit of intercultural understanding promoted by the IB, students should study film in a broad international context (ie beyond Hollywood).

Choice of topic

Students will need guidance in their choice of topic.

The topic must clearly focus on film or television, rather than a literary, sociological, political or historical issue.

For example, a study of film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays or of classic novels must not become a literature essay about the plays or the novels. It must be a discussion about the films from a filmic point of view.

The topic needs to offer enough scope for a substantial essay without being too general. Crucially, it needs to capture the interest and enthusiasm of the student.

The research question must give the essay a sharp focus within the topic and the student has to be perfectly clear about the following.

- What arguments or points of view will they develop or prove in the course of the essay?
- What needs to be said about the topic?
- How will they use evidence to support the ideas under discussion?

- What evidence will be appropriate?

If addressing a topic already addressed in academic studies, students must examine existing views and argue against them to some degree. Earlier studies must be used as a basis for discussion and not be merely replicated.

Students must also avoid:

- being mainly dependent upon summarizing secondary sources
- approaches that are essentially narrative or descriptive
- approaches that are anecdotal
- being unfocused and too general
- material that is more appropriate to other subject areas.

Students should ensure that they have sufficient sources to support their EE and can access them when needed. Early planning is essential.

Treatment of the topic

Clarity, coherence of ideas and attention to detail are all necessary to achieve an effective EE. Students need a well-formulated research question that allows them to develop an EE that is cogent, rational and economical in expression. Their ideas should be supported by relevant sources and specific reference to film and/or television texts.

Primary sources

For primary sources, there must be detailed references to at least one film (or major television work). Primary sources include:

- the film(s)
- the script
- the screenplay
- the score
- personal contact or personal correspondence with individuals involved in making the film.

Surveys and questionnaires undertaken by the students themselves should be avoided as they are unlikely to offer statistically valid information.

Secondary sources

For secondary sources, students must make close reference to relevant sources (print and other media) related to the question, such as:

- journal and magazine articles
- reviews
- DVD “extras”
- promotional material
- internet material.

Use of sources

Students should:

- evaluate the arguments in the sources rather than simply repeating what they say
- explore a broad range of ideas from different sources, rather than relying heavily on one, or on a number of items from a single author.

Use of visual materials

An EE may be enhanced by visual materials, such as:

- drawings
- diagrams
- storyboard frames
- screenshots
- camera layouts.

However, such material must not be used merely for decorative purposes.

Visual and other source materials must be properly referenced and acknowledged

at the end of the essay.

In addition, students' EEs must:

- focus on developing, supporting and illustrating their argument, rather than on plot summary or character description
- use filmic terminology accurately and appropriately.

The most successful essays are often those with a clear voice that transmits the student's enthusiasm and scholarship with clarity and conviction. The EE should reflect the student's coherent and informed engagement with their chosen topic.

Examples of topics, research questions and suggested approaches

Once students have identified their topic and written their research question, they can decide how to research their answer. They may find it helpful to write a statement outlining their broad approach. These examples are for guidance only.

Topic	Clint Eastwood and the Western
Research question	To what extent can Clint Eastwood be said to have resurrected the dying genre of the Western?
Approach	An investigation and discussion of whether Clint Eastwood re-established the Western as a credible genre with specific reference to <i>The Outlaw Josey Wales</i> (1976), <i>Pale Rider</i> (1985) and <i>Unforgiven</i> (1992).

Topic	Neo-noir in colour
Research question	To what extent can the films <i>Chinatown</i> (1974), <i>Blade Runner</i>

	(1982) and <i>Blood Simple</i> (1984) be classified as film noir even though they were filmed in colour?
Approach	An investigation into the origins and characteristics of films classified as film noir and an assessment of how far these films can be defined as belonging to the same genre or style.

Topic	African film and cultural independence
Research question	To what extent have the films of Ousmane Sembène retained indigenous content and style in the face of pressures to make films more acceptable to the international market?
Approach	An investigation into how Ousmane Sembène's films achieved and have maintained international status in world cinema, with particular reference to the narrative and visual style of <i>Xala</i> (1974), <i>Guelwaar</i> (1992) and <i>Moolaade</i> (2004).

Topic	Ang Lee as an international film-maker
Research question	To what extent do the films of Ang Lee enable him to be considered a truly international film-maker?
Approach	An investigation into what has enabled Ang Lee to become a

	<p>significant international director with films from very different cultural contexts, with particular reference to <i>Yin shi nan nu</i> (<i>Eat Drink Man Woman</i>) (1994), <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1995), <i>Wo hu cang long</i> – (<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i>) (2000), <i>Brokeback Mountain</i> (2005) and <i>Life of Pi</i> (2012).</p>
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Topic	Wes Anderson as auteur
Research question	To what extent can Wes Anderson be considered an auteur?
Approach	An investigation into the origins of auteur theory and a discussion of whether Wes Anderson's films qualify him to be considered an auteur, with specific references to <i>Rushmore</i> (1998), <i>The Royal Tenenbaums</i> (2001), <i>Moonrise Kingdom</i> (2012) and <i>The Grand Budapest Hotel</i> (2014).

Topic	Film and feminism
Research question	To what extent can theories of the male gaze and feminism be explored filmically?
Approach	An investigation and discussion of the theories of the male gaze and feminism with particular reference to <i>The Piano</i> (Jane Campion 1993), <i>Amelie</i> (Jean-Pierre Jeunet 2001), <i>The Hours</i> (Stephen Daldry 2002) and <i>Brave</i> (Mark Andrews 2012).

An important note on “double-dipping”

Students must ensure that their EE does not duplicate other work they are submitting for the Diploma Programme. For example, the EE must not be based on the same films the student has studied for any assessment tasks as part of the course.

The film EE and internal assessment

An EE in film is not an extension of the internal assessment (IA) task. Students must ensure that they understand the differences between the two.

Supervisors play an important role in guiding students on these distinctions. Students risk their diploma if academic misconduct is detected.