



Guidelines for Thesis Proposal

The proposal should be submitted in doc(x) format, be around 1,000-1,500 words, and follow the outline below:

A. Title Page

Temporary Title – Candidate’s name – Academic Year – School of Film/MA Film and Television Studies

B. Abstract (max. 300 words)

C. Table of contents

Introduction: The intro should introduce the topic, provide a justification for its choice, clearly present the research question/hypothesis/thesis and briefly introduce the basic theoretical and methodological framework (500-750 words).

Example^{1 2}: Amy Heckerling’s two most recent films as writer/director, *I Could Never Be Your Woman* (2007) and *Vamps* (2013), constitute a slight departure from her family and teen comedies; the first follows the conventions of the romantic comedy genre with elements of fantasy and the second is a hybrid narrative, mixing the basic structure of the female friendship film with elements of horror. In this essay, I will examine the ways Heckerling negotiates issues of female aging and sisterhood in these two texts (main topic/thesis), using textual analysis (methodology 1) as well as analysis of specific cinematic codes-- mise-en-scène, editing, and cinematography—(methodology 2) to reveal Heckerling’s preferences and style, while utilising gender theory (theory/methodology 3) to assist in the

¹ The example is taken from Betty Kaklamanidou’s “Amy Heckerling’s Place in Hollywood: Issues of Aging and Sisterhood in *I Could Never Be Your Woman* and *Vamps*,” *Refocus on the films of Amy Heckerling*, Frances Smith and Timothy Shary (eds.), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. 135-154.

² Note: this is just an example of an academic essay introduction, and it is not meant to be copied *per se*. Depending on the author, the style of writing can change and as a result there is great variety when reading introductions of academic essays. This example is included here as one of the many “correct” variations of what an academic introduction should include.



contextualisation of the narratives. I will be basing my arguments mainly on Samantha Holland's *Alternative Femininities* (2004), and Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff's collection, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (2011) **(theory)**, because I find the use of the term 'femininities' that the books' authors use inclusive and appropriate in contemporary discussions on gender **(justification of chosen theory)**. Instead of treating femininity as a monolithic and absolute concept, its plural avoids 'notions of essentialism,' and 'ideas that femininity equates with young, white, slim, heterosexual, able-bodied women.' I would add that the plural also assists in the exploration of various fictional feminine performances created by the same agent, in the case of this study, a single filmmaker. **(justification of chosen theory)**.

Main Body: The main body of the proposal should include a preliminary literature review and research methodology. (500-750 words).

Example^{3 4}: Although the 2010s have witnessed a significant increase in both sociological research regarding childless women, and media attention that highlights the cultural and societal implications of the issue, television fiction remains rather voiceless on the subject. There have also been to date relatively few academic studies that address representations of childless female characters on television shows and/or films. Julia Moore and Patricia Geist-Martin (2013, 246) have already observed that, "one area that is severely lacking is analysis of the fictional representation of women who choose childlessness in books, television, and film." Although Moore and Geist-Martin add that relevant "representations are limited," they underline the importance of scholarly examination to "understand how voluntary childlessness is framed in popular, contemporary media" (Moore and Geist-Martin 2013). Anthea Taylor associates childlessness with singleness, noting that contemporary popular texts demonize single women "in a narrative that . . . works . . . to mourn their manlessness, but more importantly, the childlessness that this state implies" (Taylor 2012, 43). Taylor's association of singleness and childlessness is significant; first, it reveals the close relationship, albeit not obligatory, of the two statuses, and second, it allows scholars to revisit older representations of single and

³ The example is taken from Betty Kaklamanidou's "The Voluntarily Childless Heroine: a Post-Feminist Television Oddity," *Television and New Media*, January 11, 2018, 1-19.

⁴ Note: as with the previous example, this brief literature review is not meant to be copied *per se*, but to assist you in understanding what the main body of your proposal should include.



probably childless heroines. Third, it also explains how the female heroine from the late 1980s and 1990s—Taylor uses the protagonists of *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Basic Instinct* (1992), and *Disclosure* (1994) as her main examples—have come to represent figures “of abject horror, harbouring barely sublimated rage, murderous urges and profound jealousy towards those living the patriarchal nuclear familial dream” (Taylor 2012, 53). Another vital aspect of female childlessness is noted in Susan Berridge’s (2015, 113) analysis of celebrity culture and ageing and particularly on Jennifer Aniston, whom she considers “one of the most important discursive sites for anxieties around gender, age and chronological propriety.” Berridge examines Aniston’s interviews as well as coverage of the star in both U.S. and U.K. magazines, and notices that Aniston is frequently targeted as a celebrity who has not had a baby, which according to the author is one of several “particular gendered life goals [one has to achieve] by a certain age” (Berridge 2015, 117). Such was the extent of this scrutiny that Aniston herself addressed the media in a *Huffington Post* blog post in July 2016, where she unambiguously stated that “We don’t need to be married or mothers to be complete. We get to determine our own ‘happily ever after’ for ourselves” (Aniston 2016). It is in the same neoliberal and postfeminist context as Taylor’s and Berridge’s work that I undertake here an analysis of the atypical instances of voluntarily childless heroines on contemporary U.S. network television. **(Note: please note how the literature review is discussed and is not only composed of citations from different sources).** Drawing mainly from Diane Negra’s and Angela McRobbie’s work on postfeminist popular culture, and specifically McRobbie’s (2009, 12) concept of “double entanglement,” that is the “co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life . . . with processes of liberalisation in regard to choice and diversity,” I argue that network television, with rare exceptions, not only avoids representations of female childlessness but also promotes pronatalism, which it associates with neoliberal principles of the market (methodology) (as illustrated in everything from the booming surrogacy industry to the quest to enroll children at the best private schools, etc.).

D. Timeline

E. Initial bibliography



Essay Format

- **Fonts:** 12-point Times New Roman or Cambria fonts.
- **Spaces:** 1.15 or 1.5 space. There should not be extra spaces between paragraphs.
- **Margins:** Word default margins.
- **Page Numbers:** bottom right of each page.
- **Indentation:** The first line of each paragraph should be indented. Pressing [Tab] once should give you the correct indentation.
- **Alignment:** The text of your essay should be justified. In your word processor, choose "Justify."