

# Andrews University

JN Andrews Honors Program

## Proposal for Senior Honors Thesis

**HONS 497 Senior Honors Thesis**

**Credits** 2 (2 minimum required)

Directions: Please return signed proposal to the Honors Office **at least one week prior to your scheduled meeting with the Honors Council**. This proposal must be accepted by Honors Council the semester before presentation.

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Primary Advisor: Dr. Brian Strayer

Secondary Advisor: Dr. Kathryn Silva-Banks

Working Thesis Title: An Intellectual, Cultural, and Social History on the Role of Film and Societal Trends: A Case Study of the Outlaw Jesse James.

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Expected date of Graduation: May 2013

- I. Provide goals and brief description of your project or research.
- II. Outline your methodology. **Please be specific.** How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?
- III. Explain in what sense your project is original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations. How does it relate to current knowledge in the discipline?
- IV. Include a **substantive annotated bibliography** of similar or related work.
- V. Provide a statement of progress to date.

**This student's performance in his/her major field is acceptable, and I understand that he/she plans to graduate with honors.**

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Department Chair (signature)

**I have read and support this proposal:**

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Primary Advisor (signature)

## **I have read and support this proposal:**

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Secondary Advisor (signature)

If human subjects or if live vertebrate animals are involved, evidence of approval from the Institutional Review Board or an Animal Use Committee is needed through the campus scholarly research offices (Ext. 6360).

### **I. Provide goals and brief description of your project or research.**

The study of history through film has typically been reserved for History Channel, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, or PBS documentaries and mini-series. Even then the biases, endorsements, and bibliographies of those films must be scrutinized and fully understood before any form of historical legitimacy can be accredited to them. The importance of historical accuracy in film is undeniable and this is the reason for a near complete lack of attention to theatrical, fiction, and “based-on-a-true-story” film. Hollywood’s version of reality and history is known for being highly aggrandized and unrealistic; focusing on the money to be made from affecting the audience’s emotional response rather than the accuracy of the information displayed. However, there is a growing belief that even Hollywood can contribute to historical study. Despite the over-done special effects and larger-than-life personalities, the overarching themes and treatment of characters and situations is a vital window into the popular opinions and attitudes of the time. Reflected in popular culture are the beliefs, aspirations, distastes, and biases of the generation to which it caters. This is especially seen in film, as its popularity and success depends on the good graces of the population. Because of this, a study of film – any kind of film – can be exceedingly beneficial for those who wish to study trends in social history.

The most accurate way to test this growing belief is through a lengthy case study of an individual whose life has been abundantly documented in both film and primary source materials. In order to fully understand the shifting of opinions and the reasons behind those changes, the individual must have a long history of spotlight and interpretation. For these reasons, Jesse James is an ideal candidate for evaluation. The notoriety he achieved throughout his lifetime is almost unequaled by any other American West outlaw, and thus the amount of primary source materials such as diaries, court cases, trial and legal documents, and photographs are abundant. This allows for an accurate and detailed description of James and the nation’s opinion of him throughout his life and at the time of his death. James’ infamy has continued long after his death, starting with a silent film released in 1908 and progressing with one or more released each decade until the most recent film *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007). With a century’s worth of evidence, the depiction of the outlaw Jesse James has been defined by the popular opinion and mood of the times and the vastly different treatment of him between 1908 and 2007 is an intriguing insight into the shifting ideals and social constructs of the American people.

I hope to show that a lengthy study of a particular individual, situation, or ideal in film is a legitimate form of cultural-intellectual historical analysis and through such study one can determine the nature of the people it entertained. With the help of film, a historian can accurately assess the commonly held beliefs and biases of a specific group of people and thus can determine – to some degree – their attitudes toward other topics, and may even be able to predict their reaction to certain situations or individuals. In the specific case of Jesse James I hope to show that the idea of what a true outlaw or “bad guy” is has drastically changed since the release

of *The James Boys of Missouri* in 1908. While the original treatment of the man was exceedingly harsh, with his black clothes, black cowboy hat, drunken streak, and vigilante attitude, the Jesse James of the 2007 film is complex and intricately designed to display a broken man. It attempts to justify his actions and invites the audience to sympathize with his difficult plight. It is this striking difference in treatment, and the circumstances that must be present in society for an outlaw to be considered a hero, that I wish to research and explain.

**II. Outline your methodology. Please be specific.** How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?

A. Once my topic had been chosen and potential goals and conclusions were set I began my research with an extensive search of the secondary sources available to me in both the James White Library on our campus as well as the much larger Notre Dame Library. Focusing my search on subject matter dealing with Billy the Kid, Jesse James, and history and film, I soon had an overabundance of material to study. Due to the excessive amount of information on both individuals, I decided to narrow my research to the interrelationship between history and film and how this is seen in the numerous depictions of Jesse James.

B. Studying my secondary sources, I continued to make a list of additional works that may be of use to me from the bibliographies of the material I have already acquired. Similarly, as I looked through the bibliographies of my secondary sources it directed me to a variety of primary sources that I was able to use to help supplement my research. Thus, by starting with the secondary materials, I was able to discover important primary source material more efficiently and with a much greater specificity.

C. As I read through my material that focuses on Jesse James, I will carefully take notes that describe the reality of the infamous man. I will focus on major aspects of his life that led to his activity as an outlaw and that would eventually lead to his demise. Of the utmost importance is the manner in which he was treated during his lifetime. The major questions I will be asking will deal with how he was viewed by the general population during his life, perhaps even at certain events, and then, finally, at his death. While it was common for such outlaws to be demonized by the "civilized" Eastern states, is there any exceptionality found in the depiction of James? This element of my methodology will be the foundation of my research. Without the knowledge of the reality of James' life and situation it would be impossible to observe the shift in treatment that has occurred over the past century in film. Furthermore, it will work to show whether the original 1908 film is an accurate treatment or if the bias of "Hollywood" had already taken root.

D. Once an extensive study of James' life has been conducted, I will be able to begin research in the interrelationship between film and history. While there is not an exorbitant amount of material on the subject, the few key works that I have selected will enable me to fully understand both the positives and negatives of using film as a primary source in the research of social trends and public opinion. While I have come into this research project with the belief that the use of film in such a way would be acceptable, in carefully defined terms, I will be sure to acknowledge the constraints and difficulties of that use.

E. After I have dealt with more experienced voices on the reliability of film in the study of history I will be able to fully and accurately study the Jesse James films that I have chosen. Using the knowledge that I have gained from HONS 265 *Literature and the Arts* I will be able to analyze the elements of filmography that help create the characterization of an individual. Each film - starting with the original 1908 silent, *The James Boys of Missouri*, and continuing until the most recent production, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007) - will be evaluated in turn. Moving from decade to decade (as there is nearly one film per) I will critically

analyze the treatment of Jesse James by observing how his personality is displayed in dress, action, and looks. Furthermore, I will examine the variety of personal relationships that are displayed on film; such as that between James and his mother, his brothers, his gang, the townspeople, and the lawmen. Through such observation I will be able to outline the trend of treatment of James' character from simple to complex.

F. My final step would be to speculate on potential reasons for the shifting trend of treatment of Jesse James over the last century. One question that must be asked is whether or not this change in sympathies seen in film has been caused by the national mood of the people or if the opinions of the people have been changed by the films themselves. Because of this question I will need to delve into several more sources that deal with American fantasies on heroism and the idea of criminals as heroes. My hope is to discover if there are specific situations and circumstances that must be present in order for an outlaw to be considered with sympathy and perhaps even justified in their actions. I believe that at this point in my study, I will be able to identify several more relevant examples that demonstrate this phenomenon.

**III.** In what sense is your project original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations? How does it relate to your current knowledge in the discipline?

Many historians will continue to be highly skeptical of the use of theatrical film as valid, primary source material, thus, I believe that my research, and the research of the few supporting works I have discovered, will be beneficial in adding to the field of American memory and popular culture.. People tend write off Hollywood style film simply for the moneymaking scheme that lies behind it without considering that it is that very scheme that forces the entertainment industry into maintaining the beliefs and cultural norms of the times.

Because the person I have chosen is one that has been evaluated time and time again, it is my hope to bring something new and unique to the field concerning Jesse James. Instead of attempting to discover new information about the person, or re-interpreting his character and circumstances, I am looking into the progression of his personality over a century of film. This fact makes my research much more about the interrelationship between film and history rather than simply another character sketch of James. In fact, James was only chosen for the wealth of information to be found about him so that my own research could be more complete and accurate.

Furthermore, the cultural and intellectual focus of my research is a branch of historical study that is not typically covered in undergraduate programs. Because it deals with the abstract - thoughts, ideals, hopes, and dreams - it requires a greater degree of interpretation. For this reason, and the fact that it requires extensive study of more personal primary sources, cultural and intellectual history is typically reserved for graduate study. While typical undergraduate students are dealing with military, political, social, religious, or economic history, I am dealing with perceptions, biases, and prejudices.

Finally, I believe that my work is unique in the fact that I am combining three different fields into one research topic. While most of my resource materials deal exclusively with Jesse James, films about Jesse James, or film and history; I will attempt to combine a case study of Jesse James with a critique of film in order to create something new for the field. My proposed goals force me to pull together three fields that are normally kept separate in order to effectively defend my thesis.

**IV. Include a substantive annotated bibliography of similar or related research.**

Anderson, Christopher. "Jesse James, the Bourgeois Bandit: The transformation of a Popular Hero."

*Cinema Journal* 26, no. 2. (Winter 1979): 120-141.

Focusing on the two films, *Jessie James* (1939) and *The True Story of Jesse James* (1957), Anderson relates process of telling James' stories and about the transformation of James as a cultural figure. Anderson's work is both a parody of previous James films, as he delves into a brief study of other films based on the life of Jesse James, and a revisionist critique of them. He attempts to outline the shift in treatment of James throughout his history in film and to show the specific elements of his character that allowed him to be seen as a hero rather than the notorious criminal that he was. Anderson's article will help further my research in the fact that he also worked to map out the shifting treatment of James characterization.

Boggs, James D. *Jesse James and the Movies*. Jefferson N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2011.

Boggs' illustrated filmography analyzes the plots and players of the more than forty motion pictures about the legendary Missouri outlaw from the silent era to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each evaluation compares Hollywood's version of history to the hard facts that are known about James. Furthermore, a brief biography of the outlaw provides an overview of his life and career as an outlaw. While my research stays focused on American feature film, Boggs also examines European films, made-for-television movies and continuing TV series that have featured Jesse James. One of the most important sources for my research, Boggs' work clearly outlines the numerous films and their treatment of James' personality. However, Boggs does not look into the reasoning behind the differing treatment, nor does he make a connection between any trends throughout the past century.

Breihan, Carl W. *The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James*. New York: F. Fell, 1954.

A prolific writer on the life of Jesse James, his family, gang, and legends, Breihan's first work on James is an attempt to cover all of the information there is about the famous criminal. He retells the story of Jesse James in a fair and accurate way, leaving out any myths or legends that could not be proven by the facts available to him. Breihan's work is very straight forward and scholarly, with little bias and no detectable slant on the character and actions of Jesse James. This resource will be beneficial in improving my knowledge about the reality of James and the true events of his life and death so that I may be better prepared to compare and contrast future material.

Brustein, Robert. "The New Hollywood: Myth and Anti-Myth." *Film Quarterly* 12, no. 3. (Spring 1959): 23-31.

Focusing on the unprecedented shift in filmmaking, Brustein's article insists that Hollywood has abandoned its dream factory of artificial merchandise for the truly complex "stuff" of life. He posits that the industry has begun to agitate the people with harsh truths rather than lull them to sleep with the idea of comforting fantasies of idealism. Furthermore, he believes that it was the devastating effect of two world wars and the sudden collapse of progressive thought that brought this new form (film realism) into practice. Of exceptional interest to my research is Brustein's idea of what caused the change in feature film. His argument for the realistic attitude that emerged after a half century

is very significant and could be the real reason behind the leveling out of good and bad characters in film. Although this resource is one of my oldest materials, it is interesting to see that the shift in the treatment of characters was recognizable even in the fifties and has only continued through today.

Carnes, Mark C. *Past Imperfect: History According to Movies*. New York: H. Holt, 1995.

In his widely acclaimed work, Carnes uses the opinions of some of our greatest historians to address the facts, and fiction, as seen in Hollywood's recreations of historical events. It is with the help of such distinguished historians as Stephen Ambrose, Antonia Fraser, James McPherson, and others, that an exploration of the relationship between film and historical record is conducted. Carnes' volume offers hundreds of movie stills, archival photographs, maps, and many more illustrations that shed new light on the uses and abuses of history in popular culture. While all of the historians who were asked to review one movie and write an original historical critique of it were found to be rather nitpicky over some historical details, there is an overarching fondness for the movies and many confess that it was the movies that first got them interested in history. The invaluable amount of knowledge that resides in this one book is overwhelming and yet exceptionally helpful in my own research. By working to show that history as portrayed in film is not always one hundred percent accurate, Carnes also claims that by bringing history into film, we are opening up a greater audience to the joys and intrigue of historical study.

Elkin, Frederick. "The Psychological Appeal of the Hollywood Western." *The Journal of Educational History* 24, no. 2. (Oct. 1950).

This article is extremely interesting as it describes the classic Hollywood western as it was characterized in 1950. Elkin describes the simplicity of the western: it takes place in a small town in the American West in the late 1800s, law and order have never been firmly established, the town has one central street and just a couple necessary buildings such as the sheriff's office/jail, saloon, and perhaps a barber shop, there is never ending action, few complications, and a complete lack of complex characters. Finally, there is absolutely no mistaking the good men from the bad and no serious doubt about the story's outcome; the good guy will always win. This article will be a good foundation to my critique of the shifting trend seen in the treatment of Jesse James in film, which will, of course, be a western. Thus, my research may show that it is a change in the genre that has affected the characterization of James rather than a change in public opinion.

Ferro, Marc. "Film as an Agent, Product, and Source of History." *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 3. (Jul. 1983): 357-364.

Ferro takes a very positive stance on film and historical study. Insisting that to grasp film in its relation to history requires more than just better chronicles of the works a description of how the various genres evolved. Instead, he posits, it must look at the historical function of film - at its relationship with the societies that produce and consume it, as the social processes involved in the making of the works, and at the cinema as a source of history. Thus, Ferro focuses on the complex relationship of films, the audiences, the money, and the state and how all of this plays into the study of history. Ferro's argument for the legitimacy of film as a primary source is very similar to the assumptions that I am conducting my research under. Because of this, his work lends validity to my own and helps improve my understanding and expression of my argument.

*Frank and Jessie*, directed by Robert Boris, 1995.

This film, written and directed by Robert Boris, was produced by Trimark Pictures in April of 1995. Starring Rob Lowe as the infamous Jesse James and Bill Paxton as his charming brother, Frank, this version of the James' boys' story is an interesting blend of the two opposing views of Jessie James. While the abuses of the James family at the hands of Chicago railroad investors are made to justify the turn to criminality of the two brothers, their taste for blood and money quickly overcomes the audience's feelings toward them as they continue to relish their success as outlaws. Interestingly, the tagline for this film was "The Civil War made them outlaws. The people made them heroes." This is especially important to my research as it highlights the justified nature of Jesse James' crimes and the fact that it was the people who made them heroes rather than the film industry.

Isenberg, Michael T. "A Relationship of Constrained Anxiety: Historians and Film." *The History Teacher* 6, no. 4. (Aug. 1973): 553-568.

Isenberg's article argues that it is only due to intellectual history that feature film has been alienated from historical study and validity. He believes that it is this haughty idea of "high thought," which intellectual historians have regarded as their special scholarly preserve, that has caused the stigma against the purely aesthetic aspect of film. Furthermore, he asserts that this stigma was formed from a major concern that the popularity of the movies might in some way inhibit their art. Essentially, Isenberg focuses on the continual struggle between historians and film, at once thinking that it is unacceptable and the next decade believing it is beneficial to their field. Thus, he attempts to outline the reasoning behind this anxious relationship and why a definitive position has yet to be made. This article will be beneficial in understanding some of the underlying biases and presuppositions that exist between film and historical study.

Jackson, Martin A. "The Future Role of Films in History." *The History Teacher* 3, no. 3. (March 1970): 10-22.

Believing that the modern historian has been neglecting the unbelievable benefits of film, Jackson insists that any historian from the distant past would "take out two mortgages on his immortal soul" for a film record of Julius Caesar addressing the Roman Senate, or any other landmark of historical importance. Amazed at the thousands of reels of film that the modern historian can use in order to illustrate or enrich his or her lectures and research, Jackson insists that the future of film is destined to play a significant role in the work of historians. Furthermore, he posits that it will be in the classroom that a change in opinion toward the use of film in history will take place. This is especially seen in the college-level history classroom where feature film is starting to make a prominent appearance. While most historians are cautious and tend to relate the negative effects of using film, Jackson's article speaks of the benefits of feature film in the study of history and constructing meaning in the past. For this reason, his work will aid my research in showing the overarching positive effect of using film as a valid medium in history.

*Jesse James*, directed by Henry King, 1939.

Twentieth Century Fox Film Incorporation released this Great Depression era film in January of 1939. Directed by Henry King and starring Tyrone Power as Jesse and Henry Fonda as Frank James, this film focuses on the injustices dealt

to the James brothers at the hands of vicious railroad agents. Highlighting the murder of their mother, and the relationship between Jesse James and his wife, "Zee" (played by Nancy Kelly), this film works to show the personable-ness of Jesse and the reasons behind his criminality. This film will be important to my research as I delve into the topic of the effects of personal relationships in the trend of treatment of James and the milieu in which his actions are deemed justifiable.

*Jessie James Rides Again*, directed by Fred C. Brannon, 1947.

One of the more interesting sources in my collection of research, this film was released in August of 1947 by Republic Pictures. Directed by Fred C. Brannon and starring Clayton Moore as Jesse James, this film lacks many of the characteristic episodes and personalities in James' life. Instead, it focuses on a fictional situation in which James and a side-kick are running from the lawmen and end up in a small town where a gang is attempting to kick the local people off their land in order to gain the profit from the vast amount of oil that is underneath it. In this scenario, James battles against the gang in order to save the people and their livelihoods. The original poster for the film displayed these words, "JESSE JAMES... the dreaded name that haunts a thousand lawmen... NOW... strikes terror in the hearts of the lawless!" Most importantly for my research, I will be evaluating the apparent acceptability of vigilante justice and the circumstances that must be present for the people to support a notorious criminal.

Kooistra, Dr. Paul. "Criminals as Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure." *Symbolic Interaction* 13, no. 2. (Fall 1990): 217-239.

This article investigates the interesting phenomenon of the heroic criminal and lays out the specific structural preconditions that are necessary for his appearance. Kooistra explains that these lawbreakers can be best understood as cultural products that represent the idea of extra-legal justice. During times when the public's perception of the law as unjust is widespread, the heroic criminal emerges as a national figure and is then exploited by entrepreneurs who are motivated by profit and/or politics. Kooistra uses comparative analysis as he presents a brief study on Jesse James, William Bonney (Billy the Kid), John Dillinger, and Charles Arthur (Pretty Boy) Floyd in order to explain how they became such legendary figures despite their infamy. This article will be exceptionally useful in evaluating the sympathies that criminals can gain due to the manner in which their story is treated. Depending on the context of the time and their story those who would have been considered treacherous and degraded can be seen as justified in their actions. With the help of this article I will be able to identify the specific structural characteristics that are necessary for a criminal to be viewed as a hero rather than as a villain.

Landy, Marcia. *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

The essays in Landy's book probe the roles that cinema and television play in altering and complicating our understanding of historical events. It brings together representative examples of how both media critics and historians write about history as it is created and disseminated through film and television. Each essay contributes to the exploration of what is at stake culturally and politically in media history and how such a form of history making is different from the traditional concepts of historiography. Landy raises questions on the uses of historical films, their genres, and what they are meant to convey, all of which deepen the reader's understanding of just how

complex the issues at hand truly are. Landy's work is valuable to my research in that it focuses on how history and media affect each other. By reading her volume, I can understand the complex tensions between the two fields and how they can benefit and detract from one another.

Loy, R. Philip. *Westerns in a Changing America*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004.

Philip Loy believes that the Westerns of 1930 to 1955 were a defining part of American culture. He insists that it was those Westerns that were one of the vehicles by which viewers learned the values and norms of a wide range of social relationships and behavior. However, in 1955 Westerns began to include much more controversial themes, such as cowardly citizens, emotionally deranged characters, graphic and pervasive violence, marital infidelity, racial prejudice, rape, and many other issues that had never been associated with the feel-good, action-packed Western of the first half of the century. Thus, Loy's work examines the manner in which Westerns reflected the substantial social, economic, and political changes that shaped culture in the latter half of the twentieth century. It is in the focus of the shifting themes as the genre reacted to the changes that were unfolding in the broader social landscape of American culture that is the most valuable to my research. Loy's book will help me understand and acknowledge the effect of social trends on the film industry.

McCrisken, Trevor B. *American History and Contemporary Hollywood Film*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

McCrisken's book is the first one to comprehensively explore the Post-Cold War period of filmmaking and to navigate the complex ways that film mediates history. He insists that while film sometimes challenges and questions traditional historical perspective, it more frequently reaffirms traditional interpretations. McCrisken offers an analysis of more than twenty mainstream contemporary films ("The Patriot," "Saving Private Ryan," "Pearl Harbor," etc.) and considers why such films are becoming increasingly integral to the ambitions of a more globally focused American film industry. He really focuses on the new perspectives as to how and why Hollywood has sought to repackage American history. The most important aspect of this volume to my research is the fact that McCrisken focuses on popular Hollywood film, rather than the purely historical or documentary type. His insistence on film's importance and benefits in history adds validation to my own argument.

O'Connor, John E. "Historians and Film: Some Problems and Prospects." *The History Teacher* 6, no. 4. (Aug. 1973): 543-552.

Taking a rather unique view, O'Conner insists that there has been a growing acceptance of film in the history classroom, as well as in the professional research of historians since the 1970s, with the creation of the Historians Film Committee, of which he is a leading member. While professional historians have denigrated films as "high school stuff," O'Conner states that throughout the last quarter of a century, acceptance of the use of feature film has spread throughout the college-level and into the profession itself. He does not deny the power of media to influence public opinion, or that network programming reflects the public mind (or lack thereof). O'Conner argues that the passion for movies that used to be scorned as analogous to the infatuation of the masses has now achieved cultural stature. Adding to my material that focuses on the positive and present benefits of studying film in history, O'Conner's article will continue to strengthen my assumption that film is a valid primary source in the study of history.

O'Connor, John E. and Martin A. Jackson, eds. *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image*. New York: Ungar, 1979.

Traditional scholars have regarded Hollywood movies as intended for film buffs and nostalgia fans, regarding the medium primarily as a vehicle for entertainment and recreation. Thus the study of film has suffered from a lack of the careful scrutiny and rigorous discipline that historians so fervently exercised in their own fields. However, O'Connor believes that more recently social historians have begun to realize that film can be a rich source of information about the society in which it was made and society in general. Historians have slowly begun to use film to derive conclusions much in the same way as they would extract them from written evidence. O'Connor's belief in the value of film as a way to study societal trends is right along the same paths as my own research. In attempting to discover what the shifting treatment of Jesse James shows about American societal shifts in general, O'Connor's work will be exceptionally valuable.

Rainey, Buck. *Western Gunslingers in Fact and on Film: Hollywood's Famous Lawmen and Outlaws*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1998.

Rainey compares the film characterizations of Western gunslingers and lawmen with their real lives. For each of the figures discussed, including Jesse James, a biography is followed by a catalog of films. This catalog also includes a film description; selections from reviews; information on directors, producers, casts; and other related material. The most interesting aspect of this work is the inclusion of black and white photos of the historical figures and stills from the movies discussed; therefore a wealth of visual information is present in place. It is this catalog of films and the vast amount of information that accompanies it that has been useful within in my research.

Rosenstone, Robert A. *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow, England: Longman Publishing, 2006.

Rosenstone argues that to leave history films out of the discussion of the meaning of the past is to ignore a major factor in our understanding of past events. He posits that the dramatic feature is a legitimate way of doing history, even if it is largely fictional. Rosenstone examines what history films convey about the past and how they do so, and then he demonstrates the need to learn how to read and understand this new visual world that we have been plunged into. While he focuses on a detailed analysis of individual films such as "Glory," "Reds," and "Schindler's List," he insists that he has chosen just a few of the innumerable films that could be especially beneficial to historians. Focusing on his championing of feature film, I will use his arguments to add validity to my research's assumption that film can be used as an acceptable primary source when the nature of the study allows.

Rosenstone, Robert A. *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.

The first sustained defense of film as a way of thinking historically, Rosenstone's book takes us beyond the epistemological and literary limitations of traditional historical study. He believes that images of film can convey ideas and information in a way that words cannot, and thus can be viewed as a more effective and truthful telling of history. While he does not ignore the fact that films are subject to the conventions of drama and fiction, he insists that history

films force us to reconceptualize what we actually mean when we say "history." He spends most of his time evaluating the innovative strategies of film in Africa, Latin America, Germany, and other parts of the world; however, his thesis can be applied to film as a whole. Rosenstone urges historians to admit that film can often do what books cannot. While I believe that his emphasis on film over literature is a little extreme, his belief in the value of film to historical study is one of the main assumptions of my research project and thus his work helps to give the base of my study some validity.

Settle, William A. *Jesse James was His Name, or, Fact and Fiction Concerning the Careers of the Notorious James Brothers*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966.

The very first work on Jesse James that was painstakingly thorough and scholarly throughout, Settle's book is cited in nearly all of my other sources. It reads very much like a textbook and is filled so many facts that it lacks the feel of a story, which is its main criticism. Compiled as his doctoral thesis after years of interviews and research, Settle leaves no part of James' life untouched. It is commonly accepted that if an event is not spoken of in Settle's work, then it did not happen. I will be using his material in order to verify facts and determine whether or not a scene or event was added to a film as a way to demonize or create sympathy for James. Settle's book will also be one of my main knowledge bases about the life of Jesse James.

Steckmesser, Kent Ladd. *Western Outlaws: The "Good Badman" in Fact, Film, and Folklore*. Claremont, Calif.: Regina Books, 1983.

Steckmesser presents five Western criminals (Joaquin Murrieta, Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Butch Cassidy, and Charles Arthur Floyd) with the reputation of being Robin Hood types. For each of the five outlaws listed above he provides an unromanticized biography and then follows it with a thorough criticism of the folklore, fiction, drama, poetry, films, and television programs inspired by their legends. Clearly, for my research, the vast majority of this work is inapplicable, save for one section. The surprisingly unbiased and extensive biography of James' life as well as a lengthy discussion as to how his character has been developed in a number of different media is extremely helpful in my own study. While the television shows, poems, and folklore of Jesse was very interesting, I will keep my focus on the film aspect of Steckmesser's work.

*The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, directed by Andrew Dominik, 2007.

Released in October of 2007 and directed by Andrew Dominik, this film depicts Jesse James in a way that no film before it has done. Starring Brad Pitt as Jesse, Casey Affleck as Robert Ford, and Mary-Louise Parker as James' wife "Zee," the film shows James near the end of his career. Most of his original gang is dead, in jail, or retired and he is struggling with the past and what the future has in store for him as an outlaw on the downward slope. James is depressed, quixotic, murderous, and cautious when a young admirer, Robert Ford, joins his small circle of friends. Ford admires Jesse and longs to have his name known throughout the West, just like James; but he is disappointed by the broken man he now sees. In the final, climactic scene of the film Ford shoots the now retired James from behind and thus claims his reward and earns a name for himself. While a study of Robert Ford would be amply met by this film, I will be focusing on the unique treatment of the aged James, due to the fact that seeing him as broken truly adds to the appeal of the infamous outlaw.

*The James Boys in Missouri*, directed by Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson, 1908.

This silent film, released in April of 1908 by Essanay Film Manufacturing Company and directed by Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson, is the first film to depict the story of the Frank and Jesse James. Realizing that the outlaws were still contemporary figures to many filmgoers, the producers attempted to show the most accurate and unbiased view of the life of Jesse James. At the same time, Anderson took into consideration that a small percentage of public opinion saw James in a rather sympathetic light, and thus took a "softer" approach to his character than reality would have allowed. Perhaps this is most clearly seen in the dignity given to Frank James when he surrenders to the Governor of Kansas; it is portrayed with the same ceremony and grace as General Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox. Although there are only eighteen minutes worth of film to evaluate, this piece will be of the utmost importance to my research because it will show the public's opinion of James while he was still thought of as a contemporary. Furthermore, it will show the very first portrayal of James and thus give me a starting point on which to base all of my further study.

*The Last Days of Frank and Jesse James*, directed by William A. Graham, 1986.

Joseph Cates Productions released this film in February 1986. Directed by William A. Graham and starring Kris Kristofferson as Jesse and Johnny Cash as Frank, *Last Days* focuses on the different personalities of the James brothers once they have retired from their fifteen years of thievery. While Frank is depicted as a book-loving and family-oriented man, Jesse is shown as a money-loving womanizer. This is one of the harsher treatments of Jesse James, which is especially interesting for my research because it breaks from the trend in treatment. While it would be expected for him to be portrayed more favorably, due to prior research, his character is handled with very little sympathy and not a small amount of disdain.

*The True Story of Jesse James*, directed by Nicholas Ray, 1957.

Released in February of 1957 by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Film Corporation, this film was directed by Nicholas Ray and stars Robert Wagner as Jesse James. Ray focuses on the last eighteen years of the life of Jesse James, showing his home life in Missouri, his experiences with Quantrill's raiders, his career as an outlaw with his brother Frank and the Younger brothers, and finally his attempt to lead a peaceful and normal life after one exceptionally disastrous plan to rob a bank. While all of the above are touched on in the film, it's James's hopes of living a peaceful life that are the most interesting for my research. Echoing the accepted belief that life centered around the home and family was the pinnacle of achievement during the late forties and fifties, this film shows James' longing for such normalcy and his pleasure at finally being able to lay aside his banditry in favor of hearth and home.

Triplett, Frank. *The Life, Times, and Treacherous Death of Jesse James*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1970.

The original work of Frank Triplett that eventually became this book was compiled within seven weeks of James' death. Relying heavily on information gathered from interviews with Zee and Zerelda (James' wife and mother), who had made an agreement with Triplett, it portrayed a very favorable and slightly slanted view of the notorious outlaw. However, the women later decided to renege on their agreement to publish and sued for royalties, which they won. It was not until 1970 that Joseph Snell edited the work and republished it. Due to the fact that the work relies solely on first person accounts of the events, it can be considered a primary source, although it is a little unclear as to what

extent it was edited by Snell, which also makes it unreliable. For my research, I am especially interested in the thoughts and feelings of James' wife and mother and how they viewed their outlaw husband and son.

**V.** Provide a statement of progress to date.

At this point in my research I have begun working through all of my source material and taking extensive notes, organizing the information topically based upon its relevance to the specific outline of my working thesis. I have begun a basic outline of the paper to come and will continue to fill it in as new information is discovered until it is a complete three-level outline. Currently I am working on formulating a strong, informative, and complete thesis statement that will assist me in organizing my material more effectively and appropriately, as well as provide a concrete foundation on which to work. Vigorous research and note taking will continue to dominate my time until I have made it through all of the material I have collected, at which point I will move on to the next step in my methodology.