Transnational Cinema: Team Research Project #1
(Elsewhere, I refer to this project as the “production history” for short.)

The work: In small teams, you will select one of the films named here, and research the film’s production, distribution, and reception. Your team will present its findings as the class watches and discusses that film. I offer an example of this project for the film The Siege, and Elinor Appel uncovers relevant sources for Paradise Now in the research guide she has created for us. You don’t have to copy my content or format, however; your team will make its own discoveries about how and why the film came to be and came to be seen.

Films to choose from: Bride and Prejudice (due 1/27), Water (due 2/1), Slumdog Millionaire (due 2/3), Moolaade (due 2/15), Central Station (2/23) City of God (due 2/26), Fast Runner (due 3/2).

Forming groups: We will form these teams by the second Monday of the quarter—I will create them randomly through the magic of technology. Please look at the due dates, consider your own calendars, and pick a film and time that will work for you.

Purpose: Part of our work as viewers of transnational films is to investigate the politics and business of getting movies made and seen. Who all gets their visions and stories out into the movie marketplace nationally and then globally? How do they do this and how far do their visions and stories reach?

The research: Watch the film before or as you research. This will give your investigation some focus and specificity. Elinor Appel has prepared an online research guide for you to help you with the research process. Please be sure to take advantage of all the work she has already done to make your job easier.

Some questions to consider as you do your research—don’t panic if you can’t cover all these, of course, and stay open to other insights. (Don’t forget the “special features” at the end of the DVD recording as a source, too.)

- Where did the film get its start, its impetus?
- Who wrote the script? What is this person’s (or people’s) background? (national, ethnic, artistic, etc...) What kinds of research went into the writing process?
- Who directed the film? What is this person’s background and reputation? (national, ethnic, artistic, etc...)
- How was the film funded and by whom?
- How much did it cost to make and how does that compare with other films we’re watching and/or watch in general?
- Did the film require governmental permission to be made and released? What is that process and what guidelines must filmmakers follow?
• Who distributed the film in its various markets?
• How did films made outside the U.S. come to be available and seen here? I think this usually involves the national and international film festivals—what roles do festivals play in marketing films across national borders?
• How was the film marketed/advertised for any or all of its various markets?
• How was the film received by audiences, critics, and perhaps government cultural boards?
• What are the film’s earnings and in which marketplaces?

Again, you might not be able to find answers to all these questions. You might discover other interesting questions and avenues to explore as you research—good! Pursue any angles that seem both relevant to our work of thinking about films in a transnational context and relevant to this film in particular.

Plagiarism—plagiarism means using the words and ideas of others without crediting, naming, these sources. Be sure you name your sources as you present your information and be sure you distinguish your words from theirs. Your Works Cited page at the end of your presentation will list your sources and where we can all find these texts. You still need to make clear whose words and ideas are whose in the body of the presentation, however.

Presenting your findings:
• Please keep the mode of presentation fairly simple, fairly low-tech, so that all class members, whatever the “level” of their computers and computer skills, can access your work easily. (You don’t get graded on fanciness of technical presentation.)

• Organize your information as you see fit. Maybe you want to walk us through the life of the film from inception to birth to rebirth onto DVD. Maybe you discover that the filmmaker is the driving force behind the film and its first release, and so you tell us of his/her steps... Decide what’s most relevant from your discoveries and shape it into digestible chunks for us. Use headings and/or other signals to help us follow along. Please don’t write an essay, a story...please set the key information as you see it clearly before us.

• As you present the various sections of information, explain how and why this information seems particularly relevant for our viewing of and thinking about the film. Perhaps even prepare some questions for us to take into our viewing and our discussion.

• Also include a list in MLA format of all the sources you used. (See Elinor’s online research guide)
Due dates and responses to your work:
Your research project presentation is due by midnight, three days before the discussion for that film closes. Check the course schedule and/or calendar to determine this date. In other words, the class needs three full days, 72 hours, of access to your work. As part of discussion of the film, we will read and respond to your research. We will consider how it figures into our understanding of the film, of its marketplaces, of its arenas of influence.

Working in Teams:
- Discuss your work preferences and habits up front.
- Create some shared guidelines and expectations for your work together.
- Break the project into steps and stages.
- Perhaps break it into distinct chunks of work that each member can take on separately. This might mean deciding which kinds of searches you will each try rather than which topics you will each take on.
- Come to some agreement about a timeline for working on the project. Schedule meetings or check-ins at various stages of the work.
- Stay in touch. If ANGEL team email isn’t enough, agree on other communication methods.

Grading Criteria:
- clarity of the material as presented
- relevance of the material as presented and explained
- demonstrated effort to cover several key areas as outlined in the questions above
- demonstrated effort to work effectively together
- Works Cited page included with presentation