

chicago style for film thesis

Navigating Chicago Style for Film Thesis: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style for film thesis presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for students and scholars in film studies. Adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) ensures clarity, consistency, and academic rigor in your research, particularly when discussing visual media, theoretical frameworks, and critical analyses. This comprehensive guide will delve into the intricacies of applying Chicago style to film thesis projects, covering everything from foundational citation principles to the nuanced handling of film-specific elements. We will explore best practices for formatting, in-text citations, bibliographical entries, and the unique considerations for citing films, interviews, and other audiovisual materials. Understanding these guidelines is paramount for presenting your film scholarship effectively and professionally.

Table of Contents

- Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Film Studies
- Core Principles of Chicago Style Citation
- Citing Films in Chicago Style
- Citing Film-Related Sources
- Formatting Your Film Thesis in Chicago Style
- Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Film Studies

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected citation style that offers two distinct systems: the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system and the Author-Date (AD) system. For humanities disciplines, including film studies, the NB system is generally preferred. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for citations and compiles a comprehensive bibliography at the end

of the work. The NB system allows for detailed commentary within the notes, which can be particularly useful for film analysis where contextualization and theoretical discussions are crucial.

Film studies, as an interdisciplinary field, draws upon various theoretical approaches, historical contexts, and analytical methods. Applying Chicago style effectively means understanding how to integrate these elements seamlessly into your thesis. The manual provides guidelines for a broad range of source types, and it's up to the student to adapt these to the specific needs of film scholarship. This adaptability is key to producing a well-researched and properly formatted thesis.

Core Principles of Chicago Style Citation

Regardless of the specific source material, the core principles of Chicago style remain consistent: accuracy, clarity, and consistency. When citing any source, the goal is to provide enough information for your reader to locate it independently. This involves meticulously recording author, title, publication details, and any relevant page numbers or timestamps.

The Notes-Bibliography system requires two main components: the notes and the bibliography. Notes are typically placed at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the document (endnotes) and are keyed to the text by superscript numbers. The first note for a source provides full citation details, while subsequent notes for the same source use a shortened form. The bibliography, appearing at the end, lists all sources cited in the notes, alphabetized by author's last name.

Footnotes vs. Endnotes

The choice between footnotes and endnotes is often dictated by institutional or departmental guidelines. Footnotes offer the advantage of being visible on the same page as the reference, which can enhance reader convenience. Endnotes, on the other hand, keep the main text cleaner and are easier to manage in digital formats. Whichever system you choose, consistency is paramount.

Shortened Citations in Notes

For subsequent references to a source already fully cited in a note, Chicago style employs a shortened form. This typically includes the author's last name, a shortened version of the title (if the full title is lengthy), and the page number or relevant identifier. For example, a second citation to a book might appear as Smith, *Film Theory*, 45.

Citing Films in Chicago Style

Citing films presents a unique challenge because films are collaborative works and often have multiple creators. Chicago style provides guidance for citing various media, and adapting it for films requires careful attention to detail.

Basic Film Citation Format

The general format for citing a film in Chicago style (Notes-Bibliography system) involves listing the director, the film title (*italicized*), the distributor, the release year, and the medium (e.g., DVD, Blu-ray, streaming service). For a footnote or endnote:

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Footnote/Endnote:

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho*, distributed by Paramount Pictures, 1960, DVD.

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Bibliography Entry:

Hitchcock, Alfred, director. *Psycho*. Distributed by Paramount Pictures, 1960. DVD.

When referring to specific scenes or moments, you should include timestamp information. This is crucial for analytical essays where specific visual or auditory cues are being discussed. For instance, a note might read: Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho*, distributed by Paramount Pictures, 1960, DVD, 00:58:30-01:02:15.

Citing Different Versions of Films

Films are often released in multiple versions (e.g., theatrical, director's cut, restored versions). It is important to specify which version you are referencing. If the version is significant to your argument, include it in the citation. For example:

-

Footnote/Endnote:

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, distributed by

Lionsgate, 2001, Blu-ray.

Citing Streaming Films

With the rise of streaming services, citing films from these platforms has become common. Include the streaming service and the date you accessed the film. The format might be:

-

Footnote/Endnote:

Directed by Bong Joon-ho, *Parasite*, distributed by Neon, 2019, accessed February 15, 2023, Amazon Prime Video.

Citing Film-Related Sources

Your film thesis will undoubtedly rely on a variety of scholarly and non-scholarly sources beyond just the films themselves. Properly citing these materials is just as important as citing the films.

Scholarly Books and Articles

When citing academic books and journal articles related to film theory, history, or criticism, follow the standard Chicago style guidelines for books and periodicals. Ensure you accurately record author names, titles, publication dates, and page numbers.

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Footnote/Endnote:

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18.

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Bibliography Entry:

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18.

Interviews

Interviews, whether conducted by you or previously published, require careful citation. If you conducted the interview, provide details such as the interviewee's name, the interviewer's name, the date of the interview, and the format (e.g., personal interview, email, Skype).

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Footnote/Endnote:

Interview with the director Jane Campion by the author, Los Angeles, CA, October 26, 2022.

For published interviews, cite them as you would any other published work, noting the interviewer if it's relevant to the publication. For interviews found online, include the URL and access date.

Websites and Online Resources

Many valuable resources for film studies are available online, including film archives, databases, and critical essays. Cite these consistently, providing the author (if known), title of the specific page or article, name of the website, publication date (if available), and the URL with the access date.

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Footnote/Endnote:

David Bordwell, "The Way Hollywood Tells It," The Blog of David Bordwell, January 20, 2008,
<https://davidbordwell.net/blog/2008/01/20/the-way-hollywood-tells-it/>.

Formatting Your Film Thesis in Chicago Style

Beyond citation, Chicago style also dictates formatting conventions for your thesis. These include margins, font, line spacing, and the structure of your document.

General Formatting Guidelines

Your thesis should typically have 1-inch margins on all sides, be double-spaced throughout (including block quotes and notes), and use a standard, readable font like Times New Roman or Arial, usually in 12-point size. Page numbers should be placed in the upper right-hand corner, starting with the first page of the main text (usually following the table of contents).

Title Page

The title page should include the full title of your thesis, your name, the name of your institution, the department, the degree sought, and the date of submission. The title should be centered and presented clearly.

Abstract

An abstract is a brief summary of your thesis, typically between 150 and 250 words. It should succinctly state your research question, methodology, key findings, and conclusions. The abstract is usually placed after the title page.

Table of Contents and Lists

A detailed table of contents is essential for a long document like a thesis. It should list all major sections, including chapters, subheadings, and any supplementary material like appendices. If you have tables, figures, or a filmography, create separate lists for each.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Navigating Chicago style for a film thesis can be complex, and several common errors can arise. Being aware of these potential issues can help you avoid them and ensure a polished final product.

Inconsistent Citation Practices

One of the most frequent mistakes is inconsistency in how sources are cited. This can manifest in variations in punctuation, capitalization, or the inclusion of specific publication details. Meticulously follow the CMOS guidelines for each source type, and if you use a citation management tool, ensure it is configured correctly for Chicago style.

Incorrectly Formatting Film Titles

Film titles should always be italicized. This applies to both the main text and citation notes. Ensure you distinguish between the film title itself and any surrounding commentary or descriptive text.

Omitting Essential Citation Information

Forgetting to include crucial details like director, distributor, or release year for films, or specific page numbers for articles and books, can render your citations incomplete and hinder your reader's ability to find the source. Always double-check that all necessary information is present.

Misinterpreting Chicago Style for Audiovisual Media

While CMOS offers general guidelines, applying them to highly specific audiovisual materials can sometimes require interpretation. Consult recent editions of the manual and university library resources for the most up-to-date recommendations, especially for newer media formats or less conventional sources.

Forgetting the Bibliography

The bibliography is a critical component of the Notes-Bibliography system. Ensure that every source cited in your notes is included in your bibliography, and vice-versa. The bibliography should be alphabetized and formatted according to CMOS standards.

Q: What is the primary citation system recommended for film thesis writing in Chicago style?

A: The primary citation system recommended for film thesis writing in Chicago style is the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system. This system uses footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and compiles a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work, which is well-suited for the detailed analysis and contextualization often found in film scholarship.

Q: How should I format the title of a film in my Chicago style thesis?

A: Film titles in Chicago style should always be italicized. This applies whether you are mentioning the film in the main text of your thesis or in a footnote or endnote citation.

Q: What are the essential elements to include when citing a film in a Chicago style footnote?

A: When citing a film in a Chicago style footnote, you should generally include the director's name, the film's title (italicized), the distributor, the release year, and the medium (e.g., DVD, Blu-ray, streaming service). For specific references, timestamp information is also crucial.

Q: Is there a specific guideline for citing films accessed via streaming services in Chicago style?

A: Yes, when citing films from streaming services, you should include the streaming service name and the date you accessed the film, in addition to the standard film citation elements. For example: Directed by [Director's Name], [Film Title], distributed by [Distributor], [Year], accessed [Access Date], [Streaming Service Name].

Q: How do I cite an interview I conducted for my film thesis in Chicago style?

A: For interviews you conducted, cite them in your footnotes or endnotes by providing the interviewee's name, specifying that it was an interview, who conducted it (you), the location, and the date. For example: Interview with [Interviewee's Name] by [Your Name], [City, State], [Date].

Q: What is the difference between the Notes-Bibliography and Author-Date systems in Chicago style, and why is NB preferred for film studies?

A: The Notes-Bibliography (NB) system uses footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography, allowing for detailed explanatory notes. The Author-Date (AD) system uses in-text parenthetical citations (Author Year, Page) and a reference list. NB is often preferred for film studies because the option for detailed notes is beneficial for discussing complex theoretical concepts, historical contexts, and specific visual or auditory elements of films without disrupting the flow of the main text.

Q: Should I include a filmography in my Chicago style film thesis?

A: While not strictly mandated by Chicago style itself, many film studies departments require a filmography. This list would typically appear after the main body of the thesis and catalog all the films analyzed or referenced in your work, often formatted similarly to a bibliography but specific to films.

Q: How should I cite scholarly articles and books in my film thesis using Chicago style?

A: Cite scholarly articles and books using the standard Chicago style guidelines for periodicals and books, respectively. This involves providing the author's full name, article or book title (articles in quotation marks, books italicized), journal or publisher information, publication date, and relevant page numbers or DOI for online articles.

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