INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Candidates are requested to write legibly.
2. Answer THREE questions.
3. You may not answer more than one question on a film; however, you may answer three questions on novels.
4. This paper consists of five pages. Please ensure that you have them all.
1. One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest

Review the novel in the light of the following quotation, providing supporting evidence for your argument by referring to specific episodes in the novel.

Kesey’s criticism of a cold-war society that he believed fundamentally emasculated men strikes a chord in contemporary America. Randall P. McMurphy’s brief stint in a mental hospital, where he persuades the submissive male patients to rise up against ruthless, emasculating Nurse Ratched, is a story replete with issues of particular immediacy in contemporary America: heightened surveillance, the corruption of administration, the degradation of the individual, and a fundamental terror of perceived feminization.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest features both a masculine hero who is able to transform his masculine performance in front of different audiences and a male patient (Billy Bibbit) who is encouraged to reassert his masculinity via sexual performance – a performance validated by the witnessing of the other patients, who laugh approvingly as they look on. That both these attempts fail, leading to Billy’s suicide and McMurphy’s lobotomy, confronts readers of Kesey’s novel with a fundamental choice that, for Kesey, reflects the crisis of masculinity in the postwar era: castration or lobotomy. The men who repress their sexuality, and consequently their innate masculinity are psychologically castrated, whereas the rest are sacrificed.

Kesey’s work exhibits a masculinity that can perhaps help us understand the obsession with masculine sexual virility and violence in our own time.

Michael Meloy

2) Sula

Passage 1:
“How come you did it, Sula?” [...] Sula stirred a little under the covers. She looked bored as she sucked her teeth. “Well, there was this space in front of me, behind me, in my head. Some space. And Jude filled it up. That’s all. He just filled up the space.” “You mean you didn’t even love him?” The feel of the brass was in Nel’s mouth. “It wasn’t even loving him?” [...] “But what about me? What about me? Why didn’t you think about me?” (Morrison, 1973:144)
Passage 2:

“How you know?” Sula asked. “Know what?” Nel still wouldn’t look at her. “About who was good. How you know it was you?” “What you mean?” “I mean maybe it wasn’t you. Maybe it was me.” (Morrison, 1973:146)

Analyse the dialogue in the two passages, and evaluate the novel’s representations of ethical behaviour, friendship and romantic love.

3) *Shallow Grave*

Few films feel as cruel and cold-blooded as Danny Boyle’s *Shallow Grave*, a fact attributable as much to its striking and sinister visual approach as its bleak downward spiral of a plot and amoral main characters.

Respond fully to the above quotation. Discuss too other elements of the film – such as genre conventions, the use of humour and the theme of love – that provide a counterbalance to the prevailing dark mood. Conclude by evaluating the significance of the ending.

4) *A Private Life*

I would say to my arms, “Misses Don’t, don’t be angry.” I called my arms “the Misses Don’t,” because they most often followed my brain’s bidding.

Then I would say to my legs, “Misses Do, let’s go home to Mama, then everything will be okay.” I called my legs “the Misses Do,” because I thought that they most often followed the bidding of my body, paying no attention to my brain.

I would then set off with my Misses Do and Don’t, soothing them with sweet talk along the way. Of course, these were private, unspoken conversations. Sometimes I felt like I was a whole group of people. It was a lot more fun that way. We exchanged ideas all the time, telling one another all our problems. I always had plenty of problems.

But what was really strange that day was when I looked up from the soggy Misses Do and Don’t and was surprised to see that none of the people around me was wet. Why was I always the first one to get soaked in the rain? I didn’t understand, but I was much more easygoing than my Misses Do and Don’t. I didn’t get angry.

What’s the good of getting angry?

Provide a close reading of the above passage, and connect it with the persona of Lady Zero.
5) *Transamerica*

*Transamerica* explores the incomplete, the fluid, the spaces in between. The film queers the familiar, such as family and journey, to reveal that binary oppositions cannot hold all possibilities.

JoAnne C. Juett

Discuss the implications of the above commentary by Juett, analysing effects created in specific scenes by Duncan Tucker’s use of interstitiality in terms of gender and sexuality. Conclude your essay by carefully explaining the significance of Toby’s reappearance in the final scene of the film.

6) *Specimen Days*

Analyse Michael Cunningham’s depictions of families of choice in *Specimen Days*.

7) *The Lives of Others*

Critically analyse the effects of key scenes depicting Wiesler’s shifting allegiances within the film, and evaluate the success or otherwise of the ending of the film.

8) *The Virgin of Flames*

Carefully analyse the final chapter in *The Virgin of Flames*, “Benediction”, and connect it to the overall themes of the novel.

Leavened.

This blue light here and trembling with knowledge beyond measure; also love: perhaps. It falls with the sense of a wingspan, but is gone just as soon leaving only the memory of it; and like this River, it is never the same twice.

Last night’s regretful rain is now only ash.

And maybe this too.

Here, on the edge of morning, perched on the lip of a bridge, hunched in the solitary sadness of a gargoyle, a woman picks petals from a flower, dropping each into that endless flow, her whispers holding it all like prayer: he loved me, he loved me not. In the river below, an angry dog barks as it swims for safety unaware of the petals falling like gossamer, like promises not kept. But there are no scriptures here in this
city of angels where every moment is a life lived too fast, where the spines of freeways, like arteries, like blood, circle in hope. Permanence is this River and with piety’s conviction we make a home here.

There will never be no more River.

9) District 9

Wikus is used as a kind of scapegoat, himself a stereotype in a puppet theatre of crass stereotypes, with the anxiety and guilt around complicity of the white minority literally erupting from within his body as an alien presence. In the end there is a sense of a redemptive process being sketched out; District 9 posits a fantasy of the complicit white man’s path to redemption and the recovery of a certain humanity as being violent, invasive, traumatic, humiliating, uncomfortably intimate, and not without humour. However, the film rests on an undercurrent of aggressive frustration – which finds its object in Wikus’s mistreated body – as the ideological freedoms granted by the narrative and visual strategies of irony and caricature seem to veil a difficulty in grappling with the real, lived complexities of the struggle for reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. At the same time, the very playfulness of the film represents a kind of gung-ho willingness to explore difficult and traumatic subject matter, and has allowed for multiple, varied interpretations, avoiding the absolute closure typical of its more strictly Hollywoodish counterparts in the sci-fi blockbuster genre.

Mocke Jansen van Veuren

Discuss ways in which the character of Wikus can be seen as a microcosm of anxieties about white masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. Comment on your reception of the film’s use of caricature and the ending of the text in terms of a fantasy of redemption. Evaluate the film’s success in terms of representations of reconciliation.

10) Zoo City

Analyse Zoo City through the lens of Lyman Tower Sargent’s notion of the “critical dystopian”.