

2016 Research Week Proposal Instructions and Template Posters and Presentations

Research Proposal Instructions

Write a concise summary of the key points of your research. This proposal needs to represent your research well as it could be used as part of the judging criteria during the event. Your proposal should contain a strong literature review or introduction to your research topic, hypothesis or research questions, methods, results, and conclusions. You should also include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings. Your abstract should be a single paragraph double-spaced. Your abstract should be *between 250 and 500 words*. The second paragraph should address how your research is informed by a Christian worldview. **In 250-500 words**, describe how your Christian worldview has informed your research design and communication of your results.

When submitting your proposal, please use the template (proposal sample) provided below.

Proposal Sample

Title – Subjective Identity Takes Flight: Magical Realism in *Birdman*

Program of Study – Literature

Presentation Type – Choose one of the following: PowerPoint, Print Poster, Digital Poster, PowerPoint (Remote)

Mentor(s) and Mentor Email – Dr. Andrew Milacci afmilacci@liberty.edu

Student name(s) and email(s) – Kelly Kramer (kmkramer3@liberty.edu)

Category – Choose one of the following: Experimental (Basic), Experimental (Applied), Experimental (Theoretical), **Textual**, Creative/Artistic. See category descriptions for more information and examples from previous research symposia.

Abstract: The 2014 film *Birdman* marked the first in back-to-back Best Picture Oscar wins for Director Alejandro González Iñárritu. This thoughtful response to the pervasive effects of the superhero genre presents the effects of imagination on a washed-up Hollywood actor. From the protagonist's magical powers to the "single-take" format, this film caused audiences and critics alike to question what was "real" in the film, and many film critics have touched on the film's magical realist elements, even if they take its definition and function in the film for granted. By offering a succinct definition and context for magical realism—focusing on its origins in Latin

American literature—I argue that a proper understanding of the term enlivens the viewer’s understanding of the film and Iñárritu’s treatment of the real. More specifically, the film demands a clear magical realist interpretation if we consider the director’s Latin American background and his deliberate inclusion of Latin American culture in the film, in particular a copy of Borges’ *Labyrinths*. Furthermore, viewing key scenes in the film from a magical realist standpoint helps to bring clarity to the film’s overall treatment of the real and how we know it. Many aspects of the film, including the play-within-the-film, dialogue, and the protagonist’s magical powers drive home this reading of the real, and the ending in particular provides some answers as to what the film wants us to conclude. Though deliberately difficult to understand, the lens of magical realism gives the viewer enough clues to piece together what did really happen, as Iñárritu’s film parallels the real-life issue of uncovering truth in a world consumed with subjectivity.

Christian worldview integration:

Film is the most widespread cultural medium where serious ideas are being discussed, and Christian critics need to interact with ideas presented by films such as *Birdman*. It would be really easy to just write this film off for being too ‘postmodern,’ but the essence of this film and its central question (what is real, what is true) deserve attention. Any major Oscar-winner by a director who won best picture this year and the year before deserves a careful investigation into what this major cultural voice has to say. In addition to being merely famous, this director is clearly imminently concerned with truth, true identity, and how human beings come to know those concepts. While it appears generally focused on art of theater and acting, the film forces the viewer to question how the stories we tell about ourselves shape our identity, and whether a

false story still has the power to affect us. Seeing ourselves as part of a story does give us an identity, and this film questions how we can allow stories to accidentally, or intentionally, shape our lives. For the protagonist, finding out the truth about who he is and what story he belongs in may be difficult and require great personal sacrifice, and even faith, but doing so is worth it. In a very real sense, the truth sets the main character free in this film. Whenever any work of art is so deeply concerned with truth, how we find the truth, and what amount of faith is required to find the truth, Christian critics need to be ready to think well about it.