Assignment Information

Students are required to select an independent novel that contains intertextual links with the movie, *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Walter Salles the director of *The Motorcycle Diaries* describes his movie as being about:

“It's about a journey of discovery that becomes one of self-discovery as well. It's about the emotional and political choices we have to make in life. It's about finding friendship, about solidarity. Finally, it's about finding one’s place in the world – one that is worth fighting for.”

The main emphasis of our study will be on how Salles represents the personal growth and development of his central characters of Ernesto and Alberto, as they travel around South America on a motorcycle. Connections can be based on the following themes:

- identity development
- personal growth
- self-discovery
- friendship
- journeys
- landscape

The focus of this assessment task is comparing how such ideas are represented in the movie and in your independently chosen novel. Hence, you will need to discuss the use of cinematic techniques by Walter Salles in *The Motorcycle Diaries* and the writing style in your novel.

The assessment task is a 1000 word paired text essay about the film and your chosen novel.

Due Dates are in the Assessment Outline for Semester 1

Some Further Information:

The film, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, is based on a book by Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who later became an icon of socialist revolution in the twentieth century. Che Guevara’s political and revolutionary legacy is hotly contested, therefore I have included some background information about him.

“Ernesto Che Guevara” by Jerry A. Sierra
from: <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/chebio.htm> (accessed 23/02/09)

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION WAS FIVE YEARS OLD in 1964 when Ernesto Che Guevara was offered financial compensation to speak at Havana University. Guevara was one of only a handful of foreigners who came with the Castro Brothers on the Yacht called "Granma" to fight against the Batista dictatorship.

Upon landing in Cuba, most of the 81 men on the yacht were caught or killed, and only 16 escaped into the Sierra Maestra Mountains, where peasants and farmers aided them until their forces grew into the revolutionary army that defeated Batista.
By the time his troops marched on Havana with Camilo Cienfuegos' troops in January 1959, Guevara was very popular with the Cuban population. Stories of his bravery and leadership circulated widely, and he was considered one of the most important figures in the Revolution.

In his response to the offer from Havana University, Guevara showed the contempt for money that he openly shared with the Castro Brothers and a number of the other revolutionaries. "It's inconceivable to me," he wrote, "that a monetary payment should be offered to an official of the Government and the (Communist) Party, for any work of whatever kind it may be. Among the many payments that I have received, the most important is to be considered a part of the Cuban people; I would not know how to gauge that in dollars and cents." (The letter was printed in the Mexican magazine SUCESSOS, January 2, 1967.)

The word "che" is the familiar diminutive for "you" in Argentina, as in "hey, you!" It was an affectionate term that became his "official" name and the one which he used for a signature, always with a lower-case "c."

Born in Argentina on June 14 1928 (he was ten months younger than Fidel Castro), Guevara studied medicine at Buenos Aires University, where he also became involved in opposition to the Argentine leader Juan Peron. He later went to Guatemala, and in 1953 he joined the government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, who was overthrown by a CIA-sponsored coup.

An intellectual and an idealist, able to speak coherently about Aristotle, Kant, Marx, Gide or Faulkner, he also loved poetry, and was equally at home with Keats as with Sara De Ibáñez, his favorite writer. It is said that he knew Kipling's "If" by heart.

"I don't think you and I are very closely related," Che wrote in a letter to Señora Maria Rosario Guevara, "but if you are capable of trembling with indignation each time that an injustice is committed in the world, we are comrades, and that is more important." It was this "great sensitivity to injustice" that forged his political views and led him to distrust imperialism, specifically the American government.

It is said that Guevara played an important role in converting Castro to communism, often quoting Marx, Engels, Mao Tse-tung and others.

Guevara suffered from a life-long asthmatic condition that might have prevented any other man from participating in guerilla warfare as he did, but he was determined to not let his ailment interfere with his ideals for a just society. This condition may be why, as a doctor, he specialized in allergies.

Journalist Herbert L. Matthews writes about Guevara in his book, REVOLUTION IN CUBA: "His dedication to his revolutionary beliefs was deeply religious. Che had a missionary's faith in the innate goodness of man, in the ability of workers to dedicate themselves to ideals and to overcome selfishness and prejudices. It was the other side of the coin of his passionate indignation against injustice and exploitation of the humble. He saw the solution in an exalted form of Marxism that would bring freedom and brotherhood. Such men are born to be martyrs."

While living in Mexico, Guevara worked in the allergy ward of the General Hospital and supplemented his salary as a photographer. It was at this time that he met Raul Castro, who told him about the situation in Cuba. In early July 1954, Guevara met Fidel, and after talking through the night for ten straight hours, he joined the Cuban Revolution.

Guevara went on to become the official doctor of the rebel army, and an important leader and strategist. Before leaving for Cuba on the Granma, he told his wife Hilda Gadea (whom he married on August 18, 1955 in Mexico City) that he joined the expedition "because it was part of the fight against Yankee imperialism and the first stage of the liberation of our continent."

After taking on many important jobs in the Cuban government after the Revolution (he headed Cuba's Ministry of Industry from 1961 to 1965) he led a force of 120 Cubans into the Congo, but the mission ended in failure.

In 1966 Guevara went to fight for revolution in Bolivia. He was captured by the Bolivian Army and executed on October 9 1967.