

Racial Justice in a Money & Banking Course

Julie K Smith, Frank Lee and Edna M. Smith Professor
Department of Economics
smithjk@lafayette.edu

LAFAYETTE
COLLEGE

Abstract

Money & Banking courses are often in high demand by students given their interests in careers in finance. However, much Money & Banking material does not necessarily lend itself to discussing issues of racial justice. This assignment exposes students to issues relating to the economic situation of Black Americans via film and scholarly sources.

In a 200-level Money & Banking course, I provide students with a list of seven possible films and eight possible themes to analyze. The students 1) watch a film 2) identify a theme 3) find two scholarly sources that discuss their chosen theme and 4) write a 1000-word essay comparing the film's treatment of the theme with the research from the scholarly sources. I scaffold the assignment so that students can successfully complete the assignment even if they have little experience with economics and economic research since some students have only taken an introductory economics course (1-semester).

Introduction to assignment

You will write an essay (at most 1000 words) after watching a film related to the economic situation of Black individuals in the United States. Your essay is not a movie review but will address how the economic issues discussed in the film are treated in the scholarly literature with support from scholarly sources.

Detailed instructions

- 1. Select a film.** Watch the film.
- After watching the film and **identifying 1 theme, find two scholarly sources** that deal with the theme. Scholarly sources are those written by economists and focus on a narrow topic. There are several ways to search for sources.
 - a. Use EconLit** on the library's linked under Research Tools.
 - b. Use "OneSearch"** on the Library homepage and to limit your search to "peer reviewed" articles. Make sure the articles you find are related to economics.
 - c. Use Google scholar.** Make sure the articles you find are related to economics.
 - d. If you have **any questions** as to whether a particular source is scholarly or related to economics, consult with me or a reference librarian.
- 3. Write and rewrite your paper.** Remember writing is not something done the day before the assignment is due.

Assignments	Deadlines
Complete Google form with film choice, theme and two scholarly sources (MLA format).	October 23 by 11:55 pm (missed deadline penalty is 1 letter grade)
Upload final essay on Moodle	October 31 by 11:55 PM

<p>Which movie/documentary did you choose? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 13th</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Banker</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Harriet</p> <p><input type="radio"/> LA92</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Mudbound</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Sorry to Bother You</p>	<p>What theme did you choose? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> differential access to capital (financing)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> differential access to resources</p> <p><input type="radio"/> costs/benefits of acting white or code switching</p> <p><input type="radio"/> skin tone and economic opportunities/outcomes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> incarceration effects on home ownership, earnings, economic mobility</p> <p><input type="radio"/> intergenerational poverty/wealth in the Black community</p> <p><input type="radio"/> race, women and leadership</p> <p><input type="radio"/> race and small business</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other...</p> <p>Scholarly source 1 (MLA style citation) *</p> <p>Short answer text</p> <p>Scholarly source 2 (MLA style citation) *</p> <p>Short answer text</p>
--	--

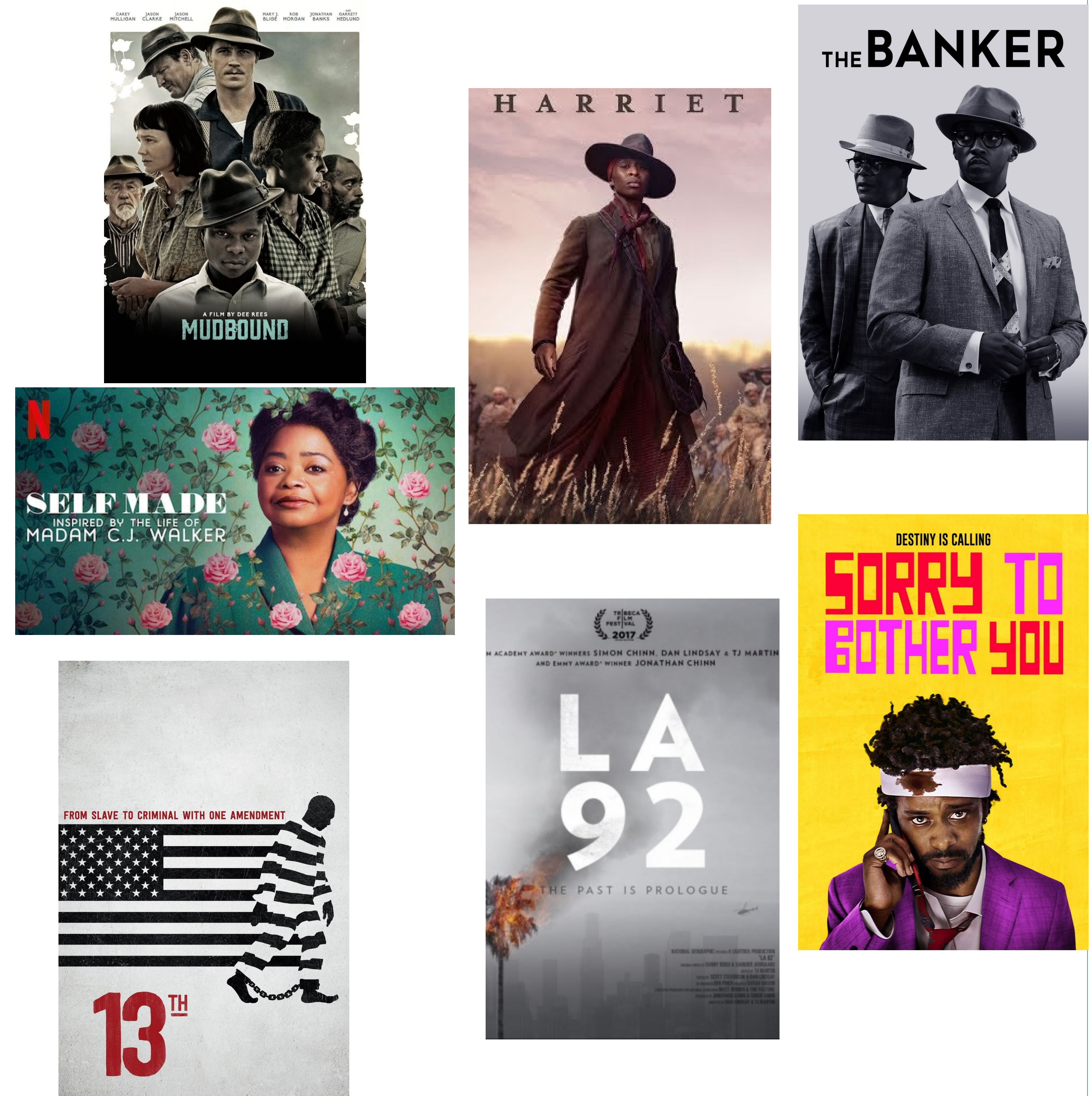
Instructor

Reflections

- Hardest part of the assignment is finding scholarly sources (about 10% have to resubmit sources)
- Students comment that the assignment has informed them of the discrimination and racism that Black Americans face - not encountered in other macro courses.
- For students of color, acknowledgement of the reality of the world, recognition of the systemic racism that exists in the United States.
- Use paper outline as grading rubric

Films

Students choose one of these films.



Potential themes

Students choose one of these themes or suggest a theme of their own:

- differential access to capital (financing)
- costs/benefits of acting white or code switching
- skin tone and economic opportunities/outcomes
- incarceration effects on home ownership, earnings, or economic mobility
- intergenerational poverty or wealth in the Black community
- race, women and leadership
- differential access to resources (e.g., land, education, opportunities)
- race and small business (e.g., creation, financing, community-building)

Paper outline

The ideal paper will have the following parts:

- 1. Introduction** (what film, what theme) and thesis statement.
- 2. Brief summary** of the film.
- 3. Discussion** of how the **1 theme** you selected is presented in the **film** and discussion of whether the treatment of that theme is similar or different from the presentation of that theme in your two **scholarly articles**.
- 4. Conclusion**
- 5. Bibliography** (excluded from word count)

Film sources

Many students have access to subscription sources such as Netflix or Apple TV. If students do not have access to those services, two of the films are available free on either NatGeo or Netflix media and two others are available to watch through the Lafayette College library.

1. Mudbound available on Netflix
2. Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam CJ Walker available on Netflix
3. Harriet available through Lafayette's digital movie collection Swank
4. The Banker available on Apple TV
5. LA 92 available on YouTube
6. Sorry to Bother You available through Lafayette's digital movie collection Swank
7. 13th available on Netflix media center