Silence Of The Lambs

“To enter the mind of a killer she must challenge the mind of a madman.”

Clarice Starling is eager and committed to her job in law enforcement. She has been given an assignment to work with Dr. Hannibal Lector who is in prison after committing gruesome crimes against others. Just as Clarice makes a connection with him, Lector stuns the law enforcement community with other crimes. We see Clarice led on a journey through many states working to track crimes with which Lector is familiar. The film leads to a crescendo that culminates in solving a powerful web of crimes.

This film offers insight into serial killers and those that search them out. SILENCE OF THE LAMBS is critically acclaimed and a film that leaves viewers on the edge of their seat. It’s not only a triumph of film making, but of soul searching and intrigue.

Programming Suggestions

This developmental guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that may be pertinent to them. Therefore, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to questions in this guide.

The discussion facilitator may choose to utilize one of the following activities as a means of developing discussion:

- Invite members the psychology faculty to come and speak about compulsive disorders and obsession. They could also talk about the possible mental state of people who commit the crimes in the film.
- Invite members of the Women’s Center to talk about roles of women in predominantly male jobs.
- Solicit input from Campus Police for information about careers in law enforcement. You could also bring in staff from the career center and ask them to discuss ways to get involved in this type of work.
- One of the issues brought up by the film is that of stalking. In fact, Jodie Foster herself was stalked while in college. Invite representatives from Campus Safety to talk with students about safety concerns, stalking, rape, etc., and how to report crimes against themselves and others.

An important consideration in choosing any facilitation option is that all students have an opportunity to participate. Be aware that many of the topics addressed in the film are not often talked about in public settings. Students who attend the program may have varying degrees of comfort level with the discussion.
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**Interpersonal Relations**

- Describe how Clarice was treated throughout the film. Was she treated differently than other characters? How and why? Do you see areas on campus or in your residence hall where women are treated differently than men? Discuss your impressions.

- Describe the relationships in the film: Hannibal/Clarice, Clarice/Jack, Hannibal/Buffalo Bill. What makes these relationships unique? What are the important elements to each relationship? Are there elements of these relationships that you can see in your relationships?

- Describe how Clarice built trust in the film. Why is this important in her work? Are there elements of how she did this that had an effect on Hannibal? How do you build trust in your relationships? In the end is this important? Why or why not?

- Is there leadership in the film? How is it defined and who are the leaders? What makes them leaders?

- Discuss the notion of *Quid Pro Quo...give and take.* It seems the more Clarice gives, the more Hannibal gives. Why is this important to the characters? Are they able to accomplish more or less through this? Why or why not? Talk about how *give and take* has an effect on your interpersonal relationships.

- Are characters like Hannibal and Buffalo Bill created due to their environment or were they born with this pre-disposition? Why do you think the way you do? Examples?

**Transgender Issues**

- Describe the way Buffalo Bill is portrayed in the film. Is it positive or negative? What are the layers to his personality? Is the fact that he dresses in women’s clothing an important aspect to this film? Why or why not?

- Sometimes people aren’t what they appear to be. Describe this statement in relation to the characters in the film. How do you see Buffalo Bill in this film? Do you know people that are something different than they appear? How does this change your impression? Is it important? Why or why not.

- Talk about the larger Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) issue within the context of film. There are times when these kinds of characters aren’t played as positive people in society. Of the characters that you see in film that are GLBT, is this true? Why do you feel this way? Examples?

**Ethics**

- Did you ever feel as though some characters made questionable decisions? What were they? Describe their impact on others. Have you seen friends or colleagues make decisions that probably were not the best for all involved? How did that situation impact other people?

- From an ethical perspective, do you think it was appropriate to assign a woman to this case? Why or why not? Would a man have gotten a different response with Hannibal? Why or why not? Do you see leaders make ethical decisions that often time affect other people? Describe.

- Was there enough done from a police perspective in order to bring the case to a “close?” What else do you think should have been done? Why?