**Discussion Questions for *Michael Collins*, a film by Neil Jordan**

**Directions**: After the film, I’d like everyone to answer the first question in class before we discuss the film. The rest of these questions are to help guide our discussions. The questions you will answer for homework will be on readings I will post after the film, and I’ll post those questions later, too.

1. **Write your first impressions** of the film and any questions they are left with. (Use a separate piece of paper that I can collect.) If that’s too vague, just answer this one: The director knew his audience included people who wouldn’t know much, if anything, about his protagonist or the historical events depicted. How well do you think he did with the challenge of engaging your sympathies anyway? If you did find it engaging, what elements drew you in and held your attention. If you didn’t feel engaged, where/when did he lose you?
2. One crucial question the director has faced ever since he made the film (during a fragile truce between the IRA and the government of England and Northern Ireland) has been about whether Michael Collins should be considered a **heroic freedom fighter** or a **terrorist** (a term usually reserved for those who commit abhorrent acts of violence). Based on what you see here, what do you think, and why?
3. Many reviewers complain about the love story in the film, though others think it helps to humanize both Collins and Harry Boland and to show the difficult choices revolutionaries have to make between their personal desires and their historic obligations. What do you think? Does the Kitty Kiernan plot line add to or detract from the film, overall?
4. Another key figure in the film is Eamon De Valera, who says himself that history is likely to judge him more harshly while making a hero of Collins. From what you can tell, is this true, or does it present both characters as complex men with both strengths and weaknesses? Even if you think the film *is* biased towards Collins, what could be seen as De Valera’s strengths and/or achievements? What could be seen as Collins’ weaknesses or mistakes?
5. Consider this film beside other films of its type, films about a historical period that emphasize the experiences of a particular person, especially a person most of us wouldn’t know about without the film, such as *Schindler’s List*. Which ones have you seen, and how did this one stack up against it? What do you think makes a film of this type work?