

*The Secretariat of the Fifteenth Annual
Virginia International Crisis
Simulation Presents:*

**Academy of Motion Picture
Arts and Sciences**

Chaired by Vinitra Rangan

VICS XV

Hello, delegates, and welcome to VICS XV!

My name is Vinitra Rangan, and I am very excited to be chairing an extremely unique committee at this conference: the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, commonly known as the Oscar Committee. I am a second-year student at the University of Virginia, and am a Foreign Affairs and (hopefully) Commerce double-major along with a minor in South Asian Studies. I'm particularly interested in South Asian politics, as I am Indian myself, and have chaired before both in high school and at UVA's high school conference, VAMUN. Last year, I was on the Secretariat of VICS XIV as the Under-Secretary-General of Logistics, but I'm very glad to get back to chairing this year. I've been involved with Model UN for six years now, and I'm enjoying every minute of it!

I suggested this committee for VICS XV because I've never personally encountered it before at any conference I've attended and thought it would be interesting to chair a committee that examined the intersection of Hollywood and politics – I have great hopes for both our crises and our discussion in the committee, and I definitely hope you do as well. This committee is meant to be a look at the other side of the Oscars – we will be discussing changes to the ceremony and its content itself as well as the logistical issues involved in putting up such a high-profile event. Throughout the committee, it is important to keep in mind your own character and the opinions they would have as well as the media repercussions of any decisions we might take – after all, the media will be watching every step we make with a razor-sharp eye!

I have included a list of positions that may be part of the committee as well as a small blurb about them in order for you to familiarize yourself with the people you will be working with – the Academy includes people often profiled in the media, but it also includes scores of people who work entirely behind the scenes but whose opinions also carry a lot of weight in the voting process for their own area of specialization. *An additional note about the committee:* for the first two or three sessions, your character will be your assigned Academy member. During this time, we will address the first topic for the committee, "Proposed Changes to the Oscar Ceremony." For the next two sessions, we will switch from being the Oscar Academy itself to being the Logistics Commission for the 2010 Oscar Ceremony, and you will receive a new position in order to deal with the second topic, "Logistical Issues." These positions will not be revealed to you until right before we begin debate on the second topic, so be prepared to think on your feet and deal with any issues that might arise! In addition, knowledge of parliamentary procedure is *recommended but not necessary* – we will be flexible enough to move in and out of parliamentary procedure. Position papers, however, are *required*.

I hope all of you have just as much fun preparing for the conference as I have had researching for the background guide – please feel free to email me at vkr5v@virginia.edu if you have any questions about the topics or how the committee will work. See you soon!

Sincerely,

Vinitra Rangan
UVA 2012

MEMBERS, ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES*

1. Meryl Streep, actress
Credits include *The Hours*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Doubt*, and *Julie and Julia*. She has received 15 Academy Award nominations and 25 Golden Globe nominations, more than anyone else in the history of both awards.
2. James Cameron, director
Credits include *Avatar*, *Titanic*, and *The Terminator*. He was most recently in the news for inventing a new motion capture system called the Fusion Camera System in order to make *Avatar*.
3. Steven Spielberg, director
Credits include *Jaws*, the *Indiana Jones* series, and *Jurassic Park*. He is an American director and producer who has won Academy Awards for Best Directing for *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*.
4. George Clooney, actor
Credits include *Up in the Air*, the *Ocean's* series, *Syriana*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, and *Michael Clayton*. He is also known for his social and liberal political activism.
5. Angelina Jolie, actress
Credits include *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *Girl Interrupted*, and *Gia*. She has received three Golden Globe Awards, two Screen Actors Guild Awards, and one Academy Award, and is known for her political activism.
6. Martin Scorsese, director
Credits include *Goodfellas*, *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, and *The Departed*. He is an American film director, screenwriter, producer, actor, and film historian and the founder of the World Cinema Foundation.
7. Steve Jobs, executive
Credits as CEO of Pixar Animation Studios include *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, *Cars*, *Ratatouille*, *Wall-E*, and *Up*. He is an American businessman and the co-founder and CEO of Apple Inc.
8. Mira Nair, director
Credits include *Salaam Bombay*, *Monsoon Wedding*, *The Namesake*, and *Amelia*. She is an Indian film director and producer based in New York known for her ethnic take on filmmaking.
9. Jeffrey Katzenberg, executive
Credits as producer include *Shrek*, *Shark Tale*, *Madagascar*, *Over the Hedge*, *Bee Movie*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Monsters vs. Aliens*. He is the CEO of DreamWorks Animation and was previously Studio Chairman at the Walt Disney Company.
10. Colleen Atwood, costume designer
Credits include *Public Enemies*, *Nine*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Planet of the Apes*, and the upcoming *Alice in Wonderland*. She has been nominated for an Academy Award many times, winning for *Chicago* and *Memoirs of a Geisha*.
11. Steve Kloves, screenwriter
Credits include *Wonder Boys*, *Racing with the Moon*, and all seven *Harry Potter* films. He is most known for adapting famous novels into screenplays.
12. Quentin Tarantino, director
Credits include *Inglorious Basterds*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Reservoir Dogs*, and *Kill Bill*. He is an American director known for his use of violence in film and nonlinear storylines.

13. Kathryn Bigelow, director
Credits include *The Hurt Locker* and *The Weight of Water*. She is known for her documentary-style technique of filmmaking.
14. Clint Eastwood, actor/director
Credits include *A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More*, and *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* as actor and *Invictus*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Gran Torino*, and *Mystic River* as director. He is known for acting in Westerns during the 1960s.
15. Penelope Cruz, actress
Credits include *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, *Nine*, *Volver*, and *Broken Embraces*. She is a Spanish actress known for her work in multiple languages.
16. Pete Docter, animator/screenwriter
Credits include *Toy Story*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters Inc.*, and *Up*. He is a key figure in Pixar Animation Studios and was the tenth employee to have been hired at the company.
17. Peter Jackson, producer/director
Credits include *King Kong*, *District 9*, and *Heavenly Creatures*. He is a New Zealand director best known for his work on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which won multiple Academy Awards.
18. A .R. Rahman, composer
Credits include *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *Couples Retreat*, *Dil Se*, and *Roja*. He is an Indian composer who has sold more than 100 million records of his film scores and soundtracks worldwide, making him one of the world's all-time top selling recording artists.
19. Matt Damon, actor
Credits include *Good Will Hunting*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, the *Ocean's* series, the *Bourne* series, and *Invictus*. He has also been actively involved in charitable work, including the ONE Campaign, H2O Africa Foundation, and Water.org.
20. Lee Daniels, director
Credits include *Monster's Ball* and *Precious*. He is an African-American director and producer who has recently shot to fame.
21. Hans Zimmer, composer
Credits include *The Dark Knight*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, *The Lion King*, and *The Da Vinci Code*. He is a German composer who has worked on over 100 films.
22. John Caglione, Jr., make-up artist
Credits include *The Dark Knight*, *The Departed*, *3:10 to Yuma*, *Gigli*, and *Lolita*. He is known for his work in period films.
23. Brad Pitt, actor
Credits include *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, the *Ocean's* series, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, and *Troy*. He is also known for his humanitarian work.
24. Cameron Crowe, director
Credits include *Jerry Maguire*, *Elizabethtown*, *Almost Famous*, and *Vanilla Sky*. He is an American director and screenwriter also known for his work at *Rolling Stone* magazine.
25. Tim Burton, director
Credits include *Edward Scissorhands*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Corpse Bride*, and the upcoming *Alice in Wonderland*. He is best known for his work with the actor Johnny Depp.

* all information from IMDB



INTRODUCTION: THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES

“Founded in 1927 by 36 of the most influential men and women in the motion picture industry at the time, the Academy is an honorary membership organization whose ranks now include more than 6,000 artists and professionals” (“History and Organization”). The Academy is composed of people who work on every aspect of a film – directing, acting, costuming, screenwriting, editing, art direction, sound editing, sound mixing, animation, etc. – and each member is invited to become part of the Academy based on their previous performances. Every year, after the Academy Awards, the Academy selects a new set of people to join the organization.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is, of course, best known for running the Academy Awards, which have been in place for the past eighty two years. “One of the first Academy committees was Awards of Merit. The seven-person committee suggested to the Board in 1928 that awards be presented in 12 categories. The first Academy Awards

were officially presented at a black-tie dinner at the Roosevelt on May 16, 1929, honoring achievements between August 1, 1927 and July 31, 1928” (“History of the Academy”). The very first Academy Awards had a small list of categories, as might be expected, and many more were added in the years following. Today, the Academy gives the following awards:

- Best Actor in a Leading Role
- Best Actor in a Supporting Role
- Best Actress in a Leading Role
- Best Actress in a Supporting Role
- Best Animated Feature
- Best Animated Short Film
- Best Art Direction
- Best Cinematography
- Best Costume Design
- Best Director
- Best Documentary Feature
- Best Documentary Short Subject
- Best Film Editing
- Best Foreign Language Film
- Best Live Action Short Film
- Best Make-up
- Best Original Score
- Best Original Song
- Best Picture
- Best Sound Editing
- Best Sound Mixing
- Best Visual Effects
- Best Writing - Adapted Screenplay, and
- Best Writing - Original Screenplay

There have also been some awards that were given only for a few years, then retired. A list of such awards follows:

- Best Assistant Director: 1933 to 1937
- Best Dance Direction: 1935 to 1937
- Best Engineering Effects: 1927/1928
- Best Original Musical or Comedy Score: 1995 to 1999
- Best Original Story: 1927 to 1956
- Best Score - Adaptation or Treatment: 1962 to 1969; 1973
- Best Short Film - Color: 1936 and 1937

- Best Short Film - Live Action - 2 Reels: 1936 to 1956
- Best Short Film - Novelty: 1932 to 1935
- Best Title Writing: 1927/1928 only
- Best Unique and Artistic Quality of Production: 1927/1928 only



TOPIC ONE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE OSCAR CEREMONY

The Oscar ceremony has undergone many changes in the eighty-two years that it has been the premier film awards ceremony in the United States – change is, after all, a natural part of any organization’s history, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is no exception. From the beginning of the Awards, there have been calls to make the Awards either more inclusive (the addition of awards for women, particularly) or more exclusive (the removal of certain awards or cutting the number of nominations for an award down, for example).

In committee, it will be your job to work together with the other people present in order to decide on a variety of issues that will affect the way the Oscars are run for decades to come – the decisions you make will be final, and all future Oscar award ceremonies will be run according to your new rules unless you say otherwise. Keep in mind the effect of your decisions on the media and the way the public will view them – your new rules will, after all, be revealed in a press release to the media first.

There are many different issues that will be discussed in committee, and certainly some of them will be a surprise to you – but here are some of the issues that you might consider when preparing for the conference:

1. *Increasing the number of Best Picture nominees to ten instead of just five.* The committee is set before the 2010 Oscars, so we will have the opportunity to decide whether or not we want this change to happen.

On the one hand, many have applauded this change, saying that it finally gives films that were commercially successful, but not the kind of films that traditional Academy members would like, a chance to be nominated: for example, if the change had occurred last year, some critics say it is possible that commercially successful movies such as *The Dark Knight* or *Wall-E* would have been included in the Best Picture category instead of being relegated to others alone (“Oscars Doubling”). On the other hand, an increase in the number of Best Picture Nominees may mean that the entire process of the Awards is being diluted – a lot of people believe that fewer nominations is one easy way to make sure the Academy Awards are as selective as they have always been (“Will Having”). After all, increasing the number of nominations in turn means that more movies that may not be particularly good will be nominated simply in order to fill the ballot, or that movies which simply offend the least amount of people will be nominated and will eventually win because of the new voting system. Things to think about, particularly relating to this issue, are: Do you have an incentive to prefer one of these options over another? Would your films have a greater chance to be nominated with 10 open slots, or do you usually become involved with films that the Academy traditionally likes? The way that you (as your character) approach filmmaking will inform your answers to these questions and the opinions you will have on the debate.

2. *Redefining the category of Best Foreign Language Film* (or, in turn, foreign language short films, documentary films, animated films, etc.) This category has been one of the most hotly-debated at the Oscars,

particularly since the definition of what constitutes a true “foreign language film” has been sketchy at best. There have been many examples of movies that have been critically acclaimed but that have been disqualified from winning, mostly for not being “foreign enough,” as in the case of *Lust, Caution* or *The Motorcycle Diaries*. In addition, there have been criticisms that Academy members do not prioritize foreign language films as much as they do films nominated in other categories: as Mairi Mackay writes for CNN, “The perennial argument that the retired Academy members who make up the judging panel are too conservative to appreciate the most exciting, edgy examples of world cinema is rearing its head once more. Unfortunately, because of the significant time commitment required to watch 14 or 15 films over two months at Academy-sanctioned screenings, the demographic of committee members is skewed towards those with time on their hands” (“The films”). Questions to think about in relation to this issue are: How much of a film’s dialogue must be in a language other than English for it to be considered “foreign”? In the past, the Academy has rejected films that have been made in other countries if more than fifty percent of their dialogue is in English – the most recent (and controversial) example being *The Band’s Visit*, the Israeli nomination in 2007 that was rejected for having too much English dialogue (“The Band’s Visit”).



Is it reasonable to ask every country to only submit one film for consideration per year, especially when thinking about countries such as India or China, which have flourishing movie industries, as opposed to smaller countries such

as Monaco, which do not? Do foreign language films have to be in an official language of the country that is submitting the film? Currently, of course, this restriction does not hold – which was the primary reason that Canada, for example, was able to gain a nomination for the Hindi film *Water*. What about films where the majority of the crew is American? For example, Puerto Rican films are considered “foreign” and can be nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category even though Puerto Ricans have had American citizenship for a long time. These are all questions that the Academy has wrestled with for a long time, and it will be up to you to write a new set of rules for the Best Foreign Language film category based on your own character’s opinions – or, of course, keep the existing rules in place.

3. *Examining gender and its role at the Oscars.* One issue that comes up rather rarely – perhaps because it seems inherently “the way things are” at the Oscars – is the question of whether or not there should be separate awards in certain categories for men and women. A few people have always asked why it is that men and women are split up when contending for some awards but not others (for example, obviously, there are separate awards for Best Actor and Best Actress but not Best Male Director and Best Female Director – and, in fact, only three women have *ever* been nominated for Best Director, and none of them won) (“Oscar Neutrality”). The system that the Academy currently follows has been in place ever since the first set of Academy Awards were given, but it is worth questioning whether or not the system is fair – and even why it exists in the first place. On the one hand, some people say the system makes it *easier* for women to win because it lets them be recognized in their own category instead of, presumably, being overshadowed by strong male roles that will gain all the nominations in a joint category. On the other hand, there are also people who question why it should be that acting *alone* should receive special consideration in terms of gender – and they assert that the same gender rules hold for other categories as well,

particularly categories such as Best Direction, where women have traditionally been snubbed in favor of men. As Mark Blankenship of *The Huffington Post* asks, "In New York the Drama League awards (for theater) recognizes one performance per year, period. Could it be that way for the Academy Awards? Could there simply be an "Outstanding Performance" category comprised of nominees from any sex?" ("Do We"). It is your decision to decide whether to rethink the awards that are given at the Oscars – your character will most likely have strong opinions on the matter, and it is your job to make them heard. Questions you might think about include: Is it worth considering whether or not to add more categories or to split up every category at the Oscars by gender, or will doing so dilute the value of the Awards? Is it feasible to require, for example, that at least two of the nominees in each category be women? Or, in turn, increase the number of nominations in each category to six and require that three be male and three female? Should there only be one acting award given, as was suggested earlier, rather than two? What about other categories that are also split up by gender, such as Best Supporting Actor/Actress?

These are all only some of the issues that you will face – there have been many changes proposed to the Oscar ceremony in past years, and you will have the chance to have the ultimate say in deciding whether they should be adopted or not. Good luck!

TOPIC TWO: THE LOGISTICS BEHIND RUNNING THE 82ND ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS

The Academy Awards are among the best-attended, most high-profile ceremonies that get some of the highest levels of media coverage of any Hollywood event. Planning and executing such an event, then, is a major process that takes months of preparation – not to mention the ability to deal with any last-minute crises that may arise.

As you will be members of the Logistical Commission of the Academy during the third and fourth sessions of the conference, you will

be assigned a new position (as was mentioned in the Chair's letter earlier) to represent at this time. Keep in mind that whatever crises you will be faced with will not be under your control at this point – you will have made your decisions as the Academy, and the ceremony will be run in accordance with those guidelines, but you will also have new decisions that you will have to deal with.

There have been multiple considerations that have informed changes to the Oscar ceremony in the past, not the least of which has been a range of cost-cutting measures and measures to boost viewership. "The 80th Academy Awards entered the record books as the least-watched Oscars in history with nearly 32 million viewers," ("Oscars 2009") after all, and the Academy will have to take further measures in light of the recent recession. It will be your job to not only implement, but also put a good spin on Academy decisions, which may or may not include the following:

- Declining invitations to some members of the Academy who had earlier always been asked to become part of the proceedings
- Canceling some after-parties, traditionally where the Academy spent a lot of money in order to entertain and wine-and-dine A-list stars
- Stopping the gifts of "swag bags," traditionally given to all those who attend the Oscar ceremony and filled with goodies such as spa days, iPods, and dress fittings
- Taking extra security measures in order to ensure that stars leave the ceremony safe and sound – this is a particularly important consideration because of increased security threats in the past few years in the United States as well as at the Oscars itself. It has been well-demonstrated in the media that it is possible to gain access to the Oscars without being invited (a film was even made about a "professional gate-crasher" called *The Crasher*; it detailed the way a

man named Scott Weiss was able to sneak his way into the Grammys, the Emmys, and the Oscars, all in one year) ("Oscars 2009: Gate Crasher").

- Moving the ceremony to another city within the United States where the costs of running the show might be lower
- Moving the ceremony out of the United States altogether (presumably a kind of outsourcing)
- Not inviting foreign film stars to partake in the ceremony

All of these are tentative measures, of course, and there is no guarantee that *any* of these will actually be implemented – although they should give you an idea of how desperate the Academy is to save money.

Questions to consider: are there any ways that the media repercussions of any of these decisions could be minimized? After all, the media is the ultimate judge of the success of the Academy Awards, and it is likely that some of these decisions would rub some media personalities the wrong way. Also, what about viewership and ratings? Reducing the number of categories given out or minimizing the amount of time given to winners for acceptance speeches are ways to make the ceremony shorter (and therefore more appealing to the average viewer). It is no secret that the Academy has been losing viewers – the highest viewership in past years was in "1998, when the blowout success of "Titanic" helped draw 55 million watchers, according to Nielsen. That year, in which "Titanic" hauled in 11 Oscars, marked the ceremony's best showing since 1983" ("Oscar Ratings Sink"). In order to remain at the epicenter of Hollywood and, indeed, the world cinema stage, the Academy Awards needs to maintain its place as the most-watched and most-respected awards show on Earth. As a member of the Logistics Commission of the 2010 Oscar ceremony, it will be your job to make that happen.

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