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Assignment 1
Cine-GT 1804: Copyright, Legal Issues, and Policy
Instructor: Greg Cram
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On May 1, 2013, the website www.wordandfilm.com (since publishing it has been renamed www.signature-reads.com and the owner of both websites is Random House Digital, Inc.) published a critical essay that I wrote called “The Dickensian Dark Knight in the Age of Sociopolitical Superheroes,” of which I was the sole author. (The essay can be found here: <http://www.signature-reads.com/2013/05/the-dickensian-dark-knight-in-the-age-of-sociopolitical-superheroes/> .) The essay goes on to describe the ways in which Christopher Nolan’s Batman films (*Batman Begins*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) allude to Charles Dickens’ novel “A Tale of Two Cities” and how the films compare the social issues that Dickens’ novel breached with the current state of American society. The essay is not so much based on previous works; rather, it uses “fair use,” to critically analyze both Nolan’s films and Dickens’ novel, but it does cite the films and novel by using quotes and making reference to scenes in the works. These references are cited in the article and accredited to their rightful sources. Being the author of the copyrighted work, I would hold the copyright for the article and its use; however, since I signed a contract with Random House (the owner of the website), I have forfeited all my copyrights. More specifically, this was a work-for-hire—yes, I was paid to contribute this article to the website—and in the contract contract, Random House explicitly states that they “[own] and [control] each and every right in the Contribution including the copyright, and the exclusive, irrevocable right to use it in any manner and in any medium RHDl chooses in its sole discretion throughout the world.” Furthermore, they retain the right to distribute the work “in any and all media forms of publication, reproduction, transmissions, distribution, performance, adaptation, enhancement or display, now in existence or hereafter developed”—a pretty solid claim to copyright. Basically, I retain no copyrights of this work, although my name is on the article.