

FILM STUDIES SYLLABUS

Course Description:

This introductory film studies course invites students to move beyond simply watching films and into the practice of analyzing them as works of art and communication. Students develop a rich vocabulary for discussing the craft of filmmaking, including shot types, camera angles, composition, blocking, lighting, editing, sound design, narrative structure, and production design. Beginning with a survey of film history from the earliest silent films through the classic Hollywood era, students examine how the art and technology of filmmaking evolved over time. Using six carefully selected films spanning animated features, live-action narrative films, and documentaries, alongside curated clips from classic Hollywood films, students will analyze how skilled directors across different eras use every element of the frame to tell stories, communicate emotion, and shape the audience's experience. The course concludes with a complete film viewing followed by a structured analytical response demonstrating the full range of analytical skills developed throughout the fifteen weeks.

Course Overview:

Unit One: Introduction to Film Studies and the Language of Cinema

Unit Two: A Brief History of Cinema

Unit Three: Shot Types and Camera Angles

Unit Four: Composition and Framing

Unit Five: Camera Movement

Unit Six: Blocking and Mise-en-Scène

Unit Seven: Lighting

Unit Eight: Editing and Continuity — Part One

Unit Nine: Editing and Continuity — Part Two

Unit Ten: Sound Design and Music

Unit Eleven: Documentary Filmmaking

Unit Twelve: Narrative Structure and Screenwriting

Unit Thirteen: Color, Costume, and Production Design

Units Fourteen and Fifteen: Deep Dive — Complete Film Viewing and Analysis

Featured Course Films:

Up — Pixar, 2009

Spirited Away — Studio Ghibli, 2001

Raiders of the Lost Ark — Steven Spielberg, 1981

Paddington 2 — Paul King, 2017

March of the Penguins — Luc Jacquet, 2005

Flow -- Gints Zilbalodis, 2024 — optional

Classic Hollywood Films Referenced:

Citizen Kane — Orson Welles, 1941
Casablanca — Michael Curtiz, 1942
Sunset Boulevard — Billy Wilder, 1950
The Third Man — Carol Reed, 1949
Singin' in the Rain — Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952
Touch of Evil — Orson Welles, 1958
High Noon — Fred Zinnemann, 1952
12 Angry Men — Sidney Lumet, 1957
The Wizard of Oz — Victor Fleming, 1939
Psycho — Alfred Hitchcock, 1960 (*NOT the shower scene*)
The Birds — Alfred Hitchcock, 1963
The Night of the Hunter — Charles Laughton, 1955
Battleship Potemkin — Sergei Eisenstein, 1925
Intolerance — D.W. Griffith, 1916
The General — Buster Keaton, 1926
Nanook of the North — Robert Flaherty, 1922
Primary — Robert Drew, 1960
Double Indemnity — Billy Wilder, 1944
Gilda — Charles Vidor, 1946
The Big Sleep — Howard Hawks, 1946

Films and clips may be substituted for a similar viewing experience based on that weeks topic of discussion. Please let me know if you feel any viewing is unsuitable for your child; I will happily swap it out for a different one. I have tried to stick with age appropriate clips and films.

Film Journal Requirement:

Students are required to maintain a Film Journal throughout the entire fifteen-week course. The Film Journal serves as both a learning record and a creative workspace. Students should bring their journal to every class session without exception. Journal entries should include analytical observations from film viewings, written responses to discussion questions and activities, sketches and diagrams where relevant, responses to quick checks for understanding, and personal reflections on filmmaking techniques and creative choices. Journals will be reviewed periodically, and a final reflection entry will be completed in the last session.

Grading Scale:

A: 90 – 100
B: 80 – 89
C: 70 – 79
D: 60 – 69
F: 0 – 59

Grade Breakdown:

Film Journal Entries and Reflections: 35%
In-Class Activities and Analysis Work: 25%
Quick Checks for Understanding: 20%
Final Comp. Film Analysis Response: 20%

