

Fall/Spring Cinema as Literature Syllabus and Information Packet

Vista Murrieta High School

Can you identify these film quotes?

“Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary>”

“Here’s looking at you, kid.”

“Hey Blondie, you know what you are?”

Cinema as Literature meets the district graduation requirement for elective credit. The class is designed to show students how film is a form of literature. By viewing classic and modern film, students will learn that good film, like good literature, has certain elements in common. Students will be expected to understand motifs, symbols, metaphors, allusions, plot, theme, and other literary elements as they relate to both film and literature. In addition, students will develop an appreciation for the interaction of film elements such as scripting, directing, acting, producing, lighting, sound, music, editing, cinematography, special effects, set design and costuming. Students will learn to recognize such film genres as drama, comedy, western, science-fiction, mystery, action/adventure, and animation. Students will use their knowledge of the various elements of cinema to analyze and critique films studied in class. This will be accomplished through discussions, compositions, projects and evaluations. Students will use a variety of writing forms that include: note taking, paragraph analysis, and formal essays. Students may also read literature that corresponds with some selected films.

Expected Student Learning Results/ UC/CSU (A-G) Requirements:

Students will:

- 1.0 Identify literary concepts in film such as motifs, symbols, metaphors, allusions, and plot elements.
- 2.0 Identify and critique elements of film.
- 3.0 Define and distinguish various film genres.
- 4.0 Analyze and critique films orally and in written compositions.
- 5.0 Demonstrate and ability to compose critical and analytical essays.
- 6.0 Utilize the writing process to compose, revise, and edit compositions.
- 7.0 Utilize multimedia projects for demonstrating an understanding of the elements of film.

Outline of Content for Major Areas of Study:

Semester I: A. Introduction to film history: (Study of Chaplin): *Modern Times, Chaplin, Chaplin shorts, The impact of The Musical, Scorsese video*

Terms to Study:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Timeline | 6. Saturated vs. De-saturated color |
| 2. Production steps | 7. High-key lighting |
| 3. Master scene technique | 8. Crane Shot |
| 4. Continuity | 9. Talkie |
| 5. Suspension of disbelief | 10. Satire |

B. Sample Platter Unit: *Rear Window, The Hudsucker Proxy, A River Runs Through It, The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, and Casablanca* (May show *Disturbia* as companion to *Rear Window*/May show first scene of *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* to study Fourth Wall)

Terms to Study:

1. Protagonist/Antagonist
2. Narrative technique
3. Plot: exposition/conflict/climax/resolution
4. POV
5. Theme/Symbolism/Imagery
6. Foreshadowing/Suspense
7. Static vs. Dynamic characters
8. Archetypal characters
9. Motivation
10. Foils
11. Allegory
12. Irony: verbal/dramatic/situational
13. The epic
14. Sympathetic characterization
15. Setting/tone

Terms for film analysis

- | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Screenwriting | 8. The Mystery | 17. Casting |
| 2. Establishing shots | 9. Cinematography | 18. The Western/Spaghetti |
| 3. The Comedy | 10. Photo Montage | |
| | 11. Lyrical Film | 19. Tracking (pans/swish pans) |
| 4. Point of view shots | 12. Falling stunts | 20. Long shots |
| 5. Optical effects (blue screen/digital) | | 21. Lighting/shadows |
| 6. Rear Projection | 13. The farce | 22. Low/high angle shots |
| 7. Soft focus lens | 14. Editing | |
| | 15. Scoring | |
| | 16. Camera movement | |

C. High School/Coming of Age films: *The Breakfast Club, Donnie Darko, Stand by Me, Good Will Hunting*

Terms to study:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Theme | 7. Scoring and Soundtrack |
| 2. Motif | 8. Pacing |
| 3. Foreshadowing | 9. Carpe Diem |
| 4. Dialogue | |
| 5. Style/mood/setting | |
| 6. Symbolism | |

D. Rebels as a theme: *Cool Hand Luke, Bonnie and Clyde (Only scenes for squibs), Shawshank Redemption, Thelma and Louise, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (if time: V for Vendetta)*

Terms to study:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Anti-hero | 6. Theme | 11. Crane shots |
| 2. Sympathetic characterization | 7. Dynamic Duos | |
| 3. Foreshadowing and Symbolism | 8. End-of-the-Road | |
| 4. Religious imagery | 9. Soft focus lens | |
| 5. Motif | 10. Squibs | |

E. Happiness and Harmony: *Forrest Gump, Raising Arizona, In America, American Beauty* (if permitted)

Terms to study:

1. Motif/symbolism
2. Theme
3. Optical effects
4. Flashback
5. Projection

F. Monsters in Film: *The Sixth Sense or Signs, Psycho, What Lies Beneath, Jaws, The Shining and/or The Birds* (Birds-if time, only clips)

Terms to study:

1. Personification
2. Dramatic/situational irony
3. Stop motion animation
4. Mattes/composite shots
5. Animatronics

G. Epic Struggle: *Gladiator and Braveheart, Spartacus* (scenes) and *Fellowship of the Ring*

Terms to study:

1. The Epic
2. The reluctant hero archetype
3. Foils
4. Battle stunts
5. Digital effects
6. Historical influence/costuming

H. Warping Time: *Run Lola Run, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Memento* and *Back to the Future*

Terms to Study:

1. Motif/symbolism
2. Theme
3. Optical effects
4. Flashback

I. War Films: *The Patriot, Saving Private Ryan, Apocalypse Now* or *Platoon, and Three Kings*

Terms to Study:

- a. Hand held shots
- b. Narrative
- c. Propagandist film
- d. Slow Motion shots
- e. Bleaching

J. Breaking Down Stereotypes: *In the Heat of the Night, Crash, and 12 Angry Men*

Terms to Study:

- 1. Characterization
- 2. Scoring
- 3. Dialogue

K. Looking into the Future: *The Truman Show, Gattaca, and The Matrix*

Terms to Study:

- 1. Symbolism/motif
- 2. Science fiction/dystopias
- 3. Optical effects
- 4. CGI
- 5. Animatronics

L. Animation (If Time Permits): *Ratatouille Or Up and Spirited Away, TBD*

Terms to Study:

- 1. Narrative
- 2. Clay animation
- 3. Animation Process

M. Accountability

- a. Teacher-generated tests
- b. Weekly assignments and Notebook
- c. Writing assignments
- d. Projects

RULES: 1 Respect, 2 Responsibilities, and 3 Readiness.

Electronic Devices: DO NOT USE cell phones, MP3 Players, or any other electronic devices which will interfere with the learning process. Failure to follow these instructions will result in surrendering the device to me. It is important that you respect the little amount of time we have in class. If taken, you may pick it up at 2:30. If taken twice, you may pick it up per Security Policy

Absences: According to district policy, a student who misses twenty absences (unexcused) may be failed by the instructor of the course. Absenteeism is the number one cause of failure. Please do not make a habit of this. Also, ten absences (excused or unexcused) may result in a grade lowering by ten percent.

Tardies: You will be given three excused tardies from me each semester. Once you exceed that amount, administrative action will take place.

Respect: It is not appropriate to disrupt class with unnecessary antics, but if you feel the impulse to shout, interrupt class with unnecessary announcements, or run around like a maniac, please let me know before this sensation affects the class. I will ensure that you will be removed from the class for the appropriate amount of time so that your impulse may be relieved. Please don't let a feeble attempt for attention bring down your grade; failure to follow this procedure will result in administrative action and grade penalty.

Bathroom Passes: If you need to go to the bathroom, sign-out and return as quickly as possible; however, if you exceed three uses per semester, participation points will be deducted.

Absent Work/Late Work: If you are absent the day a project/essay/ or major assignment is due; that something is still due. Please be wary of this; as you will lose twenty-five percent of the grade by turning the work in the following class. If you are absent the day something is assigned, you will have one class day to make up the work (this rule applies to the number of absences as well: 1 absence= 1 day, 2 absences= 2days). Late work is accepted at ten percent off **each day** that it is constituted as late. After day ten; it is worth nothing.

Student Notebook:

The student notebook is not only an important part of each progress report, but it also influences performance on other assignments. Most tests are open notebook, so thorough note taking is essential. Instructions for critiques, projects and assignments are to be kept in the notebook. You may make up notes if you are absent the day notes are given; however, if you are present the day notes are given and have chosen to withhold from note taking, you will not receive credit for make-up notes for that day. At the end of each unit of film, notes must include definitions to all terms studied in that unit as well as ten questions/commentary you have in regard to the films selections.

Reviews and End of Year Project:

At the end of each unit, students will be required to turn in a fifty-point, MLA and typed review. These reviews are based on films covered in each unit. Every student is also responsible for signing up for and presenting their review (they make work with a partner). Reviews are assigned with each unit, but students only present one of their reviews from the year. Sign-ups will take place at the beginning of the year.

Methods of Evaluation:

Class Participation: 30%

Writing, Projects, Quizzes, Tests: 30%

Student Notebook: 30%

Final: 10%

*It is important that you never ask Mrs. Hipp or Mr. Haefer whether a film is good or bad before your first viewing. Remember, this class is meant to help you become a critic of film; it wouldn't be wise of you to ask us that; it is your responsibility to figure that out yourself.

*The following letter has been created to inform you that some of the films we will view are R rated films. It is imperative that you understand that we make certain that your child is watching films with the themes we have set forth as the fundamental foundation of the class; if there is any questionable footage, we will make certain it is not seen. Most R ratings we will view are due to violence (war scenes), and language. Few of the films viewed display nudity and we omit these scenes if necessary.

Fall

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian (s),

Your son or daughter has enrolled in **Cinema as Literature** for the 2013-2014 school year. I believe this course is an exciting opportunity to explore the art of film while strengthening analytical thinking and writing skills.

A course outline and syllabus has been given to your child; this includes an overview of the course, my grading procedures, and the expectations held by students. Please read the information in order to familiarize yourself with the content and policies of the course. For a more detailed description, including an outline of the major topics to be explored in the class, please contact me at the email address listed below.

The films will not necessarily be shown in the order they appear on the syllabus, and some titles may be omitted, or only used for excerpts, due to time constraints, title availability, or changing student needs. Please sign the form below indicating that you have read the course description and the film list, and that you approve of your son or daughter viewing these films. Students have the option to opt out of viewing any R-rated films included on the list. They will be given an alternative assignment, and their grades will not be adversely affected. If you have concerns with films which do not have an R-rating, please contact me to discuss your issue.

I look forward to an enjoyable and successful year, and I believe that communication with parents and guardians is essential for student success. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns about any aspect of this course. You may contact me through any of the following:

Phone: (951) 894-5750 ext. 6728

Email: shipp@murrieta.k12.ca.us

Please sign and date this letter and have your son or daughter sign and return it to me by the third class meeting.

Sincerely,

Sunny Hipp

Student Name: _____ Period _____

I have read the course description for Cinema as Literature, and the list of films attached. I give my son/daughter permission to view the films on the list.

Parent/Guardian Name _____ Signature _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____