What is Film Study?

Film Study is an introductory Film Studies course that is offered through Marshall High School's English department and is available to all students in grades 9–12. The course focuses on teaching movies as visual narratives, but students analyze and study all of the language systems of film (e.g. photography, editing, sound, acting, story, writing, ideology, etc.). In studying these valuable tools that filmmakers use, students better understand how movies are constructed and appreciate the criteria necessary to make a film. The course is both a film history course and a genre study course, for students study important film movements as well as the conventions of a genre. Film Study is not intended to be a course solely for aspiring filmmakers; however, a few creative independent and group projects will challenge students to make their own movies, which will be screened at a student film festival held at the end of the school year. The final presentation and exam grade for the course is a 10–minute presentation of a 5–minute clip of a movie chosen by a student that exemplifies excellence in filmmaking. The student will explain the artistic and technical merits of the film based on the skills he or she learned in the course. All students who wish to better appreciate film are encouraged to take the course.

Attendance Policy

Film Study screens all of its films in class; therefore, attendance is vital to a student’s success. Due to the nature of the course, it is strongly recommended that students attend class regularly and are on time. It is difficult to replicate material when students are absent or late for class. If a student misses a screening, he or she will have the responsibility of renting the films and viewing them independently. Many of the films that we will screen in this class are not always accessible or available at a local library or a movie rental chain (e.g. Blockbuster), and group project presentations require school copies of a film to remain in the building. If students have an excused and valid absence and are unable to rent and watch a missed film, students will be excused for the assignments for one film per quarter. All other work should be completed in a timely manner.
Course Overview

"This course involves the study of classic and award-winning films. Students critique both the artistic and technical merits of the films. They study the development of theme, plot, characterization, and setting in each production. They learn the vocabulary associated with film and use this vocabulary when discussing or writing about films. Students may create their own short films. This course will fulfill the graduation requirement for a credit in fine and practical arts" (FCPS Standard Course Curriculum).

Curriculum Objectives

- Students will identify and analyze significant films and people.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the formal and narrative elements of film.
- Students will recognize common characteristics that define specific film categories.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the film production process and production roles.
- Students will analyze the relationship between films and the realities they represent.
- Students will apply varied criteria in evaluating film.

What Movies Are Screened?

The following movies are screened in their entirety (a few films may be deleted from the list depending on final selection for the course):

- American Teen (2008)
- Back to the Future (1985)
- Casablanca (1942)
- Cinema Paradiso (1988)
- Citizen Kane (1941)
- From Russia with Love (1963)
- The General (1927)
- The Godfather (1972)
- Gone with the Wind (1939)
- It’s a Wonderful Life (1946)
- Jaws (1975)
- The Matrix (1997)
- Millennium Actress (2001)
- Modern Times (1936)
- North by Northwest (1959)
- The Princess Bride (1987)
- Psycho (1960)
- Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)
- Rear Window (1954)
- Rebel without a Cause (1955)
- Run Lola Run (1998)
- Saving Private Ryan (1998)
- The Searchers (1956)
- Singin’ in the Rain (1952)
- Star Wars (1977)
- Sunset Boulevard (1950)
- The Truman Show (1998)
- The Wizard of Oz (1939)

What’s the course schedule?

Each quarter is scheduled with 23–24 days of classroom instruction; therefore, the schedule for the course for each quarter will feature six four-day cycles. The structure of each day in the cycle is featured below.

Day One – Review Half of Chapter from Textbook
Homework: Read and take notes on ½ a chapter.
Day Two – Mini-Lessons/Start Film
Homework: Work on project or study for a test.
Day Three – Finish Film
Homework: Take film quiz on Blackboard.
Day Four – Group Presentations/Review Film
Homework: Finish film packet.

How much work will there be?

FCPS recommends that students have 2 hours of homework each night to prepare for their future collegiate studies and to enhance their understanding of a course’s curriculum. As Marshall High School is on a block schedule, Film Study students may be required to complete a minimum of 30 min. of homework following each class. Each quarter, the following assignments are completed:

- 3 open note tests on 3 chapters from Understanding Movies textbook
- 6 film packets
- 6 short quizzes on films
- 1 research group project presentation
- 1 creative independent or group project