

AMERICAN FILM I – CURRICULUM GUIDE (July 2008)

CP American Film I
142.01
Level I
Credits – 5
No Prerequisites
Open to grades 10-12

COURSE DESCRIPTION

American Film I is an introductory course in the study of film as a medium for literary expression. Films will be examined within the context of their historical, social and political milieu. This course will provide students with a background in the history, the technical elements, the primary genres, the storytelling techniques and the thematic rendering of meaning in film. In addition, students will participate in hands on activities that provide them with a direct experience in the critique, promotion and creation of a film.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

High Point Regional High School's curriculum and instruction are aligned to the State's Core Curriculum Content Standards and address the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement gap, by providing equity in educational programs and by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with others regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS

- 3.1. f, g, h
- 3.2. a, b, c, d
- 3.3. a, b, c, d
- 3.4. a, b
- 3.5. a, b, c,

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will recognize and explain the essential elements of film technique and lexicon, such as cinematography, editing, sound techniques, storytelling structures, genres, and acting/directing styles;
- Students will identify narrative and visual styles of Hollywood movies that typify the specific historical context, with an emphasis on post-1939 films;
- Students will analyze characteristics of familiar Hollywood film genres, such as the romantic comedy, film noir, the western, the musical, animation, the epic, war, thriller/horror, social commentary, and comedy;
- Students will trace the origins of modern film style to the roots of early film;

- Students will synthesize interrelationships between the popularity of Hollywood genres and the historical context of the specific production time;
- Students will write clear, coherent journal responses, formal critiques and essays about the films screened;
- Students will utilize knowledge gained in the study of film to write informed film reviews;
- Students will participate in class discussion about the films screened;
- Students will create individual and group oral presentations of film interpretation and criticisms;
- Students will apply knowledge gained about the medium of film to create several film oriented projects;
- Students will compare and contrast the communication style/techniques of film/screenplay with novels/plays.

COURSE UNITS

UNIT 1 - Introduction (4 weeks)

Goals:

- Students will begin to construct a foundation of cinematic knowledge through the introduction of the concepts, formats and techniques in American cinema;
- Students will explore through reading, lecture, film, media and Power Point presentation film as an art form and a means of literary communication.

Objectives:

- Students will maintain a journal of notes, critiques for reference in future cinematic assignments;
- Students will demonstrate verbal and written comprehension of the Hollywood studio system through in-class discussion and free writes;
- Students will discuss the evolution of film from silent/black and white movies to talkies/color to digitally mastered productions;
- Students will demonstrate comprehension of film terms, techniques, genres, and major contributors to the development of the medium in quizzes and tests;
- Students will analyze through class activities the impact of director/actor choices in film portrayals;
- Students will compare and contrast narrative styles in written form with narrative styles in celluloid through essays;
- Students will practice writing/creating critiques of films;
- Students will view films and clips that are designed to illustrate concepts.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate narrative styles, historical perspectives, genres, director styles and film terms and techniques (see attached film list);
- PowerPoint presentation of film elements will be incorporated into daily lessons;
- Online film reviews will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

UNIT II – Art Elements/Film Language (6 weeks)**Goals:**

- Students will develop an in-depth knowledge of the various artistic and technical elements in creating a film;
- Students will examine the relationship between cinematic storytelling and the incorporation of individual elements;
- Students will critique films in terms of their understanding of these elements.

Objectives:

- Students will maintain a written journal of notes and critiques for reference in future cinematic assignments;
- Students will analyze through class activities the impact of director/actor choices in film portrayals;
- Students will demonstrate verbal and written comprehension of each of the elements of cinema, (including screenplay/narrative style, direction, editing, characters/acting, cinematography, plot, setting, themes/symbols, sound/music, setting, costumes/make-up, special effects/animation), through a series of class writing and discussion activities;
- Students will practice identifying film elements through the viewing of a variety of films and clips;
- Students will discuss the elements of film in small group and class discussions;
- Students will demonstrate in-depth comprehension of film terms, techniques, genres in quizzes and tests;
- Students will compare and contrast narrative styles in written form with narrative styles in celluloid through essays;
- Students will write/create two dimensional media presentation of films.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate narrative elements, historical perspectives, film terms and techniques (see attached film list);
- Internet research of movies for creation of media project;
- Online film reviews will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

Unit III - Genres (6 weeks)

Goals:

- Students will investigate the significant differences in the genres of film;
- Students will understand the varying movements in film genres in terms of their historical implications.

Objectives:

- Students will maintain a written journal of notes and critiques for reference in future cinematic assignments;
- Students will analyze through class activities the impact of director/actor choices in film portrayals;
- Students will demonstrate verbal and written comprehension of each of the genres of cinema, (including westerns, war portrayals, action movies, romantic comedies, dramas, comedies, historical fiction, science fiction, horror, film noir, animation, social commentary, “star” driven movies, indies, docu-dramas, and musicals);
- Students will practice identifying film genres through the active and guided viewing of a variety of films and clips;
- Students will discuss the components of the different genres of film in small group and class discussions;
- Students will be able to identify and demonstrate in-depth comprehension of film genres on quizzes and tests;
- Students will synthesize genre comprehension in a short, original promotional movie trailer;
- Students will develop skills in the use of Movie Maker and/or Photo Story technology;
- Students will write/create two dimensional media presentation of films.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate genres, historical perspectives (see attached film list);
- Internet research of movies for creation of movie trailers;
- Movie Maker/Photo Story will be used for project creations;
- Online film examples will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

Unit IV - Themes (6 weeks)

Goals:

- Students will investigate the significant thematic movements in American cinema;
- Students will understand the application of film elements and genres in the communication of film themes.

Objectives:

- Students will maintain a written journal of notes and critiques for reference in their final movie project assignments;
- Students will demonstrate verbal and written comprehension of the major themes as they are portrayed in film. Themes included are Coming of Age, Quest/Conquest, Inhumanity/Hope, The Outsider, Epic Hero, Ethnic Diversity, Social Ideologies, Myths/Archetypes, Romance, Heroism, Love, Sacrifice, Crime;
- Students will analyze through class activities the impact of director/actor choices in film portrayals;
- Students will practice identifying film themes through the active and guided viewing of a variety of films and clips;
- Students will discuss the synthesis of techniques used to convey themes of films in small group and class discussions;
- Students will be able to identify and demonstrate in-depth comprehension of film themes on quizzes and tests;
- Students will synthesize theme comprehension in film in a short, written screenplay, in preparation for the final project;
- Students will continue to develop skills in the use of Movie Maker and/or Photo Story technology;
- Students will write/create two dimensional storyboard presentations for original films.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate thematic synthesis (see attached film list);
- Internet research of screenplay format for project;
- Movie Maker/Photo Story will be used for project creations;
- Online film examples will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

Unit V – Actors/Directors (4 weeks)**Goals:**

- Students will investigate the significant directors/actors in American movies over the past 100 years;
- Students will understand the impact of individual artistic vision in film.

Objectives:

- Students will maintain a written journal of notes and critiques for reference in their final movie project assignments;
- Students will demonstrate verbal and written comprehension of the major individual influences in American film. These include the following Directors: Hitchcock, Spielberg, Scorsese, Stone, Kubrick, Chaplin, Welles, Lucas, Scott, Nichols, Disney, Altman, Howard, Coppola, Campion, Allen, Cassavetes, Huston, Wilder, Cukor, Griffith, Eastwood and others; Actors: Chaplin, Keaton, DeNiro, Streep, Hepburn, Gish, Wayne, Lemmon, Nicholson, Hoffman, Brando, Poitier, Washington, Penn, Peck, Duvall, Tracy, Newman, Jackson, Cage, Hackman, Hanks, Depp, Stewart, Bergman, Davis, Keaton, Christie, Benning, Sarandon, Thompson, Close, and others.

- Students will practice identifying film themes through the active and guided viewing of a variety of films and clips;
- Students will analyze through class activities the impact of director/actor choices in film portrayals;
- Students will discuss the synthesis of techniques used to convey themes of films in small group and class discussions;
- Students will be able to identify and demonstrate in-depth comprehension of director/actor influences/styles on quizzes and tests;
- Students will synthesize theme comprehension in film in a short, written screenplay, in preparation for the final project;
- Students will continue to develop skills in the use of Movie Maker and/or Photo Story technology;
- Students will write/create two dimensional storyboard presentations for original films.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate thematic synthesis (see attached film list);
- Internet research of screenplay format for project;
- Movie Maker/Photo Story will be used for project creations;
- Online film examples will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

Unit VI - Final Film Project (4 weeks)

Goals:

- Students will incorporate all course elements learned and, working in small groups, create original short films of a selected genre.

Objectives:

- Students will synthesize all elements of film making to create original short films that depict a particular theme, within a particular genre, utilizing the film elements to reinforce their messages;
- Students will present their films to an audience of classmates;
- Students will practice critiquing their own and each others' movie projects in terms of the elements learned in the course;
- Students will evaluate the course.

Technology:

- Myriad film sources that illustrate thematic synthesis (see attached film list);
- Internet research of screenplay format for project;
- Movie Maker/Photo Story will be used for project creations;
- Online film examples will be utilized for demonstration purposes.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will complete assignments throughout the year.

Assignments include:

- Ongoing written response journals
- Quizzes and tests in film elements, genres, themes, actors/directors
- Marking Period Projects: Movie poster, movie trailer, movie screenplay, movie storyboard
- Critique essays for each unit
- In-class hand-out activities
- Internet research activities
- Final film projects
- Mid-term and final exams

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

- Movie/video cameras
- Computer access
- Movie Maker, Power Point, Photo Story programs
- Projectors
- Screen
- Movies on DVD or VHS
- Art materials

EVALUATION TOOLS

Measures of student progress:

- Timely submission of all assignments
- Completion of homework assignments
- Reading assignments
- In-class participation
- Completion of marking period projects
- Written Critiques
- Completion of class activities
- Completion of research assignments
- Final Film Project

Effectiveness of the Course:

Determined by:

- Student final projects
- Student evaluation feedback

Exams

Mid-term and final exams will be written for the first time in the 2008-09 school year.

COURSE POLICIES

Student success in American Film I is contingent upon the following factors:

- Timely and conscientious completion of **all reading, viewing and written assignments;**
- Consistent class attendance;
- Active class participation in activities and discussion;
- Timely completion of all marking period projects. These projects are designed to be cumulative in their synthesis of content; therefore, each step is important in the process.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Films

The following is a sample list of films that may be shown, either as clips or in their entirety, in order to demonstrate the film principles taught in the course. Not all the films listed will be used each year:

<i>Citizen Kane</i>	<i>Platoon</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>
<i>The Great Train Robbery</i>	<i>Interview with a Vampire</i>	<i>Pleasantville</i>
<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	<i>The World According to Garp</i>	<i>A Fish Called Wanda</i>
<i>The Graduate</i>	<i>Thin Red Line</i>	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
<i>Schindler's List</i>	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	<i>Grumpy Old Men</i>
<i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	<i>Bridge Over the River Kwai</i>	<i>The Days of Wine and Roses</i>
<i>Psycho</i>	<i>Chinatown</i>	<i>Pretty Woman</i>
<i>North by Northwest</i>	<i>Double Indemnity</i>	<i>American History X</i>
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	<i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>	<i>Glory</i>
<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	<i>Do the Right Thing</i>
<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	<i>King Arthur</i>	<i>Fargo</i>
<i>The Godfather</i>	<i>Gladiator</i>	<i>Barton Fink</i>
<i>Annie Hall</i>	<i>The Mask of Zorro</i>	<i>House of Sand and Fog</i>
<i>E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial</i>	<i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	<i>The Professional</i>
<i>3:10 to Yuma</i>	<i>A Chorus Line</i>	<i>The Piano</i>
<i>The Unforgiven</i>	<i>Amadeus</i>	<i>Stand by Me</i>
<i>Jaws</i>	<i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i>	<i>Raging Bull</i>
<i>King Kong</i>	<i>LA Confidential</i>	<i>Kramer v Kramer</i>
<i>Frankenstein</i>	<i>Easy Rider</i>	<i>The Deer Hunter</i>
<i>American Graffiti</i>	<i>Toy Story</i>	<i>In the Line of Fire</i>
<i>Cabaret</i>	<i>Finding Nemo</i>	<i>Bonnie and Clyde</i>
<i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i>	<i>The Lion King</i>	<i>Spartacus</i>
<i>Moulin Rouge</i>	<i>Ratatouille</i>	<i>Face/Off</i>
<i>Cocoon</i>	<i>Shrek</i>	<i>The Insider</i>
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	<i>Mash</i>	<i>Sleepless in Seattle</i>
	<i>The Three Muskateers</i>	<i>Philadelphia</i>
		<i>Sophie's Choice</i>
		<i>The Great Escape</i>

*What's Eating Gilbert
Grape*
A Clockwork Orange
The Shining
Fantasia
*Snow White and the
Seven Dwarfs*
Alien

The Wild Bunch
American Graffiti
Pulp Fiction
Goodfellas
Beetlejuice
Edward Scissorhands
The Apartment
Rocky

Dances With Wolves
Shane
Silence of the Lambs
Network
Rebel Without a Cause
Tootsie

Textbooks and Materials

Excerpts and readings will be taken from the following sources:

- *The Art of Watching Film*, Boggs and Petrie, McGraw Hill, 2000.
- *Cinematic Storytelling*, Van Sijll, Jennifer, Wiese, 2005
- American Film Institute website: www.afi.com
- Additional web material and periodical film reviews/handouts as they are researched