

Film Studies Syllabus
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Ghidotti Early College High School

Subject: We will look at specific film forms, particularly documentary forms, and their history, best examples, notable characteristics, and key practitioners. We will look at some of the major themes in documentary work across forms and genres. Various topics in documentary studies - including film/video, audio, non-fiction narrative writing, and documentary photography - may be examined in this course.

Course Overview, Activities, and Films:

Unit 1: Introduction to Criticism

Topics: Traditional auteur film theory vs the New School of Film Studies/ Criticism versus Review

Activities: lecture, assessment through analytical film notes, close reading of critiques, vocabulary and quiz.

Unit 2: Introduction to Film

Topics: Analysis of film: scene, visual effects, sound, score, editing, performance, pacing, Rule of Thirds, Zoetrope.

Activities: Lecture, viewing of “Behind the Scenes” and “the making of” shorts, assessment through analytical movie notes, production of group stop motion animation short, scheduling, scriptwriting, animation, music or score production, and self-reflection paper, peer critique.

Unit 3: Influences of TV and Scriptwriting

Topics: vocabulary, scriptwriting: plot analysis, characterization, symbolism, and editing.

Activities: create a commercial in groups, peer analysis, product creation and evaluation, music or score production, self-reflection, storyboarding and identifying target demographic, scriptwriting.

Unit 4: Introduction to Documentaries/ Truth or Propaganda

Topics: Ethics, responsibilities, perspective, history of documentaries, logical fallacies.

Activities: Critical readings, Socratic seminar, quiz, watch Michael Moore’s: Who Should We Bomb Next?, assessment through analytical movie notes, presentation.

Unit 5: Historian/Chronicler

Topics: role of documentarian, role of researchers, role of historians, pacing and transitions, visual effects augmenting or detracting narrative.

Activities: Watch Ken Burns's sections of Civil War and Baseball documentaries or History Channel selections, assessment through analytical movie notes, reading of historical texts, compare/contrast or evaluative paper.

Unit 6: The Prosecution and Defense

Topics: Bias, perspective, mental competency to hold trial, community perception of justice, indict and convict or exonerate?

Activities: Watch My Brother's Keeper, assessment through analytical movie notes, informal class discussion, and critique.

Unit 7: Exposing Abuses/ Film as Public Forum

Topics: Social justice, film as instrument of change or social conscience, ie. college safety, gender issues, humane treatment of animals.

Activities: Watch The Hunting Ground and Blackfish, assessment through analytical movie notes, informal class discussion, reading or viewing media of fallout, critique.

Unit 8: Spotlighter and Investigator

Topics: Culminating unit of prior vocabulary, techniques, and concerns of a documentary film.

Activities: Watch Sports documentary ie. 30 for 30, King of Kong, Man on Wire, Resurrect Dead, assessment through analytical movie notes, informal class discussion, critique

Unit 9: Project

Activity: In groups, student will assign groups, establish a schedule, create storyboard, and create a 5-10 minute documentary on the topic of their choosing. Final self-reflection.

Overview of Semester Tasks: Analytical film notes, informal class discussions, Socratic seminar, self-reflections, peer critiques, film critiques, compare/contrast or evaluative essay, quizzes, presentations and projects: storyboarding, scoring or music production, scriptwriting, animating, filming, editing,

Grading Policy: Grades will be scored according to a total points system using the standard percentage range for letter grades.

- Late work will be accepted for 50 percent credit and must be submitted during the quarter in which it was assigned.
- Make-up and extra-credit work are permitted with restrictions.
- Positive class participation is required.

Extra Help

I am available before and after school. Please send an email to mbishop@njuhsd.com.