

NEWPORT-MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Course Description

FILM AND AMERICAN CULTURE
(Senior/Non-UC Credit)

Content covered in this course is described in the Course of Study. Based on student needs, teachers select appropriate materials from the Instructional Materials List. Classroom presentation of course content is determined by the instructor and is delineated under Content. A more detailed outline of course activities may be obtained from the instructor.

OVERVIEW

This one semester course focuses on American film and its influence on, as well as a reflection of, significant American values. Through this course, students will achieve a greater awareness of the richness of the American film tradition and its influence in the United States and around the world. Students will view a variety of films or film clips that support the course objectives, engage in class discussion that will stimulate and improve critical thinking skills, and demonstrate their knowledge through written assignments and projects.

COURSE OF STUDY OBJECTIVES

1.0 Historical Development of film in America

Students will examine the beginnings of film in America, including those who contributed to its early development and are regarded as pioneers in the field

1.1 CONTENT

- Influence of film on the American culture and the reflection of American culture on film
- Early pioneers in the film industry
- Themes found in early films
- Innovative narrative structures used in screenplays
- Groundbreaking film techniques such as deep focus photography and sound tracks

1.2 SUGGESTED TEACHER ACTIVITIES

- Input on course content
- Teach viewing skills
- Facilitate class discussions and analysis of films viewed
- Model and monitor stages of the writing process

1.3 SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- After researching historical issues including yellow journalism, jingoism and construction of the Hearst Castle at San Simeon, students will write an essay that compares and contrasts William Randolph Hearst to the semi-fictional Citizen Kane
- Students will illustrate a famous American poem that reflects one of the major themes or images in a film from the AFI List of 100
- Students will develop partial film scripts that focus on dialogue and selected camera techniques that develop characterization and conflict

- Students will complete a short essay on a particular director or groundbreaking film.
- Students will design an original film poster

1.4 ASSESSMENTS/EVALUATION

- Tests and quizzes on key directors, on groundbreaking films and on major concepts in the historical development of film in America.

1.5 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS USED

- Core film: "Citizen Kane"

2.0 The American Hero in Film

Students will be introduced to heroes from the 1920s to the present and examine the values, strengths and characteristics which make them distinctively American.

2.1 CONTENT

- Focus on war heroes from WWI to Vietnam
- Examine the differences in treatment of heroes from the various wars (WWI, WWII, Korean, Vietnam) and Sergeant York vs. "Paths of Glory"
- Note the influence of Humphrey Bogart on the Modern Hero/anti-hero's shift from glamour and good looks to the "good, the bad, and the ugly"
- Reflect on the treatment of women as heroes.

2.2 SUGGESTED TEACHER ACTIVITIES

- Facilitate class discussions and short writing assignments.
- Have students identify the qualities most admired through the decades and note the shift in values, strengths and characteristics of heroes in American film.

2.3 SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Students will independently research one or two other views of war through American film and make an oral presentation on this topic
- Students will write short character sketches on the similarities and differences of American heroes in film
- Using published reviews from magazines and newspapers as examples to structure their own film reviews, students will write at least one critical review of a new film
- Students will plan, prepare, videotape of a 3-5 minute film review (a la Siskel & Ebert) and present/show it to the Class.
- Students will read *From Hero to Celebrity* by D. Boorstin.

2.4 ASSESSMENTS/EVALUATION

- Tests and quizzes on American heroes in film, the treatment of heroes from various wars, and treatment of women as heroes
- Rubric to evaluate videotaped film review

2.5 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL USED

- Core films: "Sergeant York", "The Spirit of St. Louis", and "Shane"

3.0 Influence of Film on Major Social Issues

Students will examine the influence of film on major social issues in America from the early days of film to the present

3.1 CONTENT

- Analyze the relationship between major social events and the images of minorities portrayed in film
- Trace the stereotypical portrayals in film of minority groups such as Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and women
- Note the treatment of minorities from the days of D.W. Griffith to “In the Heat of the Night”

3.2 SUGGESTED TEACHER ACTIVITIES

- Input on course content
- Teach viewing skills
- Facilitate class discussions and analysis of films viewed
- Model and monitor stages of the writing process

3.3 SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Students will select from several films that deal with the treatment of the way the image of a minority group is portrayed and write a major essay that analyzes the cause/effect relationship and/or correlation between one or more key social or political events in American history and how minorities were portrayed through film during the same time period.

3.4 ASSESSMENTS/EVALUATION

- Tests and quizzes regarding the influence of film on major social issues in America, on the relationship between major social events and the images of minorities portrayed in film, on the stereotypical portrayals in film of minority groups such as Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and women

3.5 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- Core films from English Department collection

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

CORE READING

From Hero to Celebrity by D. Boorstin

OUTSIDE READING ASSIGNMENT: Students will select one book from the library related to major directors, actors, or screenwriters and prepare a written report and make an oral presentation on this individual.

AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

Core films –

“Shane”

“The Spirit of St. Louis”

“Citizen Kane”

“Sergeant York”

Copyright law permits the use of commercially produced films in the context of an instructional setting such as a classroom, with face-to-face instruction for educational purposes.

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Changed to a non-elective course by Barry Barowitz, Director of Secondary Curriculum & Instruction on October 28, 2003