

FOLSOM CORDOVA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Critical Approaches to Cinema

Board Approved: January 2018
Proposed Grade Level(s): 11-12
Grading: A-F
CTE Sector / Pathway: N/A

Course Length: One Year
Subject Area: English
Credits: 10

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Intent to Pursue ‘A-G’ College Prep Status: Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This college-preparatory English elective calls for students to analyze directorial intent, to derive purpose and meaning from the rhetorical elements embedded in works of art—in this case, storytelling through cinema. Students will move beyond a plot-level understanding of story to interpret how structures of film— sound and lighting, framing and camera angles—create meaning. Students will also learn theoretical frameworks common of a typical advanced English course: a deconstructive approach, a social/political approach, a feminist approach, and a mythological approach. Each of these frameworks will give the students a more critical eye when viewing film. Because film tends to be a complex gathering of technique, storytelling, art, ideas and viewer interpretation, this argument-centered, discussion-based class will ask students to study film techniques and archetypes, learn vocabulary to further a more nuanced, critical discussion, look for ambiguous or complex interpretations, and find evidence of directorial or writer intent while considering audience interpretation. Students will read, discuss, and write daily, offer formal and informal analysis of individual film frames, selected clips and full-length films, as well as participate in formal discussion and debate.

GENERAL GOALS/ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

Goals:

- Students will learn a broad base of aesthetic and technical vocabulary to develop an understanding of cinematography and how specific film techniques creates meaning beyond the plot. How does this director convey purpose and meaning beyond the telling of the story? How can we describe the storytelling and film techniques used to create meaning?
- Students will analyze a rich body of work for discussion, understanding the interplay between director and audience and how perspective shapes understanding. What film techniques are indicative of the director’s style? What does this style say about his views? How do the choices of the director aid in our understanding of his purpose? What is the director arguing about people, our country, our world?
- Students will learn that there are many perspectives from which to view film, and all aid in our cultural literacy, our understanding of the world as we know it. How are women, people of color portrayed for the time period? What does the director intend? What historically is happening during the filming of this movie? What ideas does the director want us to consider?
- Students will compare both film and literary storytelling techniques that attempt to convey or shape the same themes in order to compare and contrast the ideas within a given medium. What ideas does the

director emphasize in the telling of the story?

- Students will develop and reinforce their critical thinking and problem solving skills, effective oral and written communication techniques, and collaborative abilities. Why does the director make these choices? What ideas do the choices convey?

COMMON CORE STATE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING (K-12):

Key Ideas & Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft & Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Reading Range / Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

COMMON CORE STATE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING (K-12):

Text Types & Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production & Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

COMMON CORE STATE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING (K-12):

Comprehension & Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and ensure that the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

DETAILED UNITS OF INSTRUCTION:

Unit 1: Film Construction, Classification, Techniques

Students learn film terminology and how to discuss film in a technical way.

- Realism, Classicism, Formalism
- Documentary, Fiction, Avant-Garde
- Camera Angles
- Mise en Scene
- Framing
- Lighting and Sound
- Editing Techniques
- Archetypal Symbols

Assessment

- Formative: Analysis of frames/clips, both verbal and written responses (daily, on-going through the term.)
- Summative: Unit Exam on Academic Vocabulary

Typical Films (Clips and Full Movies): *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Juno, 12 Angry Men, Rear Window, Life is Beautiful, Wall-E, Seabiscuit, The Red Balloon, ET, Toy Story*

Unit 2: Storytelling: The Mythological Approach

Students learn the hero's journey in storytelling, including specific details of the journey, and how to analyze heroism from a classic perspective. This unit focuses on how "story" transcends humanity.

Assessment:

- Formative: Analysis of frames/clips, both verbal and written responses (daily, on-going through the term.)
- Summative: Essay—Tracing the Hero's Journey (student- selected film).

Typical Films (Clips and Full Movies): *Star Wars, The Sandlot, The Lion King*

Unit 3: Storytelling: The Feminist Approach

Students learn to analyze stories from multiple perspectives, focusing on archetypal female portrayals and roles in films, and how the portrayal has shifted throughout history.

Assessment:

- Formative: Analysis of frames/clips, both verbal and written responses (on-going through the term.)
- Summative: Presentation—Compare/contrast female characters from a selection of films.

Typical Films (Clips and Full Movies): *Sense and Sensibility, Chicago, The Secret Life of Bees*

Unit 4: Media Literacy: The Social/Political Approach, Documentary Film Techniques

Students learn to differentiate between propaganda and informational text, including how images can be used to both raise emotions and provide logic and reasoning. We will study the rhetorical functions of documentary filmmaking, and how political messages and ideas are portrayed.

Assessment

- Formative: Analysis of frames/clips, both verbal and written responses (on-going through the term.)
- Summative: Socratic Discussion and then Debate (and differences between the two) on issues raised in documentaries. Embed evidence drawn from the films.

Typical Films (Clips and Full Movies): *The Cove Food, Inc., Jiro Dreams of Sushi*

Unit 5: Genre Study: Directors' Meaning and Purpose

Students learn that the choices a director makes, including genre and style, affect the meaning and purpose of film. We study the specific ideas and thematic messages within each film.

Assessment

- Formative: Analysis of frames/clips, both verbal and written responses (on-going through the term.)
- Summative: Final Essay/Presentation—Film Critique, using techniques and approaches to analyze what the director intends, and his/her success in the film. Students pick a specific genre that interests them.

Typical Films (Clips and Full Movies): Rom Com – *The Hundred Foot Journey*, Adventure – *A Beautiful Mind, Cast Away*, Action – *Inception* Horror – *Jaws*, Silent Films – *The Artist*, Epic – *Forrest Gump, The Butler*

TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS:

A number of texts and resources are used—all available on-line and through teacher-produced visuals and presentations.

Resource Materials

N/A

SUBJECT AREA CONTENT STANDARDS TO BE ADDRESSED:

Each unit will contain the Common Core reading/writing/listening and speaking standards. Below is a list of the main focus standard(s) for the unit.

UNIT ONE: Film Construction, Classification and Techniques

ELA Reading Literature 11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

ELA Writing 11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

ELA Listening and Speaking 11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

UNIT TWO: Storytelling, The Mythological Approach

ELA Reading Literature 11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

ELA Writing 11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

UNIT THREE: Storytelling, The Feminist Approach

ELA Reading Literature 11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other

ELA Writing 11-12.1c Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

ELA Listening and Speaking 11-12.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

UNIT FOUR: Media Literacy, The Social/Political Approach, Documentary Film Techniques

ELA Reading Informational Text 11-12.1, 2, 3 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats.

ELA Writing 11-12.7 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

ELA Listening and Speaking 11-12.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

UNIT FIVE: Genre Study, Directors' Meaning and Purpose

ELA Reading Literature 11-12.1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. Analyze how an author's choices structure specific parts of a text. Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story.

DISTRICT ESLRS TO BE ADDRESSED:

Students will be:

- **Self-Directed Learners:** Students will make choices about which films to critique and present. They will choose mediums in which to showcase their understanding.
- **Constructive Thinkers:** Students will analyze and critique a number of frames and film clips, thinking creatively about choices a director has made.
- **Effective Communicators:** Students will learn a wide-ranging vocabulary that promotes Visual and Media Literacy. Students will learn classic argumentative approaches, and consider differing perspectives.
- **Collaborative Workers:** Students will discuss in small groups, and present information, including projects, with peers.
- **Quality Producers/Performers:** Students will present information in both written and electronic formats, producing essays and a film critique that demonstrates their understanding of film techniques.
- **Responsible Citizens:** Students will develop a cultural awareness, studying perspectives from which film analysis can occur. We watch films from around the world. Characters of world religions, ethnicities and races are represented.

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