

# *Film Studies - 2025-2026 Course Syllabus*



*Mrs. Douglas*

*Rm. 1138*

*Period 4*

*Welcome to Film Studies!* This class is designed to teach you how to view film as a visual text. Using this approach to film, we will develop our visual literacy skills and gain proficiency as a receptive and active viewer of film. Along the way, you will begin to gain an appreciation of film as a unique art form. You will learn to analyze film as both a historical document and a cultural artifact. You will learn to identify how the artistic elements and technical aspects of filmmaking enable the filmmaker to depict a cinematic narrative. This class will require a commitment to critically viewing, analyzing, and discussing film. It is my goal that by the end of this course you will never simply “watch” a movie!

**Course Goal:** Recognize and appreciate film as a powerful and artistic medium of storytelling and communication.

## **Course Learning Objectives\*:**

- Become a receptive and active viewer of film.
- Learn the language of film.
- Identify cinematic devices.
- Develop visual literacy skills.
- Learn to identify and interpret the expressive layers of film.
- Gain knowledge of the historical origin of film.
- Identify film as a collaborative work of art.
- Recognize film as both a historical document and a cultural artifact.
- Learn to respond critically (analytically) to film.
- Recognize film as a medium for social commentary.
- Expand film repertoire.
- Identify auteur directors and their filmographies.
- Write a film analysis.

\*Objectives for the course are designed to meet the National Film Study Standards (<http://www.film-foundation.org/>).

**Required Materials:** (provided by the district ☺)

- ✓ binder/folder
- ✓ writing utensils
- ✓ notebook

## **UNITS OF STUDY:**

1. What is Film?
2. The Origins of Film and the Burgeoning Film Industry
2. Film as a Visual Literacy
3. The Expressive Layers of Film
4. Auteurs: A Director’s Artistic Vision
5. Parody and Satire
6. Film and Society

## Grading Procedures:

Grades will be calculated on total points value.

*In-class assignments, in-class participation, quizzes, and tests will be assigned points based on length, complexity and significance. The points you earn will reflect your level of attendance, participation in class discussions, and your full active attention to the films we will view.*

### Participation in Classwork

- If you are fully engaged in classroom activities and respectful of our learning environment, you have the potential to earn **10 points per week (100%)** or **2 points a day**. Your weekly participation grade will be recorded in PowerSchool.
- Each unit of study incorporates several films. Along with actively viewing a film, you will be expected to engage in any notetaking, classroom discussions, reading, and other types of lesson activities designed around the film. This classwork introduces you to new content, reinforces learned content, and increases your ability to “read” a film. Additionally, you can expect the occasional quiz/test and/or film analysis. **On average, each unit of study is worth 200 points.** You will earn points based on your level of participation in these activities. Participation includes your level of active viewing, in-class behavior/attitudes, level of classroom discussion, and completion of classwork.
- Each of us will be expected to contribute to the class discussion! I love to “talk film.” I hope you will too! Whole-class and small group discussions will further our analytical and interpretative viewing. You can expect that any film we view will be subject to re-viewing and pausing for analysis. Please leave your groans in the hallway!
- After an absence, see me about making up classwork. This most likely will include viewing a segment of the film you missed.
- If you have any questions about your grades, please see me to schedule a time to discuss.

### Quizzes

*Quizzes are designed to check for understanding. Quizzes reveal individual/whole class learning gaps or misconceptions.*

- Quizzes are given regularly throughout each unit of study.

### Tests/Film Analyses

*Tests and film analyses are designed to demonstrate what you have learned and evidence the standards-based skills you have gained by the end of a unit of study.*

- End-of-unit tests/film analyses assess what has been learned. They require you to independently apply the learning targets and demonstrate your ability to think on a critical level.

## Classroom Routines and Expectations

*It is expected that all students will exhibit respect for our learning community by adhering to the following classroom routines and expectations:*

- **Hats & Hoods & Sunglasses & Blankets & GVCS Dress Code**
  - Hats, which do not disrupt the learning environment, are **permitted** to be worn in class.
  - Hats are **not** permitted to be pulled down fully over ears or face.
  - Hoods are **not** permitted to be worn in class.
  - Sunglasses are **not** permitted to be worn in class.
  - Blankets are **not** permitted to be brought to class.
  - Abide by the school dress code in this classroom. Avoid wearing anything with graphics or messages, which may be potentially offensive to others.

*Please honor these expectations before entering my classroom! I know the classroom you just left may have different rules, but it's important that you learn to navigate different sets of expectations.*

- **Backpacks**

- Backpacks are permitted in class.
- Backpacks are to be tucked fully under your desk or placed in the back of the classroom.

- **Food/Drink:**

- Water is permitted in the classroom.
- Food and non-water beverages (aka Dunkin' coffee, energy drinks, etc.) **are not permitted** in the classroom.

- **DISTRICT/STATE Cellphone Policy (7:45 am–2:54 pm):**

- NO cellphones, smart-watches, wireless headphones, earbuds or any other smart device will be used, accessed, visible or heard in the classroom.
- These smart devices are expected to be turned off and placed in your backpack or locker or left at home – NOT in your pocket.
- School-issued I-pads are a permissible device for classroom use, at my discretion (aka when I say so!). Keep them in your backpack, unless otherwise directed by me.

*Cellphones smartwatches, smart devices and wireless headphones, carbuds, and other types of smart devices are expected to have been turned off and placed in your backpack or locker at 7:45 a.m. I should **never** see these devices in my classroom. Avoid giving me ANY to suspect you are using any of these disallowed devices. I will be required to collect it and turn it into the office. Be disciplined and simply wait until the end of the school day to access messages, etc. Consider it a 7-hr. break from social media and text messages.*

- **Punctuality**

- Be on time for class every day.
- You will be assigned a seat. However, anticipate the re-assigning of seats, if necessary, to meet specific learning goals.
- You are required to have a pass from a teacher, staff member, the nurse or the welcome desk if you arrive late for class.
- If you enter the classroom late, do NOT disrupt instruction. **Quickly and quietly** take your seat. I will come to you to collect your pass and give you any materials you may need for class.

- **Dismissal Time**

- Only I dismiss the class. I promise that I do watch the clock so that you don't have to! Refrain from clock-watching and packing up before I have granted permission to do so. The last few minutes of class are very important! This is when we recap, look ahead to the next class, give reminders about assignments coming due, and give instructions for collecting materials.

- **Expectations During Classtime**

- You are expected to participate in class discussions. Film Studies is a discussion-heavy class!
- Ask and answer questions in class that are directly related to our discussion.
- Your active and appropriate participation is something I keep track of every day. Your learner behaviors, or lack of, will be reflected in your weekly participation grade.
- Raise your hand. Avoid blurting out. Refrain from interrupting or in any way being dismissive or critical of the opinions or perspectives of others. Avoid any type of attention-seeking behavior.
- At all times, avoid the use of foul language, sexual innuendoes, rude comments, derogatory comments, name-calling, side-jokes/comments, or murmuring. Remember where you are. Words matter! Choose them carefully!
- Refrain from making negative comments about the movies we may be watching or the learning activities I have planned or the classmates you have been asked to collaborate with. You are welcome to your opinion but keep any negative opinions to yourself! This negativity affects me and detrimentally affects the learning of others. Strive to have an open mind and choose a positive attitude.
- It is never my intention nor my desire to embarrass you or publicly call you out on your behavior. I will attempt to use non-verbal cues to get your attention. Learn to read my non-verbal language to avoid a public re-direct.
- Be mindful of your body language! It is a non-verbal discussion with me and your classmates! Some body language communicates disinterest, boredom, devaluation, inattentiveness and/or negativity. Please exhibit courteous and attentive body language: good posture, eye contact, active listening/viewing, note-taking, eyes-on-the-text, etc. This kind of body language communicates respect for me and the important work we are engaged in every day. If you get sleepy while we are reading, be proactive. Stand in the back of the classroom, if necessary. You will not be permitted to sleep during class – I am sorry!
- Absolutely avoid using class discussion to air differences you may have with other students or teachers. Additionally, do not use class discussion to ask questions regarding your individual grades or ineligibility status, or any issue you may have with classroom policies, seating arrangements, and/or expectations. **Please see me privately on these matters.**
- Any behavior I deem to be disruptive, disrespectful, or insubordinate will be subject to a logical consequence, dependent on the severity of the disruption. This could be:
  - a warning
  - a phone call or email home
  - a written referral to the principal
  - probation or ineligibility
  - removal from the classroom

Note: Some movies we watch, you may have already seen. Consider it an opportunity to gain further insights! However, I expect that **you** will never intentionally spoil a movie for a classmate by blurring out plot details and plot twists. I consider this to be an extremely rude and disrespectful behavior. You can expect me to respond accordingly.

- **Ineligibility**

- Your eligibility, or ineligibility, will be determined based on the learning behaviors you regularly exhibit. These include classroom attendance and participation, organization to meet deadlines, and assignment completion. See the learner behaviors rubric for how expectations are scored. Ask how you can improve your learner behaviors to avoid ineligibility.

- **Permission to leave the classroom**

- Permission to leave the classroom is permissible at *my discretion*.
- Granting you permission to be excused from the classroom is solely my decision. I will rarely deny you access to the bathroom, but don't necessarily expect me to say "yes" immediately. I may suggest that you wait until a better time. I expect you to respect and abide by that decision.
- Do use the time built into your schedule to see the nurse, or go to the main office, or get a drink of water, use the restroom, give blood, or see Mrs. Preston, etc., etc. Consider bringing a pre-filled water bottle to class.
- Permission to leave class to use the bathroom should be a rare occasion, not an everyday, at the same time, and for the same length of time occasion. Limit time out of the classroom. Long and frequent bathroom breaks will affect your participation grade and may result in a call home and/or to the nurse
- Some instructional times to be out of the classroom are worse than others. Expect, I may ask you to wait, and to ask me again at a better time. I expect you to respect and abide by that decision.
- Anytime you are given permission to leave the classroom, it is expected that you sign-out and sign-in. No exceptions.

- **Classroom Space and Resources**

- The physical classroom and classroom resources are ours to share responsibly and respectfully. Certain spaces and resources are for my use only. Please do not touch anything on my desk or answer the classroom phone without my permission. Do not sit on my chair or enter the space behind my desk space unless given permission.
- Classroom resources should be handled respectfully and responsibly. These include but are not limited to writing utensils, notepads, folders, books, pencil sharpeners, desks, bookshelves, etc.
- You are expected to organize your materials and to participate in the daily routine of distributing and collecting classroom materials.

## Books and Films

Following is a list of films you will potentially view this year. **This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change.**

*The Great Train Robbery*  
*The General*  
*A Dog's Life*  
*The Artist*  
*Gran Torino*  
*Slumdog Millionaire*  
*The Shining*  
*Psycho*  
*Sleepy Hollow*  
*Sleepless in Seattle*  
*No Country for Old Men*  
*Fargo*  
*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*  
*Saving Private Ryan*  
*Raising Arizona*  
*King Kong (2005)*  
*Oh Brother Where Art Thou*  
*Interstellar*  
*Empire of the Sun*  
*Goodfellas*  
*Young Frankenstein*  
*Monty Python*  
*The Knight's Tale*  
*Catch Me If You Can*  
*Dunkirk*  
*1917*  
*Rear Window*  
*Jaws*

**Be Ready! Be Present! Be Responsible! Be Respectful! Be Awesome**

*You are responsible for the information contained in this syllabus and for abiding by the policies therein.*

**To the Parents/Guardians of Mrs. Douglas's students:**

*I consider it a privilege to teach your student this school year. I am excited about the time we will spend together viewing great films. I expect each film will give us opportunities to explore varying experiences and perspectives and grow an appreciation for the storytelling power of cinema!*

*These guidelines and expectations are outlined to provide a nurturing and equitable learning environment for everyone. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, or any matter throughout the school year, please do not hesitate to contact me*

**Please send me** (Mrs. Douglas) **a message in our new ParentSquare app** to let me know that you have read this syllabus. (Click on Messages, click New Message, and type my last name, and it should be easy to send me a direct message!)

**If parents at different numbers both want to be contacted throughout the year, please have both send this message and indicate as such.**

Your student has elected to study film, a full-year elective class offered in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade as an alternative to 12<sup>th</sup> grade ELA. This course will earn your student a full 12th grade English credit.

Throughout the course, we will watch a variety of critically acclaimed domestic and foreign films. Some of these films have an R-rating or may not be rated (NR) due to the age of the film. Though I do select films with the aim of furthering your student's recognition and appreciation of film as a unique and powerful art form, some may contain violence, strong language, nudity and sexual content. However, I do make every effort to limit gratuitous "R-rated" content.

If you have reservations about a film listed above, or about your student viewing R-rated films in general, let me know in your message, as I need to gain parental permission.

Lastly, having started this messaging conversation will provide you with an easy way to contact me throughout the course of the school year, if needed. Thanks!

Mrs. Douglas\*\*

Contact Info: kdouglas@genvalley.org  
585-268-7900 ext. 1138

\*\*I reserve the right to make changes to this document and the policies herein. 9/2/25