

IB Film Summer Work

I'm so excited to have you in this course next year. IB Film is a unique blend of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, and it all starts with learning how to watch movies in a whole new way.

This summer, you'll begin preparing for the course by exploring key film vocabulary and applying it while watching movies. These terms will become the foundation of how we talk about film, analyze scenes, and plan your own productions.

Your Summer Assignment:

1. **Study the Film Vocabulary:**

Read through the list of film terms provided. Don't worry if you don't memorize every definition right away, just start getting familiar with the language of film. Try looking up examples on YouTube or jotting down notes in your own words to help them stick.

2. **Watch 3 Films from 3 Different Genres:**

Choose three movies, each from a different genre (horror, drama, comedy, documentary, action, sci-fi, etc.). As you watch, pause to observe and reflect on how filmmakers use techniques from the vocabulary list. Think about camera angles, lighting, sound, editing, mise-en-scène, and more.

3. **Take Notes (Informal is Fine!):**

For each film, write a short paragraph or list noting:

- The film title, director (if known), and genre
- 3-5 film vocabulary terms you noticed in action
- A brief reflection on how those choices impacted your experience as a viewer

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The art and technique of visual storytelling through camera work and composition.

- **Framing** – How a subject is positioned in the shot. Tight framing may evoke tension or claustrophobia; loose framing can suggest freedom or isolation.
- **Depth of Field** – Shallow depth can emphasize emotion by isolating a character; deep focus allows for layered storytelling and spatial relationships.
- **Focus Pull (Rack Focus)** – A shift in focus from one subject to another draws attention and can signal change or realization.
- **Camera Movement** –
 - **Dolly/Tracking Shot** – Follows the subject smoothly, often immersing the viewer in action.
 - **Crane Shot** – Sweeping vertical motion, often used for emotional lift or dramatic reveals.
 - **Handheld Camera** – Shaky movement conveys realism, chaos, or anxiety.
 - **Steadicam** – Smooth movement that retains intimacy with the subject.

- **Aspect Ratio** – The shape of the frame; wide aspect ratios can feel epic or isolating, while square ratios feel confined or nostalgic.
- **Color Grading** – Adjusting hues and contrast in post-production. Warm tones may feel inviting or nostalgic; cool tones can evoke sadness, detachment, or sterility.
- **Shot Composition Types** –
 - **Establishing Shot** – Sets the scene and tone.
 - **Two Shot** – Places two characters in frame to show connection or conflict.
 - **Over-the-Shoulder** – Often used in dialogue to suggest perspective and power dynamics.
 - **Rule of Thirds** – Positioning subjects off-center creates visual interest and tension.
 - **Leading Lines** – Natural lines guide the viewer’s eye and can symbolize direction or control.

CAMERA ANGLES

The position and angle of the camera influence power dynamics, emotional tone, and viewer engagement.

- **Eye-Level Shot** – Neutral, direct, and often used for realism or relatability.
- **High Angle** – Looks down on a subject, making them seem small, weak, or powerless.
- **Low Angle** – Looks up at a subject, giving them authority, menace, or dominance.
- **Bird’s Eye View (Overhead)** – Creates a sense of fate, detachment, or insignificance.
- **Worm’s Eye View** – Extreme low angle that emphasizes grandeur, danger, or disorientation.
- **Dutch Angle (Tilted Shot)** – Implies instability, chaos, or psychological tension.
- **Point of View (POV)** – Places the viewer in a character’s shoes, creating empathy or discomfort.
- **Extreme Close-Up** – Focuses on a detail (e.g., eyes, hands) to heighten tension or intimacy.
- **Extreme Wide Shot** – Establishes setting and scale, often evoking loneliness or awe.

LIGHTING

Lighting shapes the mood, directs focus, and builds emotional or thematic meaning.

- **High-Key Lighting** – Bright and even, often associated with comedies or optimism.
- **Low-Key Lighting** – High contrast, strong shadows; used in thrillers, noir, or scenes of tension.
- **Backlighting** – Creates silhouettes, often symbolizing mystery or emotional distance.
- **Side Lighting (Chiaroscuro)** – Highlights duality, conflict, or internal struggle.
- **Underlighting** – Lighting from below, commonly used to create fear or unease.
- **Top Lighting** – Emphasizes vulnerability or exposure.
- **Hard Light** – Sharp shadows and defined edges; creates stark, intense images.
- **Soft Light** – Diffused and gentle, often used for romantic or introspective scenes.

- **Motivated Lighting** – Light that mimics a logical source (e.g., sunlight through a window).
- **Practical Lighting** – Light from visible sources within the scene (e.g., lamps, candles) adds realism.

MISE EN SCÈNE

Everything placed in front of the camera to be captured visually.

- **Set Design** – Communicates time period, social context, or mood. A cluttered space may feel chaotic; minimalism might feel sterile or controlled.
- **Props** – Objects that serve narrative or symbolic purposes. A recurring object may become a motif.
- **Costume** – Reveals character traits, status, or transformation.
- **Makeup and Hair** – Used to age characters, emphasize realism, or reflect inner states.
- **Blocking** – The movement and placement of actors within the scene. A character standing alone may appear alienated; symmetrical blocking might suggest harmony or control.
- **Spatial Relationships** – How characters relate to one another physically can indicate emotional distance or intimacy.
- **Composition** – Arrangement of elements within the frame; symmetry can feel calm or unsettling, depending on context.

SOUND DESIGN

The intentional crafting of all audio elements to support storytelling.

- **Diegetic Sound** – Sound that originates from the film's world (dialogue, footsteps, ambient noise). Builds realism and immersion.
- **Non-Diegetic Sound** – External to the story world (score, narration); guides audience emotion or theme.
- **Foley** – Custom-recorded sounds matched to on-screen actions for realism.
- **Ambient Sound** – Background noise (wind, birds, city sounds) that sets the environment.
- **Sound Bridge** – Audio that connects two scenes, easing transitions or suggesting continuity.
- **Silence** – Strategic absence of sound can be unsettling or deeply emotional.
- **L-Cut / J-Cut** – When sound from the next (or previous) scene starts before the visual cut. Useful for creating narrative flow or emotional momentum.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

How a story is organized and experienced by the viewer.

- **Linear Narrative** – Events unfold in chronological order.
- **Nonlinear Narrative** – Flashbacks, time jumps, or disjointed structure that reflects memory or emotional logic.

- **Three-Act Structure** – Setup, confrontation, and resolution. Often used in traditional storytelling.
- **In Medias Res** – Story begins mid-action, creating urgency or intrigue.
- **Circular Narrative** – Begins and ends in the same place; emphasizes fate or repetition.
- **Parallel Editing (Cross-Cutting)** – Shows simultaneous events, builds tension or thematic parallels.
- **Unreliable Narrator** – The storyteller’s version of events is questionable, adding complexity or mystery.

MOTIFS

Recurring elements that reinforce themes, mood, or character development.

- **Visual Motif** – Repeated imagery (mirrors, birds, water) that gains symbolic meaning.
- **Color Motif** – Strategic repetition of color palettes (e.g., red for danger or desire; blue for melancholy).
- **Sound Motif** – Recurring sound or musical cue that signals emotion, memory, or transformation.
- **Symbolic Motif** – Repeated objects or actions that stand for a larger idea (e.g., locked doors = repression).
- **Character Motif** – Repeated dialogue or gestures that reflect a character’s identity or arc.

SOUND (MUSIC AND SCORE)

The emotional and thematic power of music in film.

- **Score** – Original instrumental music composed to enhance emotional tone and pacing.
- **Soundtrack** – Pre-recorded songs selected to reflect character or setting.
- **Leitmotif** – A recurring musical theme tied to a character, emotion, or idea.
- **Underscore** – Subtle music used beneath dialogue or action to guide mood without drawing attention.
- **Sting** – A sudden musical cue used to heighten shock, humor, or revelation.
- **Diegetic Music** – Music heard by characters in the film (e.g., playing from a radio).
- **Non-Diegetic Music** – Music only the audience hears, used to shape emotional response.

GENRE

Film categories defined by shared conventions, aesthetics, and audience expectations.

- **Genre Conventions** – Visual, narrative, or thematic elements typical of a genre (e.g., jump scares in horror).
- **Tropes** – Familiar story devices or character types (e.g., the “reluctant hero” in action films).
- **Subgenres** – More specific branches (e.g., psychological thriller, romantic comedy).

- **Hybrid Genre** – A mix of genres that challenges traditional boundaries (e.g., sci-fi romance).
- **Genre Subversion** – Intentionally challenging or reversing expectations of a genre.
- **Iconography** – Common visual symbols (e.g., cowboy hats in Westerns, spaceships in sci-fi).
- **Tone** – The emotional feel of a genre (satirical, earnest, bleak, uplifting).