

**TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Larkspur, California**

**Course of Study**

**HISTORY AND APPRECIATION OF FILM**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

History and Appreciation of Film is a one semester college prep elective for eleventh and twelfth graders that offers a rigorous but accessible study of film history from the late nineteenth century to the present. The course provides a look at representative films for artistic, historical and cultural significance. Connections will be drawn between developments in different countries and times of film history. Students will acquire an understanding of the language and techniques of film making while learning about important film styles associated with particular periods, genres, countries and directors.

The course provides students with a historical study of both American and foreign film. It covers the early developments in film making, including silent films of America, Germany, France, Italy and the Soviet Union. This chronological study will enable students to place a film in a cross-cultural and historical context, up to and including the most current film developments.

The course will also provide students with the analytical tools to review a film through the film maker's lens, identifying techniques that have evolved over the past hundred years and evaluating their use in the films we study. Films will be viewed with an eye to the artistic techniques in terms of the development of these techniques in previous films viewed or studied.

The course will also provide an opportunity to analyze films for their cultural significance, for what they reveal (or fail to reveal) about the times in which they were made, and the subjects about which they were made

For example, "Birth of a Nation" will be viewed through an artistic lens (innovative film techniques); a historical lens in terms of film development and the view of history contained in its plot; and cultural significance-how it reflected racism and led to a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. Students will also compare the movie to movies being made at the same time in other countries with a significant film industry.

The course uses an interdisciplinary approach to learning, combining reading, writing and analyses with a discussion of film, history and contemporary society

This course addresses the following district graduation outcomes:

- #1 Communicate articulately, effectively...when speaking and writing
- #2 Read/view and analyze material in a variety of disciplines
- #3 Use technology to access information, analyze...communicate ideas
- #11 Interpret, experience, and create...artistic work

**Course Goals:**

1. Analyze and appreciate film as a reflection of artistic ability and cultural significance.
2. Explain how film is a unique medium of expression with its own language and history.
3. Draw connections between developments in different countries and times in film history.

## II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

1. Explain the multinational nature of the invention of cinema .
2. Compare how narrative developed in silent film in the United States, Germany, and Soviet Union.
3. Describe how the invention of sound influenced the development of film in the United States.
4. Describe the Hollywood Studio System and its commercial and artistic impact.
5. Define and use as tools of analyses the terminology and film techniques studied in class.
6. Analyze the effect of various influential directors on the film industry.
7. Evaluate the role of film as a reflection of American culture and political concerns.
8. Identify, define and compare elements and themes found in a variety of film genres (Comedy, Western, Film Noir, etc.).
9. Investigate the impact of film as a reflection of society-in its depiction current and historical social mores, stereotypes and other important historical issues (war, racism, etc.)

### Course Outline:

1. Recognize and explain the multinational nature of cinema
  - Key inventors
  - Key inventions and the relationships of inventions to technological cinematic progress
  - Patent Controversies
  - Early exhibitions and public response
2. Compare narrative development and techniques in silent film in the United States, Germany, France, and the Soviet Union
  - Development of silent movies and movie stars
  - Development of early major studios and directors
  - Soviet Montage/Avante- Garde of 1920s
  - German Golden Age (1920s-30s)
  - American Film pioneers (Griffith, Sennett, Chaplin)
  - France between the Wars (surrealism, Renoir)
3. Explain how the invention of sound influenced the development of film in the United States
  - A Effect on destruction of stars, directors and modes of storytelling
  - B. Effect of sound on creation of American studio System and new genres of movies (the 1930s musical, for example)
4. Explain and evaluate the Hollywood Studio Years: 1930-45
  - American film musicals
  - Art and Commerce (studio domination of film making and distribution)
  - Some Key directors: Sternberg, Ford, Hawks, Hitchcock, Welles, Cukor, Capra, Sturges)
  - Economic and social role of key stars
  - Key genres (musical, gangster, social realism, comedy, western) and relation to current society
  - Censorship and film making
5. Hollywood in Transition: 1946-65

HUAC and the Hollywood Blacklist  
Film Noir  
Message movies  
D effect of new ratings system

6. Neorealism and the New Wave
  - Italian neorealism (Rossellini, Visconti, Fellini, etc.)
  - French postwar classicism (Cocteau, Tati, etc.)
  - 1959 and after ( new wave, Truffaut, Godard, etc.)
7. Hollywood Renaissance: 1964-76
  - Focus on new American Directors ( Woody Allen, Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick)
  - Film as mirror on society
8. American Film 1979-present
  - Blockbusters
  - Technological advances and impact on film
  - Modern mythology: Star Wars, ET, etc.
  - Current issues of race, gender, social equity and censorship in contemporary American film
  - Stars and popular culture

### **III. ASSESSMENT**

#### **A. Student Assessment**

Students will be assessed through a variety of means including:

- a. Written quizzes
- b. A mid-term and a final exam
- c. A research project which demonstrates understanding of a specific topic (genre, editing, etc.)
- d. A notebook that includes summaries, evaluations and analyses of films viewed in class

#### **B. Course Assessment**

The effectiveness of this course will be assessed through a combination of student feedback and administrative/departmental observation.

### **IV. METHODS AND MATERIALS**

#### **A. Methods**

1. Students will apply film terminology to written analysis of films in their
  - a. research paper
  - b. journals (based on their reading and viewing of films)
  - c. quizzes and tests
2. Direct instruction in film making techniques coupled with viewing of films
3. Direct instruction in film history and cultural significance coupled with viewing of representative films
4. Reading of a Film History text

5. Reading of Film criticism essays
6. Class discussion, debate and analysis of films
7. Student-written film criticism essays

#### B. Materials

Students will use a variety of media. These include a Film History textbook, representative films(available for rental or purchase depending on funding), and essays written by filmmakers, critics and historians. Equipment: a dvd/vcr player and a television. In order to copy primary sources, a small copy budget will be necessary. Students will also access information of film using the internet.

The approved textbooks are: Closely Watched Trains by Marilyn Fabe and American Cinema by John Belton

The approved list of films is attached as Appendix B.

#### C. Technology

Students will use the Internet for research and various video technology (VCR, DVD).

### **V. GENERAL INFORMATION**

This is a five unit, semester course open to juniors and seniors. Students must have parental permission to enroll in this course (see Appendix A: Parental Permission Form).

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites.

Requirements Met: This is an elective course which may be used in partial fulfillment of the elective credit required for graduation. No specific graduation requirement is met.

This course meets the UC/CSU “g” elective requirement.

Approved: 1/29/02