



Dallas High School Home of the Dragons



Film as Literature

2013 - 2014

Instructor: Aaron Fawcett

Telephone: (503) 623-8336 X 905

Email: aaron.fawcett@dsd2.org

Office Hours: Tues-Friday 3:00-3:30, and additional times by arrangement.

Prerequisite: Grade 10-12

Course Description: Welcome to Film as Literature. This course endeavors to introduce you to the world of film as an analyst, not as an audience member. The transition is easy for some and not so easy for others. You must accept the fact that you know only a few basic things about movies, whether you like the film, or whether you don't. Why you like things is a much more complicated issue and that is what we will focus on a great deal. To do so we will study many movies, hopefully one a week and you will gradually learn to analyze how and why movies work. We will study photographic elements, complex terms such as "Mise en Scene", editing, acting, film language, and much more. My major goal is to help you to become "cineliterate," and I usually say that if I "ruin" movies for you for a while then I've probably done my job fairly well. Specific writing tasks will allow you to practice a lot for state assessments and help you achieve those writing standards that will allow you to graduate.

Text: Film: An Introduction; William H. Phillips; 3rd ed.; 2005

Course Outline: First Semester

	Unit Topic and Film	Summative Assessment (Standards 1-3 are assessed, in part, on every exam listed below)
Unit 1:	Introduction to film terminology, photographic terminology; writing pretest: identifying and explaining "theme." Film: " October Sky "	Photographic Terms Test Pretest: What is the theme of this film? Use three examples as your support paragraphs.
Unit 2:	Film history: Film: " Metropolis. " This unit will focus on recognizing and writing about some major differences between film then and film now. Compare/contrast.	EESEC paragraphs focused on explaining differences and similarities between older films and newer films.

		EESEC paragraphs
Unit 3:	This film unit will explore human psychology and the always fascinating “why” we do the things we do. We will practice using the film’s evidence to Exploring support thesis. Film: “Amadeus.”	EESEC paragraphs focusing on using evidence to support claims.
Unit 4:	Feminist Criticism: “The Color Purple.” Here we use a film as a source for learning to watch film with a specific critical approach as our filter. Writing will be focused on explaining how the film approaches a sensitive yet relevant current issue.	EESEC paragraphs focused on specific characters and the struggles they face during the film and this part of history. This unit will really be geared towards understanding the theme and how to use great quotes to support your claims.
Unit 5:	Evaluating Acting/Character: “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?” For this unit we will explore how to write about acting and review for the first time the performances the actors give.	Body paragraphs that focus on evaluation and support of at three different characters.
Unit 6:	Comedy: “Some Like it Hot.” What is the difference between comedy and tragedy when it comes to it? Is the line as wide as we think, or is there more in common than what first appears? All this and more coming to you through this unit. This, ironically, is one of the more philosophical units and usually turns out to be quite a bit of fun.	This will be the first full paper we write. The content of the paper will be to determine why this film is categorized as and accepted as one of the greatest film comedies of all time. Full essay. Woo-hoo!
Unit 7:	Postmodernism: “The Matrix.” During this unit we will focus on what postmodernism is and how it is pursued and explored in “The Matrix.” Terminology will be a major issue and stumbling point throughout this unit, so making sure we understand the content language is key.	Body paragraphs focusing on exploring some key facets of postmodernism. Key terms include “simulation,” “simulacra,” “pastiche” and “meta-narrative.” There are plenty more terms we will cover, but these will be key writing points.
Unit 8:	Identity in Postmodernism: “The Truman Show.” Here we will take a closer look at the impact of media in our world and expand on the concepts from above. We will explore the allegory of “Plato’s Cave” and apply it to this film.	Formal paper will happen over this film. “What is the value of a single human life?” Another topic will be to explore whether or not the film is an extension of Plato’s cave allegory.
Unit 9:	Thematic writing: “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.” This unit will explore and come full circle back to the pretest. We will focus a lot on the concept of the “unreliable narrator” in film and what that does to an audience’s experience.	Formal paper: “What is the theme of this film?” Use examples from the film to support your claim.

Standards to Be Assessed:

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Standard 1: SWBAT write a five-paragraph essay with a developed thesis, areas of support directly pulled from the source.
2. Standard 2: SWBAT write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through effective selection, organization and analysis of the content
 - Introduce a topic
 - Organize a complex idea
 - Create a unified whole that builds on preceding information
 - Develop a topic thoroughly using supportive details
 - Use transitions to signal relationships between ideas
 - Use Academic and appropriate vocabulary
 - Provide a concluding statement

Career Related Learning Standards: Career-related learning standards (CRLS) are fundamental skills essential for success in employment, college, family, and community life. We have integrated the Personal Management standard from the CRLS into all courses at DHS. **This standard will be assessed and communicated independent of the academic grade.** It is included below and mainly includes behaviors that will be assessed in this course.

- **Personal Management Standard:** Exhibit appropriate work ethic and behaviors in school, community and workplace.
 - Students will identify tasks that need to be done and initiate action to complete the tasks.
 - Students will plan, organize and complete projects and assigned tasks on time, meeting agreed upon standards of quality.
 - Students will take responsibility for decisions and actions and anticipate consequences of decisions and actions.
 - Students will maintain regular attendance and be on time daily.
 - Students will maintain appropriate interactions with colleagues.

Grading and Assessment:

Student's final grade for each course will be broken down into two categories:

- 1) **Academic:** based on assessments, tests, projects and performances that measure learning.
- 2) **Personal Management:** based on homework completion and other behaviors measuring the CRLS personal management standard.

The Final grade is calculated as follows: 75% of the course grade will be based on the **Academic** grade and **25%** on the **Personal Management** grade.

- Any items included in the Academic grade (PA) may be retaken and the higher grade recorded. Teachers may extend the retake time period, but as a rule all retakes need to be done within **2 weeks** of the initial assessment.
- Students will complete extra preparation before retaking an assessment.
- Personal management work turned in late may be reduced by up to 50% credit.
- Retakes are not allowed on Personal Management assignments.
- Students must schedule performance retakes at their teacher's convenience. (Speech, drama, labs.)

Academic Integrity: We expect students to express academic integrity by doing their own work and properly documenting information gathered from other sources. Students who violate the principles of academic integrity will be subject to disciplinary consequences (see Insubordination section of the on-line student agenda).

Extra Credit: Extra credit is not offered, however students may be given additional opportunities to show mastery.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices: Mobile phones are not to be in use or in open view within classrooms, restrooms, locker rooms, or during lockdown situations. Misuse of mobile phone or electronic device will lead to the following consequences:

- ☐ 1st offense – student is kindly reminded to keep the phone off and away
- ☐ 2nd offense - confiscated device is delivered to the main office where student must reclaim it
- ☐ 3rd offense – confiscated device is delivered to the main office where a parent/guardian must reclaim it

Personal Communication Devices Board Policy:
<http://policy.osba.org/dallas/j/jfceb%20r%20g1.pdf>

Tardies and Unexcused Absences: Points will be given towards the Personal Management grade at the end of each grading period (9 weeks/18 weeks) for daily attendance and punctuality. Points will be deducted for each tardy and each unexcused absence in that 9-week grading period. Overly disruptive behavior may also result in loss of attendance points.

1 July, 2013

Re: Film Permission Slip and Films Shown

To Whom It May Concern:

If you are reading this letter then your child is enrolled as a student in **Film as Literature** this semester. I look forward to the opportunity to work with your child in this very interesting, yet complicated subject.

It is my mission to help students get out of their comfortable audience chair and sit in the more stringent analyst's chair. Film is one of those mediums that is easy to watch but sometimes hard to analyze. This will not come easy for them, or for me. I look forward to the challenge—I hope they do as well.

Success in this course is dependent upon your child attending regularly. As engaging as I am (insert laugh track), I still can't compete with the myriad of things to do outside of school. Please encourage your child to attend regularly—it is really difficult to catch up in this class since we watch most of what we analyze in class and not at home.

Here is a list of the films we will see in this class. By signing this form you do give permission for your child to watch these films. Opting out of certain films is not an option because there are not resources to teach two films simultaneously to two separate groups. I strongly believe that all scenes shown in this class are appropriate and I would love to have a conversation with you about anything you might have a question about. Feel free to contact me at the school (503-623-8336 ext. 3111).

- **What's Eating Gilbert Grape** [PG] (1993) Director: Lasse Hallstrom
- **Metropolis** [NR] (1926) Director: Fritz Lang
- **Amadeus**: [PG] (1984) Director: Milos Forman; Screenplay by Peter Shaffer
- **The Color Purple** [PG-13] (1985) Director: Steven Spielberg; **The Truman Show** [PG] (1998) Director: Peter Weir; Screenplay by Andrew Nicol
- **October Sky** [PG-13] (1999) Director: Joe Johnston
- **The Matrix** [R] (1999) Director: Andy and Larry Wachowski
- **Some Like it Hot** [PG] (1959) Director: Billy Wilder
- **Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind** [R] (2004) Director: Michel Gondry
- **The Truman Show** [PG] (1999) Director: Peter Weir

I give permission for my son/daughter to watch the above films.

X

Date
