

Lit & Cinema

Course Syllabus

Literature and Cinema is a study of film as text. The course is designed to create active viewers, thinkers, and writers, as well as provide an overview of cinema as an art and a craft. Students will develop an overview of film history and criticism, as well as a better understanding of the contributions of the art to American culture. Focus units will look at the contribution of women and black directors, as well as the development of film technology and various genres. Each student will complete a major project that can be in the form of traditional research or criticism, or an original work in the form of a script or short film.

Note that specific films referenced below may be subject to change based on availability or a class's educational needs. Students will need signed permission to view R-rated films in the course.

Enrichment: Each unit will offer enrichment activities that student may pursue outside the classroom. These will not replace class work, but may offer opportunity for extra credit at the instructor's discretion.

Units of Study	Description & Objectives	Materials	Assessments
Film Origins and History	In this unit students will build an overview of the history of film as a medium, starting in the late 1800s and running up to the present. Major eras and themes of each period will be discussed with the objective of giving students a foundation on which to critique cinema in upcoming units.	Clips representative of films from the 1890s through the 1990s, TBA <i>Porter's The Great Train Robbery</i> (1903) Cinema history readings	Context seminar: students will explore and compare two eras of their choice with an eye to how film reflected and potentially shaped social and historical contexts of the eras. Findings will be reflected in seminar discussion
Active Viewing	Students will examine a series of critical approaches to film. The major objective is to shift the act of viewing from passive to active. Students will develop an	Clips for film study, TBA <i>Scott's Blade Runner</i> (1982) interrogation sequence	<i>Rear Window</i> critique: students will choose a critical approach discussed in class to develop a thoughtful written critique of the Hitchcock film.

	understanding of film as an artistic construct and an understanding of comparative cinema.	Hitchcock's <i>Rear Window</i> (1954)	
Director as Auteur	'Auteur theory' looks at directors as the creators of a film's aesthetic and message. This unit will focus on works by Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick to understand this approach to an artist's creations.	Hitchcock's <i>Psycho</i> (1960) <i>Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and love the Bomb</i> (1964) and <i>The Shining</i> (1980)	Director study essay: students will examine two to three films by a single director with the goal of articulating what makes that director an 'auteur.'
Women in Cinema	The world of cinema has been both traditional and transgressive. In this unit we will look at women's roles as creators and performers in film. Students will examine ways in which film has been a medium of both subjugation and liberation for women.	Hawks' <i>His Girl Friday</i> (1940) Chadha's <i>Bend it Like Beckham</i> (2002) Satrapi's <i>Persepolis</i> (2007) Selected clips, TBA	Comparative essay: Students will compare two films with differing portrayals of gender roles, at least one of which must be directed by a woman. Comparison must reflect awareness of historical and social contexts related to the films.
Cinema & the American Experience	This unit will focus primarily on the work of black directors and performers, especially as they represent portrayals of American history. Building on themes from the previous unit students will examine how films have portrayed persons of color and can provide opportunity to develop alternative historical narratives.	Griffiths' <i>Birth of a Nation</i> (1915) excerpts Fleming's <i>Gone With the Wind</i> (1939) excerpts McQueen's <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i> (2013) Lee's <i>Black KKKlansman</i> (2018)	Film & race seminar: Students will explore changing portrayals of African Americans in film and prepare discussion notes on the topic for a seminar discussion.
Genre Study: <i>Film Noir</i>	Following World War II, film took a darker bent. <i>Film Noir</i> is	Selected clips, TBA	Exploring Noir: using 'genre rules' explored in class, students will

	<p>characterized cynicism about human motivations and often employs a strongly stylistic point-of-view. Students will explore aspects of this genre as a model for a personal genre study.</p>	<p>Vidor's <i>Gilda</i> (1946)</p> <p>Polanski's <i>Chinatown</i> (1974)</p>	<p>script and perform or film an original <i>film noir</i> scene.</p>
<p>Film Technology</p>	<p>As a craft, film has been shaped by developments in technology. Amateur film-makers today have easy access to effects and editing tools of which professionals from the past could only dream. This unit will examine how changing film technology has transformed the field.</p>	<p>Selected Clips, TBA</p> <p>Cooper & Schoedsack's <i>King Kong</i> (1933)</p> <p>Garland's <i>Ex Machina</i> (2015)</p>	<p>In-class quiz on film technology.</p>
<p>Project</p>	<p>Each student will design and complete their own Literature & Cinema related project. This work is highly individualized, and could be a traditional research based paper, or an original creative work as determined by student interest and teacher approval. Emphasis will be placed on planning, time management, and mastery level execution of work.</p>	<p>Dependent on project. Student and teacher will collaborate on a suggested viewing/reading list.</p>	<p>Student designed project that explores learning within the art. This may take the form of research on a director or genre, a comparative cinema study, or potentially an original work such as a script or short film. There is potential for collaborative projects, but each student's role and duties must be clearly stipulated and adhered to.</p>