

INTRODUCTION TO FILM CRITICISM

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Guiding Questions:

- Why is film appreciation an important skill to possess?
- What skills are required for film appreciation?
- Why do we watch films?
- What cinematic conventions are used to convey certain images and messages?
- What is a film critic?
- What are proper film criticism techniques?
- How are film and television used as a medium to convey messages to their audiences?

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the history of modern cinema including cinematic history, modern film distribution systems, and the ancient and modern studio systems.
- Students will identify the cinematic conventions used by directors in the creation of a film including but not limited to camera angles, shot types, editing techniques, and *misé en scene*.
- Students will model film critics in creating their own reviews of a selected film from a predetermined list paying special attention to identifying and critiquing certain cinematic conventions and techniques used by the director in the creation of the film.
- Students will identify and discuss the techniques, messages, and reasoning used by directors and producers in film and television to convey certain positions and opinions.

Conceptual Focus:

Through a thorough study of the history of modern cinema and current cinematic conventions and techniques, students will gain an appreciation and ability to “read” a film beyond its standard on-screen meaning for deeper understanding behind the goals and motivations of the film’s director, producer, and producing studio. Using this knowledge, students will create their own critique of a film in which they identify the cinematic conventions used in the film to discern the message or goal of the director that lies beneath the visual surface of the film. Students will further apply these skills to television programs and commercials to understand how different programs and products broadcast themselves and for what purposes they choose to do so. It is hoped that through an introduction to the analysis of film and television, students will gain a more critical eye for the world around them and be more inclined to question and ponder events and occurrences that interest them.

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Course Outline:

Week One- Film History

Week Two- Film Production, Distribution, and Exhibition

Weeks Three and Four- Film Form: Significance and Narrative

Weeks Five and Six- Types of Films

Weeks Seven, Eight, and Nine- Film Style: Mise-en-Scene, Cinematography, and Editing

Weeks Ten, Eleven, and Twelve- Film Style (continued): Sound, Lighting, and Style

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen- Critical Analysis of Films/ Learning How to Be a Critic

Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen- Analyzing, Reviewing, and Creating Student Criticisms

Weeks Seventeen and Eighteen- Media Literacy: Critically Analyzing Film and Television

Selected Texts:

Baran, Stanley J. *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004.