



A LEVEL FILM STUDIES - 2017-19  
KINGSDALE FOUNDATION SCHOOL

# What is Film Studies?

That's basic: you get to come to class and watch some of the best films of the last one-hundred years – films that say more about civilization and what it means to be human than most of the novels in the English curriculum. Then you talk about them, appreciate them, figure out why they are in fact works of genius, and then you make your own. You'll also learn to write like a pro, and it won't ever feel like work. That is Film Studies.

Most people ask, 'Where will Film Studies get me?' In terms of University, it feeds nicely into the humanities and the arts – the kind of tracks you might want to take if you're looking (obviously) at the film industry itself, or if you're looking at anything like teaching, academia, journalism or history.

But it's more than that. We live in a visual culture, and Film Studies is a mainline into the pressing issues, a direct window into its soul. The ideas that spark from the films taught are sociological, historical, political and philosophical. They cover the big questions of society and humanity, and the best questions of art. More than anything, the aim of Film Studies is to facilitate your path to being an active thinker. It will sharpen your visual literacy, widen your knowledge base, and help you become the kind of person worth talking to at parties, job interviews and on dates. No hyperbole: it makes being in the world more worthwhile.

## What's in the Course?

Using the WJEC Eduquas specification, the two-year study is divided into three overall components. Two components of the course involve the *academic study of films*, and one involves *actively making films*.

Component 1 covers varieties of film and filmmaking, specifically looking at Hollywood from 1930-1990, American film since 2005, and British film since 1995. Component 2 looks at global filmmaking perspectives, documentary films, and film movements like silent cinema and experimental film. These two components make up the content for the written exams at the end of the course. Although there are specific (critically acclaimed/mind-blowing) films we will study as a class, promising students will be given the opportunity to expand their academic investigations further afield.

As for Component 3, students will make a film of their own – because what's the point in learning the theory if you never put it into practice? As this counts for 30% of the final mark, due time will be given during lessons to the active practice of filmmaking and the creation of short films.

Boom!

# Overview: What's Taught When

## Autumn 2017:

- Introduction to Film Terminology
- Hollywood 1930 – 1990 (Comparative Study: *Vertigo* vs *Apocalypse Now*)
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Auteur Theory
- Introduction to Production: Making the Basics



## Spring 2018:

- American Film since 2005: Two film study: *No Country for Old Men* & *Boyhood*
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Spectatorship, Ideology
- British Film since 1995: Two film study: *Trainspotting* & *Moon*
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Narrative, Ideology
- Production Practice: Making a Narrative

## Summer 2018:

- Global Film: Two film study – Inside and Outside Europe: *Victoria* and *City of God*
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts
- Short Film: A Complete Review of WJEC's Short Film List
- Production Planning for Internal Assessment

## Autumn 2018

- Documentary Film: *20,000 Days on Earth*
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Critical Debates, Filmmakers' Theories
- Experimental Film: *Pulp Fiction*
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Narrative, Auteur
- Production Assessment Begins

## Spring 2019

- Silent Film: The Varied Work of Buster Keaton
  - Key Elements, Meaning and Response, Film Contexts, Critical Debates
- Production Assessment Due

## Summer 2019

- Exam Revision

# Summary of Course Assessment

## **Component 1: Varieties of film and filmmaking**

**Written examination: 2½ hours**

**35% of qualification**

This component assesses knowledge and understanding of six feature-length films.

Section A: Hollywood 1930-1990 (comparative study)

One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to two Hollywood films, one from the Classical Hollywood period (1930-1960) and the other from the New Hollywood period (1961-1990).

Section B: American film since 2005 (two-film study)

One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to two American films, one mainstream film and one contemporary independent film.

Section C: British film since 1995 (two-film study)

One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to two British films.

## **Component 2: Global filmmaking perspectives**

**Written examination: 2½ hours**

**35% of qualification**

This component assesses knowledge and understanding of five feature-length films (or their equivalent).

Section A: Global film (two-film study)

One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to two global films: one European and one produced outside Europe.

Section B: Documentary film One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to one documentary film.

Section C: Film movements – Silent cinema

One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to one silent film or group of films.

Section D: Film movements – Experimental film (1960-2000) One question from a choice of two, requiring reference to one film option.

## **Component 3: Production**

**Non-exam assessment**

**30% of qualification**

This component assesses one production and its evaluative analysis.

Learners produce: a short film (4-5 minutes) plus an evaluative analysis (1600 - 1800 words).

# Subject Content!

At the root of all film studies is a recognition that *films are made*: they are constructed using a range of elements – cinematography, mise-en-scène, sound, editing and performance (the key elements of film form) – which are organised structurally in terms of narrative and often genre (the structural elements of film form). How filmmakers use these elements, frequently in complex and highly artistic ways, is a large part of what constitutes the formal study of film. Equally important is how spectators respond to the work filmmakers create and how learners interpret the films with reference to spectator response, relevant contexts, critical approaches and debates. In turn, these formal studies have a direct impact on learners' own work as filmmakers.

For each film we look at, we're going to look at different aspects, or "areas", in order to make sure we get the full scope of analysis. To make it easy, these areas have been spilt into **Core Areas (1-3)** and **Specialist Study Areas (4-9)**. All films we study will be examined through the Core Areas, and the Specialist Study Areas will be applied to individual films. For example: after watching Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, we will examine the Core Areas: 1) its filmic elements (the shots and sounds that make it); 2) the meanings we can take from the film (is it a film about the director's hatred of his mother?); 3) the context in which it was made (what was happening at the time). These make up the Core Areas. However, we might also look at Auteur Theory (the idea that the director is the driving creative force of the work) as that is a Specialist Area and relevant to Hitchcock.

## Core Areas

**Area 1. The key elements of film form:** cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, sound and performance – the building blocks.

**Area 2. Meaning and response:** how film functions as both a medium of representation and as an aesthetic medium – what's it saying, and why does it look like it looks?

**Area 3. The contexts of film:** social, cultural, political, historical and institutional, including production – e.g. Is it true star had a heart attack on set and they had to shut down production for six weeks?

## Specialist Areas of Study.

**Area 4. Spectatorship**

**Area 5. Narrative**

**Area 6. Ideology**

**Area 7. Auteur**

**Area 8. Critical debates**

**Area 9. Filmmakers' theories.**



# Production

The production assessment amounts to the practical side of the A Level course and gives students a chance to put what they've learned into practice. Across the two years of study students will be given many opportunities to hone their skills as both editors and directors of photography; the production assessment itself should be seen simply as the final product. They will also be given a large list of acclaimed short films to watch and study in or to enhance and inform their own practice. (See the end of this document for a full list of these films.)

## Brief:

Students will create short film of between 4 and 5 minutes which includes one of the following:

- a narrative twist
- a narrative which begins with an enigma
- a narrative which establishes and develops a single character
- a narrative which portrays a conflict between two central characters.



Learners must also complete an *evaluative analysis* of their production of between 1600 and 1800 words and make reference to all short films selected for study from the compilation set. The evaluative analysis will include:

- narrative structure of the short film – an analysis of how the narrative features and dramatic qualities of all short films studied are constructed, including through dialogue, highlighting key ideas which informed learners' own production
- cinematic influences – an analysis of how visual/audio elements of other professionally produced films or screenplays, including short films, influenced their short film or screenplay.
- creating meaning and effect – an evaluative analysis of how their production creates meanings and generates responses for the spectator in relation to other professionally produced films or screenplays, including at least one of the short films studied.

## **Principal Texts** (This list is not exhaustive – substitutions are available)

Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958), PG  
Apocalypse Now (Coppola, 1979), 15  
No Country for Old Men (Coen Brothers, 2007), 15  
Boyhood (Linklater, 2015), 15  
Trainspotting (Boyle, 1996), 18  
Moon (Jones, 2009), 15  
Victoria (Schipper, Germany, 2015), 15  
City of God (Mereilles, Brazil, 2002)  
20,000 Days on Earth (Forsyth and Pollard, UK, 2014), 15  
One Week (1920), U and The Scarecrow (1920), U and The 'High Sign' (1921), U and Cops (1922), U,  
(Keaton, US)  
Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, US, 1994), 18

## **Short Films** (Students must self-select 80 minutes' worth)

Meshes in the Afternoon (Deren, US, 1946) 14'  
La Jetée (Marker, France, 1962) 28'  
La Ricotta (Pasolini, Italy, 1963) 34'  
The Grandmother (Lynch, US, 1970) 34'  
A Girl's Own Story (Campion, Australia, 1987) 26'  
Elephant (Clarke, UK, 1989) 39'  
The Wrong Trousers (Park, UK, 1993) 30'  
When the Day Breaks (Forbis/Tilby, Canada, 1999) 09'  
About a Girl (Percival, UK, 2001) 09'  
Wasp (Arnold, UK, 2003) 24'  
High Maintenance (Van, Germany, 2006) 09'  
Connect (Abrahams, UK, 2010) 05'  
Night Fishing (Park, South Korea, 2011) 33'  
Pitch Black Heist (Maclean, UK, 2012) 13'  
Curfew (Christensen, US, 2012) 19'  
Swimmer (Ramsay, UK, 2012) 18'  
The Gunfighter (Kissack, US, 2014) 09'  
Stutterer (Cleary, UK, 2015) 12'