**History and Theory of Film and Media**

Mr. Sasso [asasso@cohassetk12.org](mailto:asasso@cohassetk12.org)

Course Website: <http://historyandtheoryofmedia.weebly.com/>

**Description**

The first motion picture flickered on a screen in 1895. This was the beginning of a new art. Our course will focus on the history and cinematic themes and techniques of this new art, as well as print and radio media. We will explore the basic tools for analyzing the art of film. We will examine how meaning in films is conditioned by the uses of camera angles and movement, editing, lighting, sound, location, and acting. We will also explore the impact of technological developments on film production, and evaluate the importance of genre and the legacy of individual “auteurs” throughout the history of cinema.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

* Describe the evolution of film from its origins at least to 1960 in terms of technology, techniques, and how it encapsulates the cultures of its time;
* Use the critical vocabulary of film studies to write and speak insightfully about cinematic theories;
* Persuasively apply what is learned from class discussions to additional films outside of class.

**Screening Issues**

First, because we will be screening films from an academic perspective (NOT AN ENTERTAINMENT PERSPECTIVE), you must be prepared to view films that will challenge you and take you outside of your typical film-viewing “comfort zone.” If you’re not interested in that challenge, you should drop the course. Second, you’re expected to pay close attention to the films during screenings, and you will be tested on screening materials. Please refrain from any behavior during screenings that might detract from anyone’s viewing of the film, including talking to classmates or using your cell phones.

There is a No-Exception Rule to cell phones in this class. If you use your cellphone during class discussions or film screenings I will ask that you put the phone on my desk until the end of the period. Failure to do so will result in removal from the classroom and a disciplinary meeting with the Assistant Principal of the school as well as a loss of all participation points for the day. Repeated offenses will result in a Parent/Teacher meeting.

Furthermore, some material shown in class will be from R rated films. A film may be rated R due to strong language, violence, and or adult content. Nudity will NEVER be shown in any of our screenings.

To ensure a learning environment that is safe and comfortable for everyone, I will be giving all students the right to opt out from any viewing that they are not comfortable with watching. If a student decides not to watch a film they must complete a short paper reviewing another film that they have seen on their own time.

**Class Participation**

It’s vital that you participate in class discussion, for several reasons: (1) you clarify what you think by asking questions and engaging in fruitful dialogue with your teacher and classmates; (2) we learn from each other; and (3) it provides regular evidence that you have read the text and seen and thought about the films. Everyone’s participation prevents the teacher from talking too much.

Some things that count under this grade: verbal participation in class discussions, attentive listening, quizzes, in-class writing analyses of screenings, homework assignments, attentive viewing of screenings, coming to class on time prepared to listen to lectures and participate in discussions.

**Pre Screening Homework:**

Before each major film screening you will be required to do some research about the film. You will be provided with a digital template for this assignment that will provide you with the areas of research. You will find and record some basic information about the film such as: the year it was made, name of the director and the director of photography, the film budget and earnings, etc. You will also find and attach images from the film. This assignment may be handed in as a hardcopy or emailed to me. The assignments will count towards your homework grade.

**Weekly Writing Assignments:**

Before we watch a film or view media, we will discuss its importance to the history of cinema and media. We will also discuss any relevant theories of media that apply to the viewing. At the end of each major screening you will be given a hardcopy assignment with questions related the pre screening discussion and your understanding of it once the screening has ended. There will also be questions pertaining to your “close reading” of the media. When students are challenged to “close read” a video/film, they must not only learn how to deconstruct the “media text,” they must also understand and appreciate all of the elements and techniques that are used to create it. “Close reading” films and media allow students to understand how meaning is conditioned by the uses of camera, lighting, editing, sound and acting. Each writing assignment will count as a project grade.

**Grading:**

Projects: 60%

Pre-Screening Homework Assignments: 20%

Participation: 20%

**Student Agreement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have read this syllabus and understand the requirements for the History and Theory of Film and Media course.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Student Signature) (Date)

**Parent screening contract:**

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name of Parent or Guardian) give permission to my son or daughter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name of Student) to view R rated films in class. I understand that some films may include strong language, violence, or adult content. By signing below I agree to allow my son or daughter to participate in the viewing of R rated movies as well as discussions pertaining to them.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature Date