**WINDSOR LOCKS HIGH SCHOOL**

English Department jgreene@wlps.org 860-292-5844

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Title: Film Studies Level: Elective for Grades 11&12 Credit: .5**

**Mission:** It is my mission to ensure that each student leaves my classroom a better student and a more well-rounded person than when they arrived.

**Vision:** It is my vision that you develop a curiosity for and appreciation of people, ideas, and cultures that are different from your own. I would also like for you to understand that the world goes well beyond the borders of Windsor Locks, of Connecticut, and of the United States. I hope that by taking part in all aspects of this course you will realize your potential as students and citizens, and also become better equipped with the knowledge, strategies and skills that you will need to meet the demands of your life beyond high school.

**Course Expectations:**

By the end of *Film Studies* you will be able to:

* Discuss the film industry’s unique and influential history.
* Explain orally and in writing how movies can educate, express and influence opinions, elicit emotions, and present a unique way of looking at the world.
* Describe how film is a collaborative medium and how filmmakers tell their stories in ways that involve elements of science, art, and technology.
* Analyze the film industry’s historical, theoretical, socio-cultural, economic and institutional contexts so that you may reflect upon and evaluate social, historical, and cultural issues.
* Explain how *genre* shapes a film’s subject matter, characters, narrative structure, and style.
* Deconstruct the traditional three-act outline: Act 1 is the exposition, Act 2 is the rising action, and Act 3 is the resolution.
* Articulate how and why people respond differently to the same work of art.
* Compare and contrast the uses of theme, characterization, motifs, mood, and plot to film and literature.
* Identify and explain how filmmakers purposely create a desired effect and use film elements (angles, shots, sound, lighting, transitions, etc.) to influence the audience’s perception and understanding.

**Course Content and Structure:** Semester sequence is as follows…

* Unit 1—The Origins of Film – 4 weeks
* Unit 2 – What is a Movie? – 5 weeks
* Unit 3 – Film Language and Elements – 4 weeks
* Unit 4 – The Filmmaking Process - 5 weeks

**Because we are looking at cinema (not just Hollywood cinema) 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 film-viewing “comfort zone.”**

In the first unit, students will develop a historical appreciation of film based on a survey of cinematic traditions. Students will learn about film as an art form, an industry, and a system of representation and communication. You will study the important role of movies in our culture and learn how movies have helped to reflect and shape our national image throughout history. During these units, students will be writing analytically, thinking critically, and deepening their understanding through small and large group discussions.

In the second and third units, students will tap their knowledge not only of literary elements but also of social studies, music, art and science. Students will learn how to “read” moving images so they may discover that film is much more than a vehicle for telling stories and entertaining audiences; it is, in fact, a persuasive communication tool as well as a cultural and historical document that can teach us about a society’s values and fears. Students begin this unit by exploring what a movie is. Students identify and analyze traditional narrative elements, including characters, setting, conflict, plot development, and theme. Initially, the focus is on the story’s *content*, or “what happened to whom and why”. Later, students focus on the film’s *narrative structure,* or “how the story unfolds on the screen”. Later, students will be introduced to various film genres so they can better understand and appreciate the complex variations of filmmaking, not just in subject matter but also in narrative structure and visual style.

The final unit introduces students to the step-by-step process of making a film, from the initial story idea through the final product released in movie theaters, and how this process is both collaborative and creative. By the end of the unit, students will have knowledge of how filmmakers communicate with images and sounds. This knowledge will help students better appreciate movies they see for entertainment, but more importantly, it will prepare them to become critical thinkers and critical viewers of the moving images they see every day.

**Classroom Expectations:**

1. Be on time and prepared for class **EVERY DAY** with appropriate materials and completed homework. All materials should be on your desk when the bell rings. Any borrowing of materials is to be done before class. Additionally, trips to the lavatory, water, etc. are to be done during passing time between classes unless absolutely necessary.
2. Cell phones must be turned off and put away out of sight upon entering the classroom.
3. Work to the best of your ability **EVERY DAY**.
4. Follow directions.
5. Respect yourself, your classmates, your teacher(s) and all support staff. Be courteous and demonstrate good manners.
6. Follow the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.
7. Speak, one person at a time, during discussion.
8. Keep the classroom clean and put materials away neatly.
9. Discuss any issues and/or concerns with teachers privately.
10. Wait to be dismissed by the teacher, not the bell.

\*In addition to these expectations, students are expected to follow all rules in the student handbook and Board of Education policies.

**Plagiarism:** Taking credit for someone else’s thoughts or work is plagiarism. Examples of plagiarism include:

* Writing another person’s ideas
* Handing in another person’s work or copying another student’s work
* Handing in work for an assignment in my class that you have used in another class
* Handing in work without a correct MLA citation, whether from the internet or any other source

Plagiarism is not acceptable, will earn you a zero and may result in additional conversations with administration and parents or other consequences.

**Course Content and Structure:** Units may be made up of short and long readings, fictional and non-fictional videos, writing, small and large group discussions, and content specific vocabulary. *The class will continually build upon and return to these skills throughout the year.*

There are six categories assignments may fall under throughout the year:

* 1. Homework- assignments given to practice, reinforce, elaborate, prepare and extend understanding of standards
	2. Classwork (formative) – initial attempts at learning (for example: checking for understanding and development of skills; responses to literature; entrance/exit tickets; bell work)
	3. Formative Assessments – drafts of essays; reading comprehension quizzes / reading checks
	4. Classwork (summative)- graded classroom assignments that measure mastery of short-term learning targets and standards in the unit (for example: responses to literature, quizzes, written or verbal analysis)
	5. Projects / Labs – formal presentations (for example: major essays; PowerPoint project; Prezi presentations)
	6. Summative Assessments - graded assignments that measure learning and mastery of unit standards (for example: quizzes, shorter essays, tests)

**English Department Homework Philosophy:**

In this class, homework is meaningfully designed as a formative assessment to practice and strengthen skills and prepare for subsequent classroom and real world applications and summative assessments. Homework will be reported and assessed as a separate habit of work rather than a percentage of the overall class average. Developing strong habits of work is a springboard for future success in college and career readiness.

**Expectations for Learning:**

* As an active participant in your learning, you will need to ask questions, demonstrate your understanding by answering questions and participating in discussions, and work hard to meet the expectations each and every day.
* In order for us to build on your strengths and address your weaknesses, it is essential that you complete and revise work when needed. You are encouraged to come for extra help if you are unsure of an assignment or feel that you are struggling with concepts.
* Meeting assignment deadlines is essential! Computer and/or printer issues are not an excuse to miss a deadline. It is an expectation, therefore, that you enter the classroom on the day that an assignment is due with that assignment completed to the best of your ability. If you do not meet this expectation, you will stay after school on a designated day to complete the work. If you are playing a sport or are scheduled for an after-school activity, your coach or teacher-advisor understands this expectation.

**All formal papers** must be typed in 12 font, Times New Roman, double spaced with the proper MLA headings (I will specify when a paper may be neatly written in ink).

 **Quarterly Grades (on a point system):**

Summative Classwork: 20%

Projects / Labs: 30%

Summative Assessments: 50%

 ***PowerSchool will be updated weekly. Projects and essays will be graded and scores put into PowerSchool no later than 10 school days after assignment is given. When necessary, exceptions may be made and students will be notified.***

**Evaluating Your Habits of Work**: **Separate from your numeric grade** based on the measures above, you will be evaluated on a daily to weekly basis on the following four Habits of Work:

* 1. Homework Completion
	2. Participation in Class Discussions
	3. Conducting Yourself Appropriately
		1. Being on time and prepared for class
		2. Respecting and listening to others
		3. Responsible use of technology
		4. Using Appropriate Language
	4. Time on Task

These four Habits of Work will be reported separately on your report cards according to the following scale:

* **ES** - Exceeds Standard
* **MS** – Meets Standard
* **PS** – Progressing toward Standard
* **LP** – Limited Progress

The separation of homework from numeric grades is a significant school-wide shift at WLHS. The intent is to

distinguish between the reporting of **WHAT** you learn (content standards) and **HOW** you learn it (**H**abits **o**f

**W**ork). To be clear, homework is still graded. You need to do it consistently in order to master standards

and to succeed on tests and quizzes.

However, by reporting homework completion (as well as participation, conduct, and time on task) separately,

your numeric grades become more reflective of *what you know and can do*. Your habits of work scores can

help you and your parents understand *why you are struggling and what to do about it*. Furthermore, as WLHS

continues to develop interventions and supports to help you succeed, the Habits of Work provide clear

expectations about what you can do to usethose additional supports.