

Film Acting and Film Studies

Theatre II Syllabus

Instructor: Christine Williams

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Course Type: Fine Arts / Theatre Elective

Grade Levels: 9–12

Course Description

Studying film and film acting is essential to a comprehensive theatre education because it deepens an actor's understanding of performance, storytelling, and audience connection. Film requires precision, emotional truth, and subtlety—skills that refine an actor's craft on stage by strengthening focus, intention, and realism. Through the study of camera technique, shot composition, and visual storytelling, students learn how directors and cinematographers frame performance to enhance meaning, which in turn sharpens their awareness of stage picture and physical presence in theatre. Additionally, analyzing film acting exposes students to diverse performance styles, narrative structures, and cultural contexts, broadening their artistic vocabulary. By studying both mediums, theatre students gain the versatility to adapt their performances for any platform, reinforcing the collaborative and interpretive nature of the dramatic arts.

Film is the most accessible form of modern storytelling, combining acting, visual design, music, and technology. Through this course, students not only learn to watch films critically but to **communicate their own artistic vision**—enhancing empathy, literacy, collaboration, and creativity.

This course introduces students to the art and craft of cinema through the lenses of performance, storytelling, and film analysis. Students will explore classic and contemporary films to understand how acting, direction, cinematography, sound, and writing come together to tell compelling stories.

In addition to viewing films, students will engage in **scriptwriting, scene analysis, hero's journey studies**, and **film-acting exercises** to deepen their understanding of cinematic storytelling, through PG and PG 13 Films

Course Goals

Students will:

1. Analyze film as a storytelling medium through camera, script, and performance.
2. Identify and apply principles of the **Hero's Journey** in screenwriting and acting.
3. Compare film genres (classics, suspense, fantasy, comedy, drama) and their conventions.

4. Develop understanding of film production elements (acting, lighting, editing, sound, design).
5. Write and perform short scenes inspired by cinematic works.
6. Explore cultural, historical, and artistic significance of landmark films.

Alignment with Texas Theatre TEKS

(High School, Levels I–IV, Theatre Production & Analysis Focus)

- **117.315(c)(1)(A–E):** Create and sustain believable characters through acting choices.
- **117.315(c)(2)(A–E):** Develop and refine interpretive and analytical skills through the study of performances.
- **117.315(c)(3)(A–C):** Recognize the role of film in the performing arts and cultural history.
- **117.315(c)(4)(A–C):** Evaluate artistic performances using established criteria.
- **117.315(c)(5)(A–D):** Connect theatre and film to personal experience, society, and world cultures.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This may vary within time periods

Semester 1: Foundations of Film and Classic Cinema

Unit 1: What Makes a Movie a Story?

Films: *The Princess Bride* (PG), *E.T.* (PG)

- **Focus:** The Hero's Journey; story structure; myth and archetype
- **Activities:** Hero's Journey chart; scene mapping; writing a short film outline
 - **Assessment:** Scene rewrite using a new hero or world

Unit 2: Visual Storytelling and Suspense

Films: *The Sixth Sense* (PG-13), *The Others* (PG-13)

- **Focus:** Camera as storyteller; symbolism; acting for tension
- **Activities:** Shot composition analysis; create a suspense storyboard
 - **Assessment:** Filmed Scenes

Unit 3: Classic Hollywood & Performance Study

Films: *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (PG-13), *Singin' in the Rain* (G)

- **Focus:** Performance choices, black-and-white cinematography, the evolution of film acting
- **Activities:** Compare stage vs. film performance; recreate a short classic dialogue scene
- **Assessment:** Written analysis comparing early Hollywood performance and modern acting

Unit 4: Justice, Morality, and Dialogue

Films: *12 Angry Men* (PG), *All about Eve* (PG)

- **Focus:** Dialogue, blocking, moral conflict, and ensemble storytelling
 - **Activities:** Mock film jury scene; script reading analysis
 - **Assessment:** Character analysis essay and group reenactment

Semester 2: Modern Film, Genre, and Screenwriting

Unit 5: The Psychological Film

Films: *A Beautiful Mind* (PG-13), *Signs* (PG-13)

- **Focus:** Lighting, tone, perspective, and performance nuance
- **Activities:** Analyze visual motifs; tone storyboard; reflection journal
 - **Assessment:** Filmed Scenes

Unit 6: Comedy and Imagination in Film

Films: *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (PG), *A League of Their Own* (PG)

- **Focus:** Timing, rhythm, and emotional grounding in comedic performance
 - **Activities:** Write a comedic scene; improv based on visual humor
 - **Assessment:** Filmed Scenes

Unit 7: Animation as Cinematic Storytelling

Films: *Wall-E* (G), *Up* (PG)

- **Focus:** Storyboarding, symbolism, and sound
- **Activities:** Visual symbolism scavenger hunt; write voice-over for a silent clip
 - **Assessment:** Filmed Scenes

Unit 8: Social Relevance and Modern Voices in Film

Films: *Hidden Figures* (PG), *Dead Poets Society* (PG),

- **Focus:** Dialogue as social commentary, truth in performance, and leadership
 - **Activities:** Filmed scenes
 - **Assessment:** Filmed scenes

Culminating Projects

1. **Film Analysis Essay:** Compare themes, camera, and performance between two films.
2. **Short Film Project:** Students script, act in, and edit a 3–5 minute original short scenes and certain projects will be entered into UIL Film competition

Assessment Methods

- Film Analysis Journals
- Discussion and Participation
- Scene/Script Performance
 - Film Quizzes
- Final Short Film or Scene Acting Projects
- Exit Tickets and Reflection Prompts

Writing & Cross-Curricular Skills

- Hero's Journey breakdowns and story outlines
- Scene and dialogue writing using script format
- Evaluating cinematography and emotional nuance
- Comparing literary themes in film adaptation

Yearly Film List (PG–PG-13 Only)

Category	Film Titles
Classic Cinema	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i> , <i>12 Angry Men</i> , <i>Rear Window</i> , <i>All About Eve</i> , <i>Roman Holiday</i> , <i>Some Like it Hot</i> , <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> , <i>The parent Trap</i> , <i>War Games</i>
Modern Classics	<i>Dead Poets Society</i> , <i>The Truman Show</i> , <i>Apollo 13</i> , <i>The Green Mile</i> , <i>Contact</i> , <i>Clue</i> , <i>Princess Diaries</i>
Fantasy & Hero's Journey	<i>The Princess Bride</i> , <i>E.T.</i> , <i>The Iron Giant</i> , <i>The NeverEnding Story</i> , <i>Star Wars</i> , <i>Galaxy Quest</i> ,

Category
**Suspense &
Psychological
Animation & Visual
Storytelling**
**Screenwriting &
Dialogue**

Film Titles
*The Sixth Sense, The Others, Signs, A Beautiful Mind, The
Village*
Wall-E, Up, Coraline, The Incredibles
*Hidden Figures, A League of Their Own, Little Women, The
Secret Life of Walter Mitty*

PLEASE RETURN SIGNATURE PAGE

I have read, acknowledged, and agree with the terms set for this course

Student Name (Print)

_____ Date _____

Student Name (Signature)

_____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

_____ Date _____