

**RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE**

FILM-122H-SURVEY OF AMERICAN FILM (HONORS)

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Number and Title: FILM-122H Survey of American Film

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Fall Year: 2017

D. Effective Term: Fall 2018

E. Sponsoring Department: Communication & Languages

F. Semester Credit Hours: 3

G. Weekly Contact Hours: Lecture: 3
 Laboratory 0:
 Out of class student work per week: 9

H. Prerequisites/Corequisites: GPA of 3.5

I. Laboratory Fees: None

J. Name and Telephone Number or E-Mail Address of Department Chair and Divisional Dean at time of approval: Chair Sara Banfield, sara.banfield@raritanval.edu; Dean Patrice Marks, patrice.marks@raritanval.edu

II. Catalog Description

Survey of American Film explores mainstream American cinema within a cultural and historical context. It focuses on the characteristics of Hollywood storytelling and visual style in film genres (such as romantic comedies, Westerns, and film noir), which not only entertain audiences but also mirror American attitudes and values. The screening list includes classic and contemporary American films and film excerpts. Students record their reactions to these screenings in weekly journal entries or short response papers. Students who complete this course will have a deeper understanding of how American movies both shape and reflect American culture.

III. Statement of Course Need

Survey of American Film is a general elective available to full-time and part-time students in any academic program. For students in the Liberal Arts Communication Option AA it is also an elective within a communication specialization (Film Studies) which they may choose to fulfill their program requirements.

- A. This course generally transfers as a Digital Media/Film Studies program requirement.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A. Free elective
- B. This course serves as a General Education course in the Humanities/Appreciation of the Arts
- C. This course meets a program elective for the Communication Studies (AA) and Digital Media/Film Studies (AS).
- D. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, www.njtransfer.org; b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

V. Outline of Course Content

Each instructor for Survey of American Film organizes the course content according to the films and film excerpts he/she selects. However, the following content is typically integral to this course.

- A. Fundamentals of Film Language.
 - 1. Mise en scene
 - 2. Camera and Lighting
 - 3. Editing
 - 4. Sound
- B. Background on Hollywood Movie Industry
 - 1. Hollywood “studio system”
 - 2. Hollywood narrative style
 - 3. Hollywood visual style
- C. Hollywood Film Genres (examples)
 - 1. Romantic Comedy
 - 2. The Western
 - 3. Science Fiction/Horror

4. Film Noir

D. Cultural, Historical, or Cinematic Themes in American Films (examples below)

1. The Coming-of-Age Experience in Hollywood Films
2. Quest and Conquest: The American Story
3. The Outsider: The Search for American Identity
4. Cultural Diversity in Contemporary American Films
5. The Family Experience in American Film.
6. Ideology, Feminism, and Auteur theories
7. Myths and Archetypes: Hero's Journey

VI. General Education and Course Learning Outcomes

A. General Education Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Produce writing that reflects critical and creative thought about films and film criticism (G.E. 1, 6)
2. Collaborate with others to analyze the communicative power of film images (G.E. 1, 6)
3. Use relevant resource materials to evaluate information about films and film criticism (G.E. 1, 6)
4. Explore commonalities and differences in values, perspectives, and behaviors in films representing different time periods, cultures and cinematic traditions (G.E. 1, 6)

B. Course Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Be conversant in the essential elements of film language, such as mise en scene, camera, lighting and editing techniques and cinematic uses of sound. (This knowledge provides a solid foundation for any future film appreciation or film/video production courses, or for entry-level jobs at television studios and video production houses.)
2. Apply advanced critical and analytical skills to writing essays that reflect original thought or argument about film and film criticism.

3. Recognize interrelationships between Hollywood films and events in American society within specific time periods.
4. Distinguish characteristics of familiar Hollywood film genres, such as romantic comedy, the Western, science fiction and film noir.
5. Interpret implicit and explicit meaning of films screened in the course particularly as they relate to cultural, historical and cinematic themes.
6. Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition of film analysis, to include narrative and visual styles of Hollywood movies.

C. Assessment Instruments

- A. Assigned quizzes on readings and screenings
- B. Assigned exercises
- C. Analytical essays
- D. Mid-term and final examinations
- E. Discussions
- F. Response questions
- G. Independent research project (paper or class presentation)

VII. Grade Determinants

- A. Assigned exercises
- B. Class participation
- C. Quizzes
- D. Analytical essays
- E. Mid-term and/or Final essay exams
- F. Weekly journal entries or response papers
- G. Film notes
- H. Independent research project (paper or class presentation)

Given the goals and outcomes described above, the primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning that may be used in the course include:

- A. Lecture/discussion
- B. Explication and analysis of literary and cinematic texts
- C. Small group discussion and collaboration

- D. Journal writing or response papers and note writing note-taking
- E. Research
- F. Screenings and scene deconstructions
- G. Field trips (optional) to events such as off-campus film screenings, lectures, or conferences.

VIII. Texts and Materials

Suggested required reading: Rather than a standard film textbook, readings will be selected from among primary and secondary sources for specific films and time periods covered in course, including, for example, readings from filmmakers' autobiographies, film theory, or social commentary from contemporary texts, film criticism or commentary from contemporary journals and magazines, etc.

Suggested supplemental reading: Newspaper or periodical articles covering current American cultural movements or events relevant to course screenings.

Suggested supplemental writing text: *The Writers Journey*, Christopher Vogler. Michael Weise Productions.

Web-based materials and in-class handouts.

Online glossary of film terms.

Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.

IX. Resources

1. DVD/Video Projection
2. CATT Classroom
3. Internet Resources
4. Library resources and bibliographic instruction for research projects

X. Honors Options

Definition: FILM-122 H conforms to the definition of an Honors Course because it enriches and challenges students beyond the scope of the regular curriculum for Film-122. The course requires additional reading and class preparation, and is writing-intensive. It also includes an

academically rigorous research project, requiring resources beyond readings assigned for FILM-122, and resulting in either a sourced research paper or class presentation. Class discussions will be conducted as seminars in which students must be more actively engaged than in a regular non-honors American Film class.

A. EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The educational goals and learning outcomes for FILM-122H are the same as in section VI above. However, students in the Honors class will have the advantage of interacting and collaborating with other Honors students in a seminar setting as well as guided assistance from their professor and a reference librarian for a research project as the culmination of the coursework. There are also optional educational opportunities with FILM -122H—such as field trips to off-campus screenings, lectures, or conferences.

B. HONORS COURSE CONTENT

- Reading: Required readings from primary and secondary contemporary texts and publications, as opposed to a standard Film textbook. Supplemental readings from current print and online sources.
- Writing: Weekly note-taking and journal writing or response papers. Mid-term and final essay exams. Research project resulting in a paper or class presentation.
- Discussion: Class discussions in seminar format for which students must be well prepared and engaged.

C. ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS FOR HONORS WORK

Students will be assessed based on:

- Class participation based on seminar-format discussion of readings and screenings for the course. Quality of note-taking and journal entries or response papers also has an impact on assessment of class participation.
- Performance on mid-term and final essay examinations.
- Content, depth of analysis, clarity, and organization of research paper or presentation.

D. GRADE DETERMINENTS FOR HONORS WORK

- Student performance in classroom discussions
- Weekly note-taking and journal writing or response paper assignments
- Mid-term and final essay examinations
- Research paper or class presentation

