

A LEVEL FILM STUDIES

What are the aims of the course?

Film Studies is a fast expanding and innovative field. The *Good Schools Guide* has identified RMGS as a centre for excellence for A Level Film Studies. We follow the WJEC syllabus. Our course aims to extend your critical understanding of film, arguably the major art form of the twentieth century. The course offers opportunities to study mainstream and independent American and British films from the past and the present as well as more recent global films, both non-English language and English language.

The historical range of films studied includes silent film and important film movements (such as European avant-garde and new wave cinemas in Europe and Asia) so that you can gain a sense of the development of film from its early years to its still emerging digital future. Studies in documentary, experimental and short films add to the breadth of the learning experience.

Production work is a crucial part of this A Level. Studying a diverse range of films is designed to give you the opportunity to apply your knowledge and understanding of how films are constructed to your own filmmaking and screenwriting.

What does it involve?

Component 1: American and British Film (Written examination: 3 hours. 35% of qualification)

This unit focuses on how a film generates meaning and audience response, and the interaction between the film and the spectator. This involves formal analysis - close analysis of sound, lighting, editing, cinematography (framing, camera movement, depth of focus), mise-en-scène (setting, props, staging, costume) and performance. You will also analyse narrative structure and genre and how they provide a structure for films. In addition, you will apply important critical frameworks to your analyses of different films. Your skills of film analysis will be developed through the study of

- One classical Hollywood film (1940s and 1950s) – e.g. *Vertigo*, *Casablanca*, *Some Like it Hot*
- Two Hollywood films produced since the 1960s – e.g. *Blade Runner*, *Inception*, *No Country for Old Men*
- One contemporary American independent film – e.g. *Winter's Bone* (2010)
- Two British films, one produced between 1930 and 1960 and the other more recent (a comparative study) – e.g. *The Third Man*, *The Constant Gardener*

Component 2: Varieties of film (Written examination: 3 hours. 35% of qualification)

For this component you will study:

- Two films representing different film movements, including at least one silent film option. The silent films studied will be from the German Expressionist and Surrealist film movements (the *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Un Chien Andalou*). You will also study a French New Wave film directed by Jean Luc Godard – *Vivre sa Vie*
- One documentary film – *20,000 Days on Earth*
- Two international, non-English language films, one European and one from outside Europe – e.g. *Pan's Labyrinth*, *House of Flying Daggers*, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*
- One compilation of short films. Short films as being different in kind from feature-length work. The short film is an extremely flexible art form. The films chosen provide examples of the distinctive narrative features that are characteristic of shorts in general. The films in the compilation are diverse in genre, theme and cultural context.

Component 3: Production (Non-exam assessment. 30% of qualification)

This section is assessed through coursework. It is designed to give you the opportunity to put into practice your own filmmaking ideas developed throughout your course of study. The production may take the form of either a short film or a screenplay for a short film. The screenplay will be accompanied by a digitally photographed storyboard of a key sequence from the screenplay in order to demonstrate how the screenplay will be realised. Alternatively you will produce a short film of around 4-5 minutes. Whichever option is chosen, you will which include 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.

How is it assessed?

Component 1: American and British Film – assessed by a 3 hour written examination (35% of qualification)

Component 2: Varieties of film – assessed by 3 hour written examination (35% of qualification)

Component 3: Production - Non-exam assessment. Coursework component consisting of a short film or screenplay and storyboard (30% of qualification)

Are there any specific entry requirements?

It is advisable that students should have *at least* a B grade in English or English Literature.

Why is it a useful qualification?

Film Studies students, as trained critical thinkers and analysts, benefit from all the skills, advantages and career opportunities of students of more traditional A Level subjects. They are particularly well placed for further training and careers in the cinema, television and media industries. The course develops writing and analytical skills and provides an excellent foundation for students who wish to study Media or Arts subjects at university. It also gives Science and Maths students the breadth of study that universities now demand. Film Studies is offered at a range of universities, including Warwick, Nottingham, Exeter, University of London (King's College and Queen Mary), University of Reading and University of Kent at Canterbury.