

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

FILM 122 – SURVEY OF AMERICAN FILM

I. Basic Course Information

- A. Course Number and Title: FILM 122 Survey of American Film
- B. New or Modified Course: Modified
- C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Fall Year: 2025
- D. Effective Term: Fall 2026
- E. Sponsoring Department: Communication and Languages
- F. Semester Credit Hours: 3
- G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3
 Laboratory: 0
 Out-of-class student work per week: 6
- H. ☐ Prerequisite (s): None
 ☐ Corequisite (s): None
- I. Laboratory Fees: None

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 entertain audiences and 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 shape and reflect American culture.

III. Statement of Course Need

- A. 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, it is also an elective within a communication specialization (Film Studies) that they may choose to fulfill their program requirements.
- B. This course generally transfers as a Digital Media/Film Studies program requirement,

dependent on the transfer institution.

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 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

This course explores the following topics:

Each instructor for Survey of American Film organizes the course content differently according to the films and film excerpts he/she select each semester. 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 the Hollywood Movie Industry
 - 1. Hollywood “studio system”
 - 2. Hollywood narrative style
 - 3. Hollywood visual style
- C. Hollywood Film Genres (some examples listed)
 - 1. Romantic Comedy
 - 2. The Western
 - 3. Science Fiction/Horror
 - 4. Film Noir
- D. Cultural, Historical, or Cinematic Themes in American Films (some recent examples listed)
 - 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. A. Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

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, 4)
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. Assessment Instruments

1. Assigned quizzes on readings and screenings
2. Assigned exercises
3. Analytical essays
4. Mid-term and final examinations
5. Discussions
6. Response questions

VII. Grade Determinants

1. Assigned exercises
2. Class participation
3. Quizzes
4. Analytical essays
5. Mid-term and final exams
6. Response papers
7. Film notes
8. Journal entry

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:

1. Lecture/discussion
2. Explication and analysis of literary and cinematic texts
3. Small group discussion and collaboration
4. Journal and note writing
5. Research
6. Screenings and scene deconstructions
7. Guest speakers

VIII. Texts and Materials

Suggested textbook: *The Writers Journey*. Christopher Vogler. Michael Weise Productions

Suggested textbook: *Engaging Cinema*, Bill Nichols. W.W. Norton C& Company, Inc.

Web materials and handouts

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 textbook information.

IX. Resources

1. DVD/Video Projection
2. RVCC Library Streaming Video service
3. Internet Resources

X. Check One: ☐ Honors Course ☒ N/A