

A LEVEL FILM STUDIES

What are the aims of the course?

Film Studies is a fast expanding and innovative field. We follow the EDUCAS 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.

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 involves close analysis of sound, lighting, editing, cinematography, mise-en-scène (setting, props, staging, costume) and performance. You will also analyse narrative structure and genre. Your skills of film analysis will be developed through the study of

- One classical Hollywood film (1940s and 1950s) – *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) – a suspense thriller by one of the masters of cinema, voted the greatest film of all time by Sight and Sound magazine in 2012
- Two Hollywood films produced since the 1970s – *Blade Runner* – Director's Cut (Ridley Scott, 1992), a dystopian sci-fi film that helped to reinvent film noir, and *La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, 2016) an Oscar-winning reinvention of the classic Hollywood musical
- One contemporary American independent film – *Winter's Bone* (Debra Granik, 2010), a bleak and haunting film with a star-making performance from Jennifer Lawrence.
- Two British films – *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), following Ewan McGregor's attempt to escape from the Edinburgh heroin scene, and *Under The Skin* (Jonathan Glazer, 2013), starring Scarlett Johansson as a mysterious alien in this disturbing arthouse sci-fi horror.

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

- Silent film, exploring the birth of cinema through the analysis of F.W. Murnau's German Expressionist masterpiece, *Sunrise* (1927)
- Experimental film – *Pulp Fiction* (1994), a postmodern crime film directed by Quentin Tarantino
- One documentary film – *Amy* (Asif Kapadia, 2015), a British documentary exploring the life and death of Amy Winehouse
- Two international, non-English language films, one European and one from outside Europe – *Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, 2006) a dark fantasy film set against the backdrop of the Spanish civil war, and *Timbuktu* (Abderrahmane Sissako, 2014), an African film exploring the impact on the local community when the town is taken over by Muslim fundamentalists.

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

This section is assessed through coursework. It gives you the opportunity to put into practice your own filmmaking ideas and skills. The production may take the form of either a short film or a screenplay/storyboard for a short film. Whichever option is chosen, you will develop a specified narrative structure (e.g. a narrative twist or a narrative which begins with an enigma). Your coursework will be informed by the study of short film, an extremely flexible art form.

How is it assessed?

You will be assessed through two examinations (35% each) and coursework (30%).

Are there any specific entry requirements?

There are no entry requirements but it is advisable that students should have level 5 in 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. Film Studies is a widely respected A Level, and Film Studies is offered at a range of excellent universities, including Warwick, Nottingham, Exeter, University of London, University of Reading and University of Kent at Canterbury. Film Studies is not a handicap to studying at well-respected institutions, and RMGS students have gone on to study at Oxford universities after completing A Level Film Studies.