

Film Studies A Level Passport Project



Welcome to Film Studies A level; I am so excited that you have chosen this course and can't wait to begin our journey through film.

These tasks are designed to: Keep you engaged with learning so that the return to learning at the start of the course isn't a huge shock to the system - Give you a deeper appreciation for the study of film - Allow you to practice your research and critical writing skills in a low risk environment - Begin to develop your viewing skills so you know how to focus on elements other than the narrative when watching films.

I would like you to submit your response to task 4 and your 1 minute 'Lumiere Minute' short film (task 4) when you have completed them.

Task 1



Think about your own film knowledge and experience. Lots of our thoughts and interpretations of what we see on screen are influenced by our own experiences. Start by making a wordcloud (see wordle.com or wordcloud.com) and filling it with your favourite genres, films, directors & performers.

Task 2

Your next activity is to get used to watching films. Much like how in Literature you read books in order to study them, the same obviously goes for film. However, you need to get used to watching films in a manner that suits studying and analysing them. You can choose the films you decide to watch - ideally choose a mix of films that you want to see, films that you wouldn't usually choose and films that are recommended to you.

When watching, aim to do the following things so that your attention is focused solely on the film: • watch in a dark room; • aim to watch on the biggest screen you can; • do NOT have your phone nearby; • try to watch the whole film in one go; • avoid snacking and • definitely no talking to someone else.

These might not be how you usually watch a film, but these will prepare you for how we watch films in an academic manner. These are also strategies to help you remain focused on the film. Each time you watch a film, make a note of the film title, the director, year of release and a few sentences on your general opinion and overview of the film.



Task 3:



At A level you will be expected to learn critical theory about film and be able to apply it to the films you are studying. To practise this, learn about the genre theorist Steve Neale. Neale defines genre as 'instances of repetition and difference'. This means that, for example, an action adventure film needs to have enough features for audiences to recognise it as action adventure, but it also needs to have some features that are unexpected to keep the audience engaged.

Watch this Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uiNqtfWvGw>

Read this article: <https://revisionworld.com/a2-level-level-revision/media-studies-level-revision/genre-theory>

Now choose a genre of film that interests you. This might be romcom, science fiction or any other genre you like. Watch at least 3 age appropriate films of this genre, making notes on how typical each film is. You will want to focus on:

-the characters in the film, the settings, the plotline, the cinematography (the use of camera angles, shots and movements), the music and soundtrack, the dialogue, the lighting and the editing (how each scene transitions into the next one).

Now think about this statement and question:

“Modern films are too predictable and formulaic – no-one can be surprised at the cinema anymore.” To what extent do you agree?



Answer this question in any form that you like – this could be as a traditional essay, or it could be a powerpoint, a mindmap, a collage or even a video. In your answer/response, you will need to ensure that you cover the following:

- Refer to the films you have watched, in particular 3 specific scenes
- Show an understanding of both sides of the statement – for and against
- Refer to Steve Neale’s genre theory

Task 4

30% of the Film Studies course is practical and involves script writing and film making.

To help you practise your skills, you are going to make a 1 minute ‘Lumiere Minute’ film.

Read the information about the origins of this very short film and watch some examples

[:https://www.cinematheque.fr/cinema100ansdejeunesse/en/resources/lumiere-minutes.html](https://www.cinematheque.fr/cinema100ansdejeunesse/en/resources/lumiere-minutes.html)

Now it’s your turn. Film the road outside your house from a window for just 1 minute, without moving the frame (no panning). Choose exactly the right moment to start recording your minute. Then 60 seconds later, stop the shot. No editing, no cheating!

The point of this exercise is not to make ‘funny short films’ like on on Youtube, but to try make the world visible, with brand new eyes. Each shot is a result of both choice - and luck.

Give a title to your view (that describes the view, very simply), your name and location. Save as a MP4 file, ready to be submitted to me.

Challenge task

If you have completed the tasks above, but still want to learn more, try these challenge tasks.



We should be interested in the cultural capital of film, and its ability to educate, present new ideas and change perceptions.

Choose one of these films to watch: United 93, Zodiac or 12 Years a Slave.

After watching, please research:

- How authentically the film portrays the event of the narrative
- How those involved in the production of the film made it

authentic (including their research & preparation before production began)

- Why those involved in the film felt that the story needed to be told
- Any controversies or criticisms of the way the film portrayed the event it covers

Familiarise yourself with reputable sources for reviews, such as:

Roger Ebert – www.rogerebert.com

The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/film+tone/reviews>

Empire – www.empireonline.com BBC Culture - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/tags/film-reviews>

Research these key Film Studies critical theories:

- Auteur theory
- Marxism
- Narrative theories including Propp, Todorov, Levi-Strauss and Barthes
- Laura Mulvey’s ‘Male Gaze’

Remember you also have a list of recommended things to watch that I emailed out to you in March.

