Transition Unit
Reading the Silver Screen: Film History, Theory and Appreciation

NCCA
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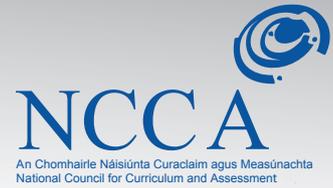
Area of Study

Creativity

Overview

This Transition Unit in Film Studies helps students develop many skills that will be beneficial to them both in the senior cycle and in further education. It aims to develop students' aesthetic, critical and communicative faculties, as well as offering them a fresh and challenging experience within Transition Year. It helps students to understand film in a wider context and empowers them to become critical and active viewers.

Related learning

This course links in with Leaving Certificate English insofar as it allows students exposure to film as a medium and affords them an opportunity to study it in detail.

Outline of the unit

- Students are introduced to a brief history of cinema and its cultural role. This will define film studies as a distinct "discipline" separate from English.
- Students are introduced to the terminology of film. The importance of being familiar with this will be stressed.
- Extracts from selected films will be used to illustrate techniques, cultural contexts, etc. Viewings will be in a group and will be classroom based.
- The idea of reviewing film will be introduced and discussed. Students will review a film of their choice. These will be used as part of the assessment. Students will present, share and discuss their reviews.
- The idea of multiple connections (genre/director/actor/theme) will be introduced. This will form the basis of the individual project, which will be done mainly in students' own time. This project will represent a key element in assessment.
- Sample project titles might include
  - Three Films by my Favourite Director.
  - The Happiest Days of your Life: Films about School.
  - A Study of Film Noir
  - Ireland in Film
- If possible, these projects would be displayed and students would be afforded an opportunity to talk about them (Open evening, etc.).

Breakdown of the unit

Teacher led classroom work will be balanced with time for research and project work.

Aims

This transition unit aims to:
- develop an appreciation for film; its history and theory
- provide students with the language and terminology to discuss film
- help students acquire the visual skills necessary to examine films in detail
- encourage students to be critically aware in relation to film
- encourage students to evaluate their own work and the work of others.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit students should be able to:
- demonstrate a basic knowledge of the history of film
- use the appropriate language and terminology to discuss film as a medium
- identify key techniques used in film discuss the importance of film culturally and socially, as well as aesthetically
- compose a critically aware review of a film
- discuss their ideas, as well as the ideas of others, in class
- identify and interpret links and connections between films
- propose and defend a project and to discuss their chosen project publicly
- take responsibility for the completion of a project: content, deadlines, quality

Key skills	How evidenced
information processing	Students will enhance these skills by taking in delivered information, using a variety of primary and secondary sources, selecting and evaluating information for project work and reviews, listening to and recording other opinions and views during discussion.
critical and creative thinking	Students will learn how to critically watch, interpret, contrast and evaluate film.
communicating	Students will have the opportunity to present their ideas and work orally, as well as engaging in class discussion based on unit work.
working with others	Students will interact in discussion groups on various unit topics.
being personally effective	Students will take responsibility for the structure, content and aim of their written work. They will be able to evaluate their work and the work of others through discussion.

Learning approaches

- Directed Learning. This is used mainly at the start of the unit introducing history and terminology.
- Activity-Based Learning. Working with film clips and key ideas.
- Group Work. Discussing key ideas and students' work.
- Project Work and Research. The project represents a major section of the unit.
- ICT. Students will be encouraged to use ICT to enhance their work.

Assessment approaches

- Film review. The student will read this in class and peers will discuss it openly. Teacher will then grade it and student will be asked to comment on this feedback indicating potential improvements based on dual feedback.
- Project assessed by teacher and feedback given to student.

Evaluation methods

Project assessment criteria:

Understanding and usage of key film terminology. (10%)
Use of illustrations and examples from primary sources. (20%)
Evidence of constructive use of secondary sources. (20%)
Overall continuity and structure. (20%)
Strength and depth of argument. (20%)
Layout and clarity. (10%)

- Evaluation sheets handed to students at key points of the unit: beginning, post-review, mid-project, end.
- Teacher led Q&A session at end of unit.
- Film response diary

Resources

The choice of films used is very much a matter of personal taste and preference. All titles should be suitably certified. Secondary sources should be mainly used by the teacher and will be dependent on the chosen films. Below are a few good general texts suitable for teachers.

- *The Cinema Book*. Pam Cook. BFI.
- *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies.* John Hill & Pamela Church Gibson. OUP.
- *Film History: An Introduction.* David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson. McGraw Hill.