

A Level Film Studies FAQs



What do we do in A Level Film Studies?

We study films! A bit like the way you studied novels, poetry and plays in GCSE English Literature, we think about how they work and how they are constructed – the way the camerawork, editing and sound are put together. How they affect us; why they make us laugh or cry, consider why we can be scared of something we know isn't real. We also consider the industries that make them and how they reflect the cultures and societies that produce them. This course is ideal for students who want to explore how and why films are made. A level Film Studies focuses on the analysis and deconstruction of film over a wide historical time frame. It allows you to engage with films from early silent cinema to 1930s Hollywood films to contemporary and experimental cinema.

Will I enjoy the course?

You will enjoy it if...

- You have a genuine interest in films from a range of genres and time periods.
- You are keen to learn about how audiences are positioned, how narratives are constructed and also the industries involved in producing film texts.
- You have an interest in film theory or wish to learn about this.
- You like discussing texts in small groups or as a class.
- You find writing analytical essays and short answer analyses easy / rewarding.

Do I need to have taken GCSE Film Studies?

No, very few schools offer GCSE Film Studies so this isn't a requirement for entry on the course. The course covers the basic aspects of film analysis and history before we start studying the set film texts, so you'll learn all the skills and knowledge you need.

Will I need to buy the films we study on the course?

No, we will study the films in class. If you wish to purchase your own copies for revision purposes, then that is of course up to you.

Can I choose which film texts to study in the A Level?

Unfortunately, the choice of texts is decided by the exam board, EDUQAS, and your teacher will have chosen these at the start of the course. You will have to study all the designated texts for each exam unit to pass the course.

What sort of work is involved in lessons?

Film Studies A level ([from EDUQAS exam board](#)) involves studying 12 different films. These are separated into set categories, which are; American, British, Independent, Global, Documentary, Experimental and Silent Film. These are analysed via a number of different study area frameworks, including: film form, meaning and response, context, spectatorship, narrative, ideology, authorship, critical debates and theoretical debates. You work with your peers to debate and pull apart the set film texts and to develop a sophisticated contextual understanding of the world at the time these films were made. Film Studies requires that you develop an inquisitive mind and consider the deeper social, political and economic contexts of those films.

You also explore the work of a wide range of influential film directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Spike Lee and the Coen Brothers. Film Studies A level also takes in the forefathers of cinema by evaluating the impact of key pioneers on the film industry including The Lumiere Brothers, DW Griffiths, Charlie Chaplin, and Sergei Eisenstein.

Film Studies A level will introduce you to a wide range of film-making processes so that you develop, through discussion, analysis and debate, a wide range of technical skills for both constructing and deconstructing film. This will give you the ability to develop your own creative skills as you explore these film-making techniques from different times and places. The coursework element requires you to develop your

creative film-making skills; but you don't need particularly fancy technology as film sequences can even be made using a smartphone these days.

What is the practical / coursework element of the course?

The practical element is known as the NEA and it involves the production of either a short film (4-5 minutes) or a screenplay (1600-1800 words) with an accompanying photographic storyboard. Both production pieces also require a written evaluation (1600-1800 words).

What sort of work is involved outside of lessons?

You will be expected to think independently and to develop your own 'voice', and you will be encouraged to expand your knowledge outside of the classroom through reading about and watching a wide range of film texts. This could also involve going to the cinema, film festivals or exhibitions. In essence you will need to live and breathe the cinema!

Do I need to know how to use film technology to take this course?

It would be useful if you at least like using camera equipment or your phone for editing / filming if you choose the film-making brief for the NEA. However, you could opt for the screenplay if you'd rather focus on a written task and enjoy creative writing.

Is the Film Studies course hard?

The course content was overhauled a couple of years ago, so it is now broader and more wide-ranging – to reflect a much more 'academic' and rigorous A Level subject. There are a lot of different texts to study over the two-year course, in addition to a large film theory component and an element of production work. A passion for a wide range of cinema is essential for success in Film Studies A level but it is not necessary to have studied either Film or Media at GCSE. It is an academic subject and suits students who have flourished in essay-based subjects like English Literature or History. As a rule, students who have achieved a minimum of 5 GCSE's 9-4 (equivalent to A*-C) will fare better in this subject. So...

- If you don't enjoy analysing texts and writing about them in essay style formats, the course will be difficult.
- If you find it difficult to manage your time, or meet deadlines, this course will be a struggle for you, especially as there is a heavily weighted coursework component which will require you to work independently to a greater extent (when compared to the exam component).
- If you don't like the idea of producing your own film texts (see below – either a short film or screenplay and digital storyboard), then you will find the course hard to complete.

What can you do with a Film Studies A Level?

A level Film Studies students can go onto study Media, TV or Film at University as a practical degree, a theoretical degree, or a combination of the two. This can lead to a very broad range of professions in media, film and journalism. A good degree in a subject like Film Studies can also develop a wide range of transferable skills including analysis, visual communication, problem-solving, as well as communication, presentation, and organisational skills.

Is there a textbook that can support the learning of this course?

Yes – there is a student book and revision guide (we study the two-year A Level, not the AS option):

https://www.illuminatepublishing.com/product-category/film-studies/?wpv-level%5B%5D=a-level&wpv_sort_orderby_as=string&wpv_view_count=735

What is the exam board for A level Film Studies?

EDUQAS and the link to their website is: https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies-as-a-level/#tab_overview

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