

Gilmour Academy

English 12: The Uneasy Relationship between Film and Text

Gilmour course # 107J-2; KAP course #ENGL 104

*Syllabus
Fall 2008*

KAP

The KAP English course is designed to help students to develop skills in perceptive reading, critical thinking, and effective writing, through the study of significant literary texts representing a range of genres and chronological periods, and drawn from a variety of gender and cultural perspectives.

Students enrolled in this course have the option to earn college credit at Kenyon College. The course has been reviewed and approved by the English faculty at Kenyon College. The grade you receive in the course is the grade that will appear on your Kenyon college transcript. The credit will be as transferable to another college as any Kenyon College credit. If you are interested, see the course instructor for a registration form.

Course overview

This is a course in comparative genre, comparative media and critical analysis. People assume that “The book is always better than the movie.” Is that true? What is the relationship between film and text? Are there film versions of books that are *better* than the original text? What can you do on film that you cannot do on a page of written text? What can you do on the page that you cannot do in film? We review literary terminology and study cinematic technique and terminology to better equip ourselves as we look at critical reviews of books and movies and we read and watch for ourselves classic of film and literature such as Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, William Faulkner’s “Barn Burning,” Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, Stephen King’s “Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption,” and James Joyce’s *The Dead*.

Essential questions to guide course:

- How do our skills/techniques as readers of books help inform our reading of film?
- How do we become more receptive and more critical viewers of cinema?
- Is it true that “the book is generally better than the movie?”
- What can you do in a book that you cannot do on film?
- What can you do with film that you cannot do in a book?

Instructors' goals

This class, even more than most, requires your presence to work. We will be reviewing and discussing film clips that have been carefully culled and edited for discussion purposes and working our way through excerpts from novels and short stories that have been chosen to correspond with those clips. It is not possible to hand all of this to you to read and view on your own. Nor is it possible to recreate the classroom discussion/discovery process. It is imperative that you make attendance a priority in this class.

Our goals include the following:

- Students will develop a familiarity, and a level of comfort in using the language of cinema and cinematic terms;
- Students will approach film and text with the same analytic eye;
- Students exercise and develop the critical acumen necessary to be a thoughtful and informed consumer of both text and film.

Course materials

a. Books:

Course packet will be distributed in class

Reference will be made to the following texts:

Barsam, Richard. *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*. Second Edition. Norton, 2007.

Golden, John. *Reading in the Dark*

Stam & Raengo, eds. *Literature and Film*

Liz Miller, "I, Robot & the Three Laws of Adaptation"

Grading/assessment

Assessment

Evaluation is based primarily upon student achievement in the composition of 4-6 essays and additional in-class writing and informal assignments. Student essays typically range from 3-5 typed pages. Essays will be evaluated for the freshness and sophistication of their insights into the texts in question; their success in developing a focused and well-substantiated argument; their ability to analyze textual evidence, using close-reading skills; their stylistic control and clarity; their grammatical and mechanical accuracy. As they prepare some of their essays, students will be asked to complete research using reference texts and scholarly sources. There is a final project in this course in which the student is expected to demonstrate understanding of the major concepts of the course.

A major component of KAP English classes is the informed and specific discussion of the assigned literature. Discussion should engage as many students as possible each day, and should encourage independent thought, clear articulation of ideas, and close analysis of specific textual detail.

a. Daily preparation

Daily homework must be completed in a timely fashion, as it will be impossible to engage in the in-class activities without adequate preparation. There will be

traditional tests or quizzes in this class as we master cinematic terms and work our way through novels and short stories. There are frequently in-class writings and/or discussions in response to critical questions. All students are to demonstrate that they have read and prepared for class. Failure to do so will result in a zero for daily work and may also result in exclusion from full participation in class activities.

If you know that you are going to miss a class, see the instructor beforehand and check the class website for handouts and assignments. If you miss class due to illness or another unanticipated reason, check the class website and/or contact another student in the class to get the missed assignments, and see the instructor immediately upon your return to school regarding work to be made up. **It is YOUR responsibility, NOT the instructor's, to inquire about making up the missed work.** Be vigilant. We will adhere to the policy as stated in the Student Handbook: If you are absent (excused) on the day an assignment is due, it is due upon your return to class.

b. Late/missing work

Work submitted late due to an excused absence will be accepted without penalty according to the guidelines set forth in the *2008-2009 Student-Parent Handbook*. It is due upon your return to class. Late papers will lose 10 points **per school day** for every day after the due date up to a maximum of 50 points. If a paper or assessment is not submitted within two weeks of the due date no credit will be given for that assignment. All assignments are due immediately upon return to school following an absence. If a student has missed part but not all of one school day, assignments are due **THAT DAY**.

You may submit ONE paper late each semester, with a grace period of up to one week. In order to use your extension, you must submit your request **IN WRITING** when the rest of the class submits the paper. If I don't receive notification at that point, the paper will be classified as late, and the late policy (see first paragraph) will be in effect. This only applies to major papers. There are no extensions for homework and daily work.

COMPUTER MALFUNCTION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AS AN EXCUSE FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS. IF YOUR PRINTER FAILS, COME IN EARLY AND PRINT IT IN THE LIBRARY OR FIND AN ALTERNATIVE PRINTING SOURCE. IF YOU FAIL TO ARRIVE WITH THE PRINTED ASSIGNMENT IN YOUR HAND, IT WILL BE COUNTED AS LATE.

The important thing to remember is this: If there are extenuating circumstances, discuss the situation with the teacher. Communication is the key when you find yourself in a tough spot.

c. Extra credit

On the rare occasion that there are activities outside of the work of the course (a play, reading, or movie to attend, an extra book to read, etc.) that might enrich class discussion, the opportunity to engage in those activities for credit will be made available only to those students who have completed all assigned work to date.

Instructor availability:

We are available each school day at 7:45 a.m., and after school until 4:15 p.m. We check Gilmour e-mail on a regular basis and find that it is an efficient and effective way to reach us.

Plagiarism:

"Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting the words or thoughts of another writer as if they were your own. You commit plagiarism whenever you use a source in any way without indicating that you have used it." (James A.W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln, *Writing: A College Handbook*, 2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1986, 522.).
Flagrant, unacknowledged use of another's material is a grave matter. All acts of plagiarism will be referred directly to the Honor Council.

Tentative course overview

Course introduction and summer reading

Unit 1 (August 26-Sept. 4): An artful move from book to film: *The Dead* by James Joyce (film 82 minutes)/dramatic structure

E.Q.: How do the criteria for "greatness" differ from one medium to another?

E.Q.: Are the criteria for analysis different for film than they are for literature?

Aug 21: summer reading

Aug 26: discuss "The Dead," use literary terms

Aug 28: Socratic seminar

Sept. 2: "Film Terminology and Cinematic Effects;" Watch film (80 mins.)

Sept 4: discuss merits of film/compare narrative/medium.

Unit 2 (Sept. 8-October 6): Learning the language of cinematography

Clips may include: *The Kid*, *Citizen Kane*, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *The Untouchables*, *The Matrix*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Memento*

Sept. 4-11: read Barsam, pages 1-28 and 48-50 from ch 1; Ch. 2

Sept. 8/9: watch *Citizen Kane*

Sept. 11: test ch 1,2

Sept. 16: Ch. 3

Sept. 18: 139-159; *The Kid*

Sept. 22: 159-185; Sept. 22/23 *Spartacus*

Sept. 25: test

Sept. 30: Chapter 6

Sept. 30/Oct. 2: clips from: *The Matrix*, *Memento*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Run, Lola, Run*

Oct 6: Chapter 273-305 from ch. 7

[Oct. 7-23: writing workshop for college essays]

**Unit 3 (Oct. 23-Nov 6): Character and setting: *Vertigo* by Alfred Hitchcock/
sequence analysis/paper**

E.Q.: How do the various features/components of the movie work together?
What is the overall effect? Does *Vertigo* withstand the test of time? Is it a great film?

Unit 4 (Nov 11-Nov 25): Short stories & film:

Readings: Stam & Miller

In each of the paired works we look at in this unit, the book was written first, and is the inspiration (or at least the starting point) for the film. Assuming chronological precedence for the book, ask yourself the following:

- What is the author's message? How is it achieved?
- What is the filmmaker's message? How is it achieved?
- How are the two works similar? Different?
- Does the film extend, develop, truncate or summarize the book?
- Is the message different? Changed? Do think that was the intention? Who achieves their apparent purpose more effectively? How?

Stephen King, *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*

Barn Burning (short story by William Faulkner; 1980 film by Peter Werner starring Tommy Lee Jones; IMDB link: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080417/>)

The Swimmer (short story by John Cheever; 1969 film by John Perry starring Burt Lancaster IMDB link: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0063663/>)

Everyone in the class will read the text, watch the film, and participate in the seminar. The question for each seminar (and for your paper) is “*Does the film adaptation of the text honor the 3 Laws of Adaptation?*” Your job, as you specialize in your particular film/text pairing, is to do additional research prior to the seminar and briefly frame the discussion, distributing and discussing relevant and/or compelling material. (Any material that you'd like us to copy should be submitted beforehand.)

After the seminar, you will continue to develop the argument(s) that you pursued in the seminar, fleshing it out, detailing and extending the evidence you present. You should quote from the text, the film, and the *I, Robot* article. (Additional research welcome.)

Mrs. Barbara Elliott
440-884-4540
elliottb@gilmour.org

Dr. Cynthia Sabik
440-684-4553
sabikc@gilmour.org

Unit 5 (Dec. 2-12): The novel into film: *One Flew Over the Cuckoos' Nest* by Ken Kesey

**Unit 6 (Dec 15-18): Final project: Applying the language of analysis, film and text.
“Spoiler special podcasts”**

[Reading assignment over Christmas break: *Lucky Child* by Loung Ung]

Jan 6: discuss *Lucky Child*

Jan 8: Final Socratic seminar (What are the advantages/disadvantages in each medium?)