

Comberton Sixth Form

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# A Level Film Studies

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# Joining Film Studies

Whether you're coming back to the subject after doing it at GCSE, or joining for the first time - we're really pleased that you've chosen our subject. We're very proud of our results over the last five years. There's been a real growth in the subject nationally as well as here at Comberton Sixth Form.

This is just a quick booklet to give you a few pointers as to what we'll be doing on the A-Level, how it's laid out as a course and what you can do to prepare for starting the in September.

If you're still not sure about whether you want to do the course then please, have a read of this booklet and you can contact me at my email address (below).

[jroffey@combertonvc.org](mailto:jroffey@combertonvc.org)



# First Year

The first year of the course is broken down to introduce how studying a film actually works, the bulk of the examined work is covered as we study at least 3 paired sets of film and by the end of the year we introduce the coursework element of making a short film.

## Introducing Film

- An introduction to film - a breakdown of how to study film that covers every aspect of textual analysis that will be used in every text we study.

## Hollywood 1930-1990

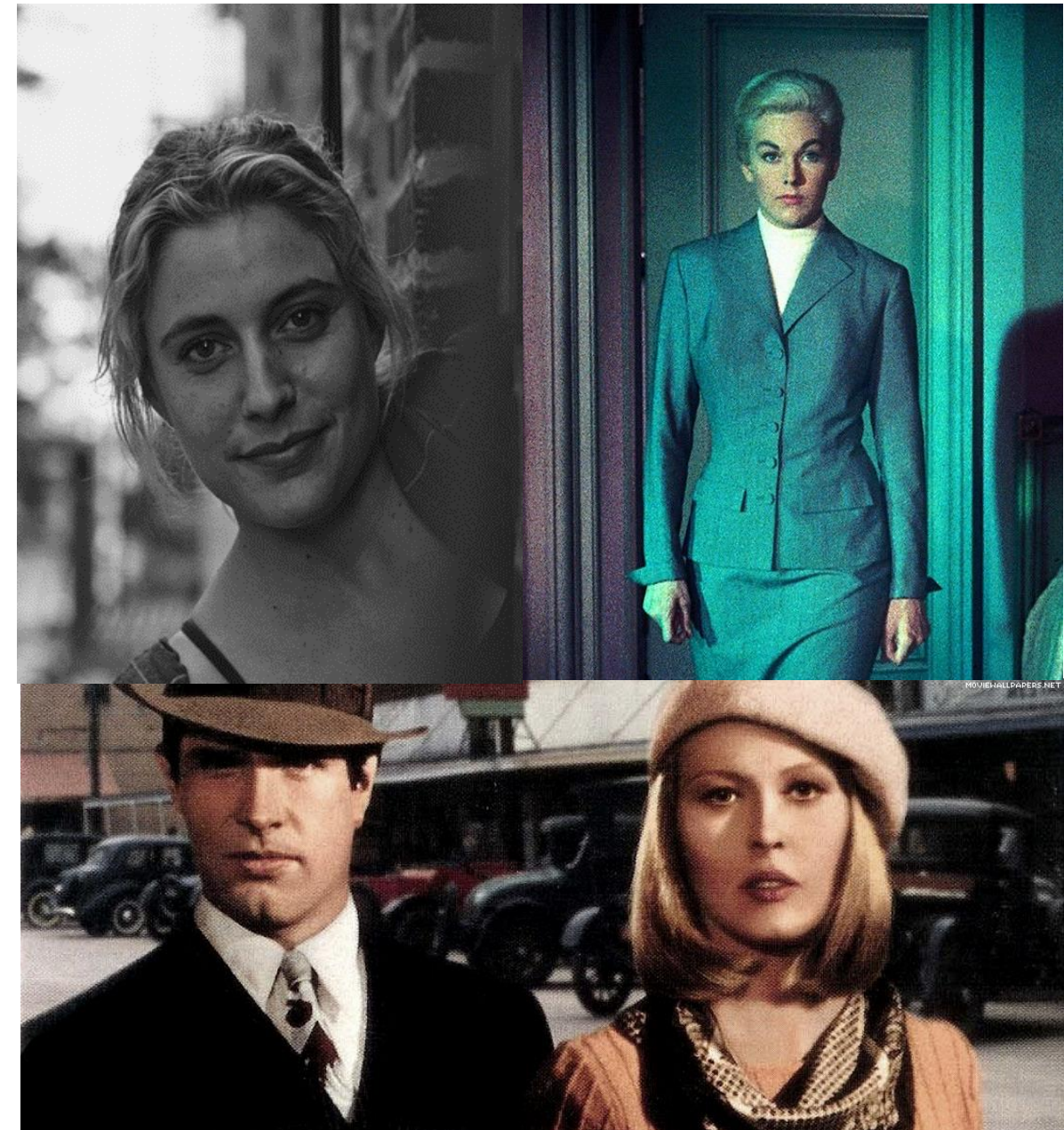
- *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, 1958)
- *Bonnie & Clyde* (Penn, 1967)
- Focus on: Auteur theory

## American Film Since 2005

- *Carol* (Haynes, 2015)
- *Frances Ha* (Baumbach, 2012)
- Focus on: Spectatorship and Ideology

## Global Film

- *Pan's Labyrinth* (Del Toro, 2006)
- *Taxi Tehran* (Panahi, 2015)
- Focus on: Core Areas



# Second Year

The second year of the course is broken down to cover a series of smaller topics and more individual film texts that are studied on their own but introduced as a part of a wider film movement. This year also includes time to focus on the production of a short film.

## British Film Since 1995

- *This is England* (Meadows, 2006)
- *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004)
- Focus on: Narrative and Ideology

## Documentary Film

- *Amy* (Kapadia, 2015)
- Focus on: Digital vs Film Debate/Filmmaker's Theory

## Silent Film

- *To be Confirmed but probably One Week/The Scarecrow/The High Sign/Cops* (Keaton, 1920-22)
- Focus on: Realism vs Expressionism Debate & American silent comedy.

## Experimental Film

- *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1995)
- Focus on: Auteur and Narrative





# The Short Film

During year 12 you will study the practicalities of film making, starting with the challenges of animation, before moving on to studying a range of short films. These short films will form the inspiration for the short films that you have to make in year 13.

You will make a short film, between 4-5 minutes in length. You will take influences from the short films that we've studied as well as any other cinematic influences you have taken on.

I've tried to link up as many of the films as possible on here. Feel free to watch them in preparation for the course. (*Stutterer* requires a small payment to 'own' on YouTube)



## The Prescribed Short Films

- *The Gunfighter* (Kissack, US, 2014) - 09'
- *Pitch Black Heist* (Maclean, UK, 2012) - 13'
- *Wasp* (Arnold, UK, 2003) - 24'
- *About a Girl* (Percival, UK, 2001) - 09'
- *Stutterer* (Cleary, UK, 2015) - 12' (pay to watch)
- *High Maintenance* (Van, Germany, 2006) - 09'
- *Connect* (Abrahams, UK, 2010) - 05'



# To Prepare...

What can you do to be ready?



Watch as many films as possible! Try keeping a record, either in a book or on an online service like [letterboxd.com](https://letterboxd.com)



Research some of the topics on the following page. Use YouTube to see if you can find analysis of these topics.



Use your phone, try making a short film. Only a minute or two. Experiment with shot distance, angle and duration.



Complete a review for three of your favourite films – each should be from a different genre. Check out Rottentomatoes reviews – what do the professional Critics make of your choices? Write a review 'back' to the best/worst Critic's review and bring these with you in September.





# Theories

There are several theories that you will have to get to grips with during the A-Level course. For each one of these theories, in order to prepare for the course, you should try looking up any introductory guides and trying to write down your understanding of what the theory means and how you can apply it to your favourite film.

## Auteur

This is the film theory most associated with Film Studies. This is the theory of the director as the author. It is an incredibly popular theory and has given rise to the cult of the director.

Your Preparation: Look out for films by a particular director - Bigelow, Fincher, Scott, Anderson etc and watch some films by them. What are the similarities?

## Spectatorship

The theory of the audience and their relationship with the film. Exploring how messages/meanings are received.

Your Preparation: look up Active and Passive readings. How do they work?

## Narrative Theory

A film's creation of the story/narrative can be explored through these theories.

Your Preparation: Explore how Todorov, Propp, Barthes and Levi-Strauss crafted narrative theories to explain stories.

## Marxist

The theories of Karl Marx can be applied to films to explore how commerce and commodification are represented and in conflict.

Your Preparation: What are: commodification, alienation, universal equivalent and any other terms you find

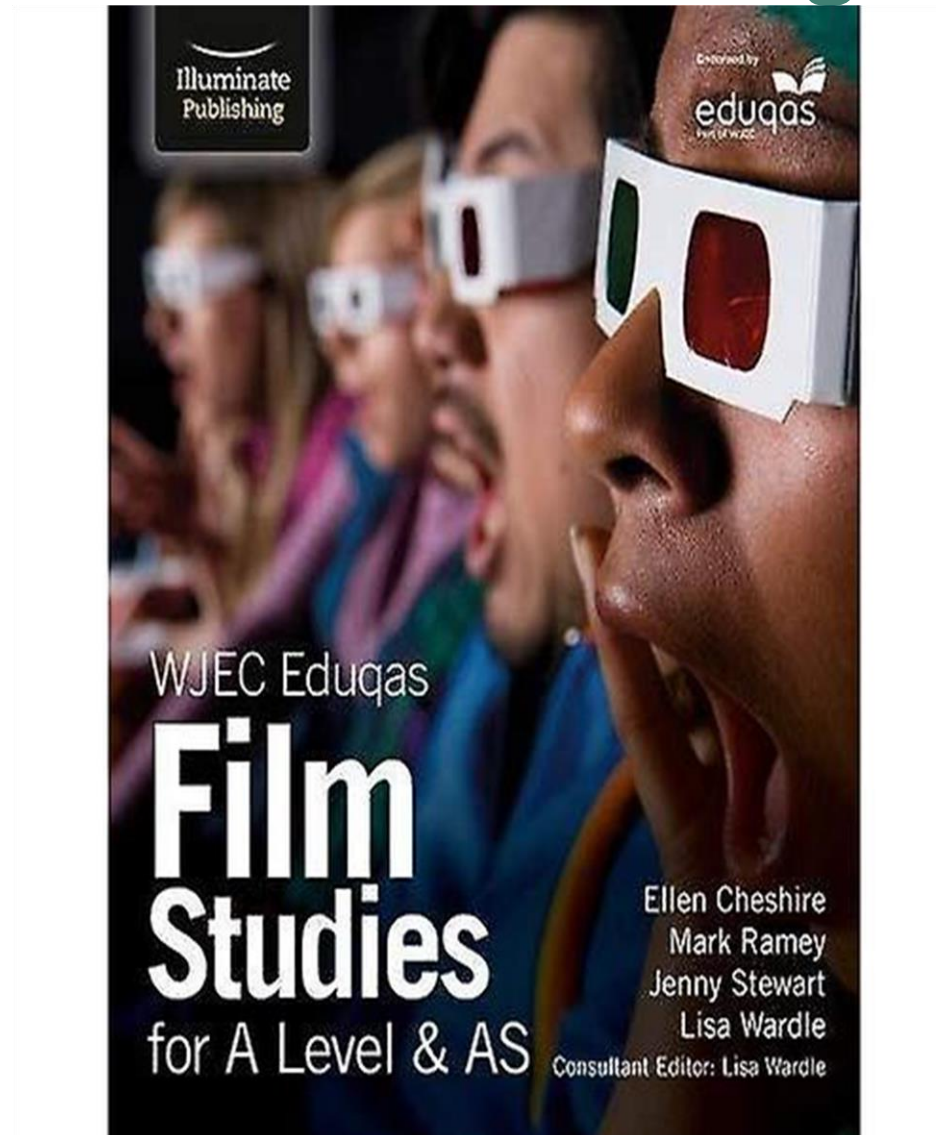
## Feminist Approaches

From the 1970s onwards feminist approaches to film have provided a powerful way of deconstructing a male dominated art form.

Your Preparation: Look up Laura Mulvey's theory of the 'male gaze'. What does it mean? How does it work?



## Further reading



This study Guide is really useful and covers the whole two year course: it's expensive, but worth the investment. Have your own copy if you can, but we do hold Reference copies in our sixth form library.