



Live Classes

Movies & Meaning: An Introduction to Film

David Webb

Syllabus

2025-2026



Personal Note from Instructor:

Join me for a fun and fascinating journey through the art and history of American movies, from their silent beginnings through the golden age of Hollywood to the present day. We will explore how movies are made, how the film industry has adapted and changed with the times, and how movies have changed us, the audience. This course is taught from a biblical worldview perspective.

Recommended Grade Level:

8th to 12th grades. Adults are also welcome!

Prerequisites:

None

Live Lecture Date & Time:

Thursdays, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Eastern

NOTE: Students are not required to attend the live lectures, but the instructor highly recommends they attend the live class when possible to participate in the class discussions, which are a key component of the course. Lectures are recorded and posted on the Canvas course page. If you miss a lecture, please watch the recording. You may also watch the recordings to review for the semester exams.

Description:

Given the power of film to persuade and entertain and new technologies designed to overwhelm our visual and aural senses, this course will equip students to engage their brains and guard their hearts when the lights go down. Students will learn how to understand what a movie is really saying through the filmmakers' use of story, style, and imagery. They will learn to think and talk about a film in a way that goes beyond its entertainment value, enabling them to influence the cultural conversation as media-wise Christians.

Required Class Materials:

Students will be assigned a classic film to watch outside of class each week. The instructor will provide a list of streaming services carrying the film that week. However, students and their parents will be responsible for accessing the film and for any rental fees or purchases required to watch it. Although you can find some of these titles for free on cable or at your local library, you can expect to pay an average of \$2.99 to \$3.99 to stream most of the films on Amazon, YouTube, and other authorized streaming sites.

No textbook is required. One or more PDFs of assigned reading will be provided each week.

Course Topics:

Students will explore film history, examine different movie genres—musicals, westerns, science fiction, animation, film noir, biblical epics, and more—and learn to identify and appreciate various elements of the art and craft of movie production, including costume design, film editing, cinematography, visual effects, music, and more. Weekly homework includes reading, short answers, and study questions that prepare students to discuss the assigned movies in class.

ABOUT THE FILMS: Each week, students will be assigned a classic film to watch outside of class. Some assigned movies may deal with mature themes or subject matter, but students will not be assigned to watch R-rated films. A complete schedule and film list will be available before the first class.

Assignment Structure:

1. Weekly Movie Reports. After watching the assigned movie, the student will complete a form containing five or six questions about the film. The group discussion that begins each class is based entirely on that week's movie report, so answering these questions thoroughly will prepare the student to contribute to the group discussion. Each report is worth 50 points and is graded based on the amount of effort expended, not on the opinions expressed.

2. Short-Answer Assignments. Each week, students will research and identify approximately ten names, events, and/or terms from American film history. Each assignment is worth up to 50 points. These weekly exercises will familiarize students with key people, films, and terminology related to that week's subject. *NOTE: Questions on the semester exams will be taken mostly from these worksheets. Because students will be allowed to refer to these worksheets while taking a test, they are encouraged to be thorough and accurate when completing these assignments.*

3. Class Participation. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the movie they were assigned to watch the previous week. Students may award themselves 25 points each week they attend the lecture and contribute to the discussion. If students cannot attend the live lecture, they may award themselves 25 points after watching the class recording.

4. Reading. There is no textbook for this course. However, some reading is required; PDFs of articles will be assigned by the instructor and posted on the Canvas course site. Students may award themselves 25 points when they complete the reading.

5. Tests

One semester exam will be assigned in December, and a second exam will be assigned in April. Each test is worth 250 points and will cover approximately 14 weeks of movies, lectures, and short answer homework assignments.

6. Final Essay — OPTIONAL

This is an optional assignment. Parents, you may wish to require the assignment to add to the academic rigor of the course, which is highly recommended if your student is planning to attend college. If the student submits an essay by the deadline, the instructor will grade the essay and award the student up to 500 bonus points. The essay will consist of the student's analysis of a single film that will be assigned for this purpose. The film title and essay parameters will be provided by February 1. The essay must be submitted by May 1 in order to be graded by the instructor.

Grading:

Students' points will be tracked on the Canvas course site. Divide the student's cumulative point total by 5,000 to determine his or her final percentage score. It's up to the parent to assign a letter grade based on the student's scoring percentage. Please remember that Mr. Webb is only the lecturer; the parent is still your home school's official instructor, counselor, and principal. Neither Apologia Live nor its faculty intends to usurp the vital role of the parent in home education.

Due Dates and Late Policy:

Tests and assignments not submitted by their due date will have 25 percent deducted from their total score.

Student Conduct:

Our virtual class environment requires special rules to minimize distractions and enable everyone to enjoy the maximum benefit of attending class. Thank you in advance for honoring these rules and working to make this class a great experience for everyone!

1. Log in to class meetings using your **first name and last initial** only. This will help the instructor facilitate the class discussion.
2. Come to class prepared to actively share, discuss, and participate. We all get more out of this class—and the movies we watch—when everyone contributes to the discussion.
3. Before watching an assigned movie, watch the video introduction provided for the film on the Canvas course site. After watching the movie, thoroughly answer all the questions on the weekly movie report, as this will prepare you to contribute to the discussion.
4. If possible, join the class at least five to ten minutes before the designated lecture time. Each week before class, the instructor will show a short video related to the film you've watched or the topic we'll be discussing that day. We will also watch some landmark short films and cartoons, as these were once a part of every film program in movie theaters.
5. You may use the chat box to talk with other students before the start of class discussion and lecture. Please do NOT type in the chat box during the lecture UNLESS you have a question or are answering a question that has been asked by the instructor.
6. Do not criticize your fellow students or disparage their comments. Movies are a highly subjective art, and everyone is entitled to his or her opinion.
7. Keep all conversations appropriate for a Christian classroom.
8. Do not use mobile devices or tablets, play games, use social media, or surf online during lectures.

8. If you must leave class early, please send the instructor a private message before exiting.
9. If you join a meeting late, please do not disrupt the class when you arrive. It will be your responsibility to watch the recording later to catch up on anything you missed.

Instructor Availability for Questions:

During the lecture, if you have a question regarding the teaching, type your question into the chat box. The instructor will pause to answer your question if the timing is appropriate. If not, the instructor will address any unanswered questions after the lecture.

The instructor will also answer questions regarding assignments, Canvas, and other administrative matters *after* the lecture. Please save all such questions to ask at that time. Or email the instructor to ask your question.