

A LEVEL FILM STUDIES

PREPARATION FOR YEAR 12



XAVERIAN COLLEGE

WELCOME TO XAVERIAN FILM STUDIES!

Hey everyone! Welcome to Film Studies at Xaverian.

Let me tell you a little about us.

We are the **number one destination for A Level Film Studies** in the North West. More people come here to study Film than anywhere else in this region.

Last year, our results were in the **Top 25% of the country**.

We were also the **highest performing** Film Studies course in Manchester.

As a department, we pride ourselves on our expert staff who have **extensive experience** not only as Film academics but also in the film industry itself.

This booklet is designed to provide you with information about the course itself, introductions to our staff, what we offer in terms of enrichment and what we expect of you as a student.

On the last page, you will find a series of tasks for you to complete across the summer in preparation for the start of the course in September.

We can't wait to meet you!



THE CONTENT

COMPONENT ONE: *VARIETIES OF FILM AND FILMMAKING*

This section of the course covers a range of American and British cinema. We will study Hollywood cinema from the height of the Studio System and compare it with cinema made after its collapse. We will explore both Mainstream and Alternative contemporary American cinema and study British cinema also. We will study film language, narrative, representation, film theory and it's relation to socio-political, historical and cultural values.

COMPONENT TWO: *GLOBAL FILMMAKING PERSPECTIVES*

This section is a development of what we have learnt over the first component and we start to explore more challenging range of texts, from silent and experimental cinema, documentary and world cinema.

COMPONENT THREE: *CREATIVE PRODUCTION COURSEWORK*

For this individual piece of coursework you will be writing, directing and producing your own short film across the two years. You will be given a brief and must create an original piece, putting into practice what you have learnt. You will study a range of short films and you will write an evaluative analysis reflecting on your work.





THE TEXTS *YEAR ONE*





THE
TEXTS
YEAR TWO



HOW YOU WILL BE ASSESSED

You will be assessed by **two exams** and **one piece of creative coursework** across the two years.

Each exam is **two and a half hours** long and worth 35% of your A Level.

Your Creative Coursework will be an **individual piece of work**. You will produce and direct your own short film. You will also study a series of short films and write an evaluative analysis of the production.



THE THREE CORE AREAS

For every single one of the texts you study, you will analyse them in relation to three Core Areas.

AREA ONE: ELEMENTS OF FILM FORM

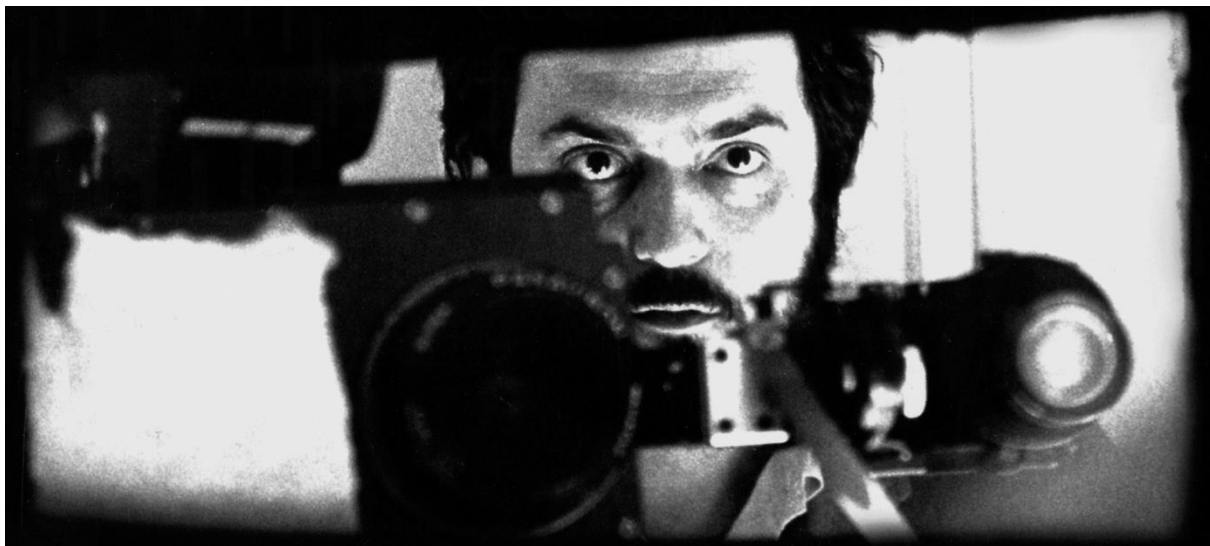
Here you will study how a director uses **film language** in order to communicate ideas to an audience and create meaning and emotion. You will look specifically at **cinematography, editing, mise-en-scene, sound** and **performance** in technical detail, analysing them first in a series of cinematic examples before applying them to your exam texts.

AREA TWO: MEANING AND RESPONSE

This will be an analysis of how filmmakers create meaning and attempt to elicit particular responses out of an audience. We will also examine specific **representation issues**, looking at gender, age, ethnicity and cultures.

AREA THREE: FILM CONTEXT

Exploring Film Context means looking at the issues that exist outside of the actual text itself. So after exploring the film, we will look at the environments in which they were created and any important **social, cultural, historical or political factors** which might affect the meanings of the films themselves.



THE SPECIALIST AREAS

There are also a number of Specialist Areas of study which will be applied to certain films across the two years.

SPECTATORSHIP

This will involve the study of how audiences read texts, where and how they watch them and whether they have the response the filmmaker intended.

NARRATIVE

Here we will examine how a narrative is constructed and managed, what devices a filmmaker will use to do this and how a screenplay works in relation to the finished text.

IDEOLOGY

This will be the study of what filmmakers are ultimately trying to communicate in terms of messages, values and ideas.

AUTEUR

An auteur is a director who has either a personal and distinct aesthetic or a particular set of themes that they consistently explore in their work.

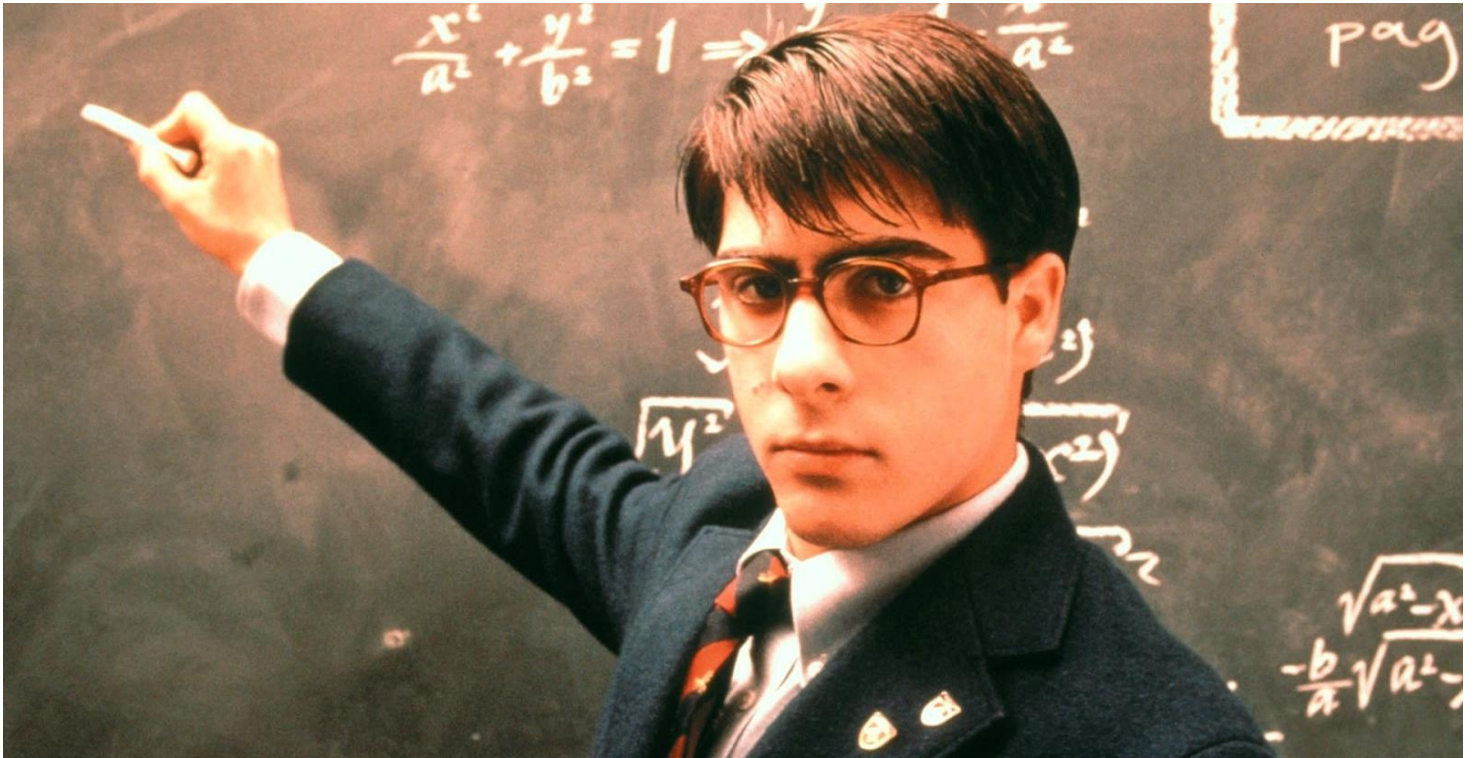
CRITICAL DEBATES AND FILMMAKER THEORIES

These last two specialist areas will involve studying specific debates and theories in relation to the films we study and asking whether they are relevant.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU

OUR RESULTS

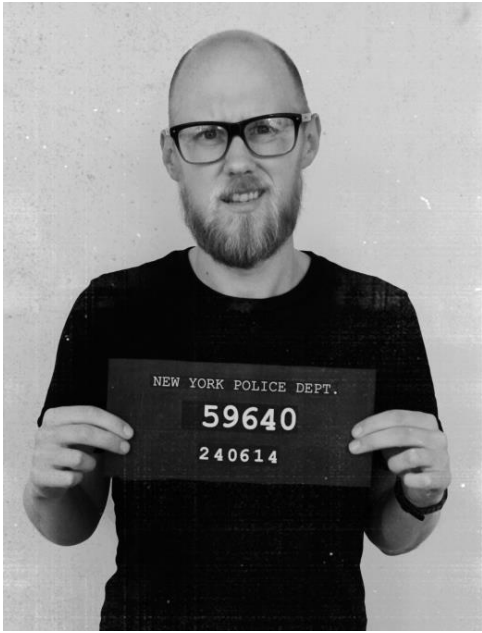
Last year, Film Studies results at Xaverian were in the **Top 25% of the country** and are consistently **among the best in the college**.



WHAT WE WANT YOU TO DO

- Forget your target grade. Aim for at least **one grade higher**.
- Be **on time** for all of your lessons.
- Be organised – **fill up your exercise book**. You'll *need* those notes.
- Think independently. Question everything. **Open your mind**.
- **Embrace new things** and types of cinema.
- Dedicate **four hours a week** to Film Studies outside of class.
- **Respect** everyone in the class.
- Push yourself. Push yourself. **Push yourself**.
- Write. Write. Watch. Analyse. Write.
- **Read** as much as you can about film.
- **LOVE YOUR SUBJECT!**

THE FILM DEPT



**PHIL
DRINKWATER:**
*CURRICULUM
LEADER*

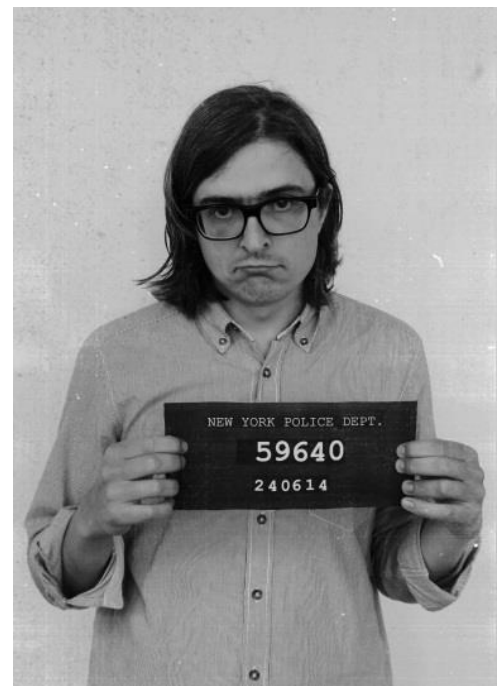


**CLAIRE
KENNEDY**



DAWN BALDWIN

VINNY COULSON: *PRODUCTION ASSISTANT*



FILM STUDIES ENRICHMENT

Get involved and make the most of your time at Xaverian.

HOME TRIPS AND TALKS

Over the course of the two years we will organise a number of opportunities to both visit HOME in Manchester – the multi-billion pound arts centre with whom we have strong connections – and to attend talks here at Xaverian with industry professionals.



TRIPS AND VISITS

In the past five years we have run a trip to both New York and London each year. This year, look out for more exciting events to take part in. These trips cost, but they are worth it for the experience.



AND THE WINNER IS.....

At the end of the two years we have an awards evening in which the best student work is celebrated, the red carpet is walked down and gongs handed out for those that really shine. Could you be the best cinematography or the best editing this year?



PODCASTS, WEBSITES AND MAGS

You need to live, sleep and breathe film.

To help you do this, here is a list of great stuff that we are obsessed by.

PODCASTS

Kermode and Mayo's Film Review
The DGA Podcast
You Must Remember This
The Film Comment Podcast
The Big Picture

WEBSITES

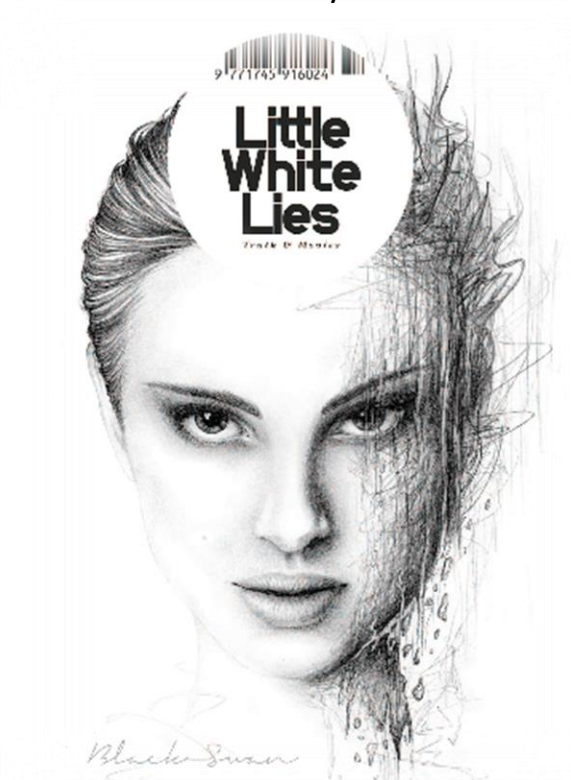
The Guardian – Film
Kermode Uncut – YouTube
David Bordwell.net
Roger Ebert
Raindance.org
BFI.org

MAGAZINES

Sight and Sound
Little White Lies
Empire

VIDEO ESSAYS

Every Frame a Painting
The Director's Series
Now You See it



PREPARATION TASKS FOR YEAR 12!

Here's a list of things you can do to help you prepare for the start of the course

ONE

Make a Top Ten list of your favourite films of all time. Put them into rank order.

TWO

For Number One on your list – write a page about why this is your favourite film. What is it about this film that sticks with you?

Think about things like the camera, the sound, the performances and the narrative.

THREE

We're big fans of making physical portfolios here. It's a lot of fun, they look great and the process of making them helps you retain information.

If you can, get hold of a notebook or scrap book. I want you to make an entry for every film you watch up until September. You can include whatever you like – drawings, a review, still images, art, anything. Make it yours. Try to focus in on what you took away from each film.

FOUR

Try to check out at least three of the listed podcasts, websites and magazines.

FIVE

Over the page is a list of ten films currently streaming online that you could watch to start pushing your boundaries in terms of different types of cinema.

FILMS TO WATCH!

Phantom Thread

(Netflix)

A very funny, strange and beautiful period romance that will make you think twice about accepting an omelette from your loved one.

Mother!

(Netflix)

Why not really push the boat out with absolutely bonkers descent into madness?

Kiki's Delivery Service

(Netflix)

A very beautiful, simple little Studio Ghibli film about a teenage witch who moves to a new town with her wise-cracking cat.

The Report

(Amazon Prime)

A taut, economical procedural thriller starring my boy Adam Driver. Basically he's looking through spread-sheets and discovering mad government stuff and it's based on a true story and it's a bit like All The President's Men. Underrated.

Wonder Boys

(BBC iPlayer)

One of my absolute favourite comfort films. Michael Douglas in a dressing gown getting into weird adventures with Tobey Maguire, Robert Downey Jr, Katie Holmes and Frances McDormand.

His Girl Friday
(Amazon Prime)

Simply one of the funniest films I've ever seen. A real fast-talking screwball comedy starring a never-more-charismatic Cary Grant.

Synecdoche, New York
(Amazon Prime)

A masterpiece written and directed by Charlie Kauffman and starring the late, great Philip Seymour Hoffman about life imitating art. A truly, truly strange film. But brilliant.

Good Night, and Good Luck
(Netflix)

A very timely drama directed by George Clooney and filmed in glorious black and white about the importance of news and information in a world determined to feed us nonsense.

Faces Places
(Netflix)

A heart-warming, life-affirming documentary about 80 year old filmmaker Agnes Varda as she travels through France in a mini van with artist JT making life-size works of art for people living in little communities.

The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)
(Netflix)

The Adam Sandler renaissance continues apace with this wonderful low-key comedy drama about two brothers (Adam Sandler and Ben Stiller) and their cantankerous old father played by Dustin Hoffman. Just a really good movie. Sandler is especially superb.