# Reading: Non-Scripted Film Study

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **20 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

## Brief Summary of Unit

Guiding Quotation: "A story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end . . . but not necessarily in that order." — Jean-Luc Godard

Throughout this course, students develop advanced filmmaking skills by studying, planning, producing, revising, and presenting original non-scripted films. Through the lens of reading, students analyze exemplar documentary and non-scripted films, as well as professional scripts and storyboards, to examine cinematography, narrative structure, characterization, theme, pacing, and other filmmaking techniques. This unit focuses on the analysis of master filmmakers and exemplary works of film, including comparisons of directorial choices and adaptations across film and dramatic texts. Because this analysis occurs concurrently with students' own film production, students study mentor works that directly support their current creative goals, applying insights from their analyses through short- and long-form analytical writing to inform their filmmaking decisions. The summative assessment is a student-designed portfolio consisting of original films and accompanying design materials.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship.

As part of the Cranford High School Film Academy sequence, this dual-enrollment course is offered in partnership with Montclair State University, providing students with the opportunity to earn college credit while engaging in advanced study of non-scripted filmmaking. Building upon prior coursework in cinematography and film production, students refine the technical, artistic, and professional skills necessary for continued study and careers in film, media, communications, journalism, digital storytelling, and related creative industries. Through authentic learning experiences—including film festivals, publication opportunities, internships, guest speakers, and community partnerships—students explore a variety of career pathways while making informed decisions about future coursework, postsecondary education, and professional aspirations.

Revision: June 2026

## Standards

**Information Literacy:** This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.

Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/ levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

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| L.SS.11–12.1 | Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking. |
| L.SS.11–12.1.A | Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and place, and is sometimes contested. |
| 9.4.12.CI.1 | Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas (e.g., 1.1.12prof.CR3a). |
| L.SS.11–12.1.B | Observe hyphenation conventions. |
| 9.4.12.CI.2 | Identify career pathways that highlight personal talents, skills, and abilities (e.g., 1.4.12prof.CR2b, 2.2.12.LF.8). |
| L.SS.11–12.1.C | Recognize spelling conventions. |
| 9.4.12.CI.3 | Investigate new challenges and opportunities for personal growth, advancement, and transition (e.g., 2.1.12.PGD.1). |
| L.KL.11–12.2 | Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. |
| L.KL.11–12.2.A | Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level. |
| 9.2.12.CAP.4 | Evaluate different careers and develop various plans (e.g., costs of public, private, training schools) and timetables for achieving them, including educational/training requirements, costs, loans, and debt repayment. |
| 9.2.12.CAP.5 | Assess and modify a personal plan to support current interests and post-secondary plans. |
| L.KL.11–12.2.B | Vary syntax for effect, apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts. |
| 9.4.12.CT.1 | Identify problem-solving strategies used in the development of an innovative product or practice (e.g., 1.1.12acc.C1b, 2.2.12.PF.3). |
| 9.2.12.CAP.6 | Identify transferable skills in career choices and design alternative career plans based on those skills. |
| L.KL.11–12.2.C | Demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. |
| L.VL.11–12.3 | Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. |
| 9.4.12.CT.2 | Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving (e.g., 1.3E.12profCR3.a). |
| 9.2.12.CAP.8 | Determine job entrance criteria (e.g., education credentials, math/writing/reading |

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| | comprehension tests, drug tests) used by employers in various industry sectors. |
| L.VL.11–12.3.A | Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. |
| 9.4.12.CT.4 | Participate in online strategy and planning sessions for course-based, school-based, or other project and determine the strategies that contribute to effective outcomes. |
| L.VL.11–12.3.B | Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable). |
| L.VL.11–12.3.C | Analyze how an author or speaker uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text or discussion. |
| L.VL.11–12.3.D | Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage. |
| L.VL.11–12.3.E | Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary). |
| L.VI.11–12.4 | Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings, including connotative meanings. |
| 9.2.12.CAP.13 | Analyze how the economic, social, and political conditions of a time period can affect the labor market. |
| L.VI.11–12.4.A | Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text. |
| L.VI.11–12.4.B | Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations. |
| L.VI.11–12.4.C | Analyze how the meaning of a key term or terms develops or is refined over the course of a text. |
| L.VI.11–12.4.D | Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. |
| R | Reading |
| RL.CR.11–12.1 | Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations of the text; this may include determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. |
| RI.CR.11–12.1 | Accurately cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations of the text. |
| RL.CI.11–12.2 | Determine two or more themes of a literary text and analyze how they are developed and refined over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account or analysis; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RI.CI.11–12.2 | Determine two or more central ideas of an informational text and analyze how they are developed and refined over the course of a text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex account or analysis; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RL.IT.11–12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author's choices as they develop ideas throughout the text regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). |
| RI.IT.11–12.3 | Analyze the impact of an author's choices as they develop ideas throughout the text regarding a complex set of ideas or sequence of events, and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop. |
| RL.TS.11–12.4 | Evaluate the author's choices concerning the structure and the effectiveness of specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) and how they contribute to its overall structure and |

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| | meaning, as well as its aesthetic impact. |
| RI.TS.11–12.4 | Evaluate the author's choices concerning structure and the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. |
| RL.PP.11–12.5 | Evaluate perspectives/lenses from two or more texts on related topics and justify the more cogent viewpoint (e.g., different accounts of the same event or issue, use of different media or formats). |
| RI.PP.11–12.5 | Analyze an author's purpose in a text distinguishing what is directly stated in a text or through rhetoric, analyzing how style and content convey information and advance a point of view. |
| RL.MF.11–12.6 | Synthesize complex information across multiple sources and formats to develop ideas, resolve conflicting information, or develop an interpretation that goes beyond explicit text information (e.g., express a personal point of view, new interpretation of the author's message). |
| RI.MF.11–12.6 | Synthesize complex information across multiple sources and formats to develop ideas, resolve conflicting information, or develop an interpretation that goes beyond explicit text information (e.g., express a personal point of view, new interpretation of the concept). |
| RI.AA.11–12.7 | Describe and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. and global texts, and the premises, purposes, and arguments in these works. |
| RL.CT.11–12.8 | Demonstrate knowledge of, analyze, and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. |
| RI.CT.11–12.8 | Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and scientific significance for their purposes, including primary source documents relevant to U.S. and/or global history and texts proposing scientific or technical advancements. |
| W.AW.11–12.1 | Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. |
| W.AW.11–12.1.A | Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. |
| W.AW.11–12.1.B | Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. |
| W.AW.11–12.1.C | Use transitions (e.g., words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. |
| W.AW.11–12.1.D | Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g., formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. |
| W.AW.11–12.1.E | Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic). |

## Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

- How do we analyze representative literary and film texts?
- How do we best utilize film making equipment to elevate narrative and information creations?

- How is characterization depicted through the use of color and shots in a film?
- How is color used in a film?
- How is linear and nonlinear sound used in a film?
- How is sound used to create mood and atmosphere?
- What differentiates a good script from a great script?
- What film techniques are used to represent the theme, stated and implied, in a film?
- What is editing and why is it essential in a film?
- What is Mise-en-scene? How does it include the lighting, sets and props?
- Why are different shots used in a film?

## Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

Course Goals & Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate proficiency in basic core technical skills for un-scripted field production and post-production editing
- Incorporate supplementary media elements such as archival footage, graphics, and animations into unscripted videos using available tools and resources
- Develop the skills to produce strong visual content for a clear point of view
- Understand story structure and pacing for the moving image
- Effectively critique a film using visual storytelling language. Consider central questions surrounding the representation of reality and truth, including voice, authority, evidence, and point of view
- Work and collaborate effectively in organized groups and production crews
- Provide constructive feedback to peers and engage in collaborative idea exchange and problem-solving
- Reflect on how creative choices and techniques shape the meaning and impact of nonfiction videos on audiences

The learning outcomes focus on developing core technical proficiency, creative storytelling capabilities, critical analysis skills, and collaborative abilities within an ethical framework. Participants will gain hands-on experience while examining deeper issues surrounding unscripted media.

Technical learning outcomes:

- Pre-Production and planning
- Understanding copyright and fair use
- Components of field production and post-production
- Scheduling, writing and conducting interviews.Principles of location lighting and audio
- Determining and Shooting b-roll - images to support the story
- Treatments/outlines based on elements gathered in the field
- Beginner-level editing of non-fiction materials using Adobe Premiere Pro
- Considerations and best practices for inclusion and accessibility
- Finishing and presenting final projects

- Characterization, plot and theme are all represented in the mise-en-scene, visual composition, and color used within a film.

- Demonstrate how the textual aspects of film further its theme.
- How color and cinematography influence an audience on a conscious and unconscious level.
- How editing and sound contribute to the overall mood and tone of a film.
- How the formal aspects of film relate to a film's structure and expression.
- How to analyze exemplar filmmaking.
- How to differentiate between cuts and transitions within a film.
- How to engage in more intellectual discussions using the visual literacy skills gleaned through film analysis.
- How to use the techniques of visually analyzing a film to view art, history and life.
- How to utilize video and audio editing software to assemble and organize original narratives and informational pieces.
- The fundamental uses and application of Adobe Premier, Audition, and After Effects.
- The fundamental uses and application of film equipment such as cameras, lighting, etc.
- The principles of visual composition as it applies to film making.
- Using the terminology gleaned through the study of editing and sound to enrich their analytical skills.
- Utilizing film cutting, transitioning and sound.

## Evidence/Performance Tasks

Assessment in Advanced Film Design: Non-Scripted is standards based and emphasizes growth, revision, and demonstrated mastery.

Film production—from idea generation through exhibition—is assessed using the Advanced Film Scorecard, with each project aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Students co-author their assessments by conferring with the teacher, monitoring their progress, reflecting on their work, and identifying next steps for improvement. Students will complete a minimum of two long-form and four short-form films per marking period while demonstrating mastery of the standards identified on the Advanced Film Scorecard, which is informed by standards-based grading practices and adapted from the Marzano Method. Throughout the marking period, students are encouraged to revise, resubmit, and reassess their work until mastery is achieved. Grades reflect each student's highest demonstrated level of proficiency at the conclusion of the marking period rather than an average of performance. Both formative and summative assessments are used to monitor growth and evaluate learning, with assessment opportunities differentiated based on student readiness and performance.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

**Assessment Ideas:**

- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism using various databases, CLCs, and Bloom's Literary Database
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation, develop notetaking skills and annotations
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation, rehearsal and modeling effective listening and speaking techniques

- Open-Ended Responses in Journal regarding Reflections, Character Development, and/or Life Choices
- Researched Presentations, Biographical, Historical, Psychological and/or Philosophical analysis of a Memoir
- Performance Assessments, including a dramatic reading of a scene, excerpt, or poem that relates to one of the subthemes
- Participate in organized literature circles where students lead discussions about character, conflict and theme and work collaboratively to determine answers to questions posed by teacher and other students
- Evaluate societal concerns reflected through plot and theme
- Cite and interpret quoted material from the text and from literary criticism
- Create a narrative memoir using narrative techniques and factual information in proper MLA format
- Participate in peer and teacher/student critiques to revise and edit their essays
- Create artistic, interactive and/or multimedia projects that suggest an understanding of the text beyond its literal meaning

**Formative:**

- Teacher Observations
- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars/Fish Bowls
- Analysis of multimodal text sets
- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation
- Peer and self-evaluations of learning
- Entrance and Exit Tickets
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal

**Summative, including Alternative Assessments:**

- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed
- Researched Presentations
- Performance Assessments
- Project-based Learning
- Problem-based Learning
- Personalized Learning
- Visual Literacy Prompts
- Digital Portfolios
- Online Discussion Forum

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

**Benchmark:**

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a claim and use evidence as support
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics

## Learning Plan

Throughout the course, students engage in a workshop model that emphasizes independence, student choice, teacher conferencing, and the transfer of learning from mentor texts to original film production. Instruction is personalized to address students' distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, and cultural backgrounds while providing opportunities for independent inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic application.

Instructional time for film study is student-driven with teacher guidance through conferencing and feedback. Students independently analyze exemplary long- and short-form documentary and narrative films, as well as award-winning documentary scripts, selecting mentor texts that best support their current production goals. Reading instruction emphasizes close analysis of cinematography, narrative structure, characterization, theme, pacing, and filmmaking techniques, with an emphasis on transferring these insights to students' own productions.

The reading of film and script targets both comprehension and critical analysis. Students engage in analytical, argumentative, expository, and reflective writing based on their study of film. Vocabulary and grammar instruction are embedded within authentic reading and writing experiences through mentor texts, teacher modeling, and mini-lessons. Research tasks are integrated throughout the unit as students investigate topics, filmmakers, genres, and production techniques.

Sample Unit Plan:

- Conference: Review portfolio requirements and student goals for the course.
- Guided First Screening: Review student goals and guide student's first screening selection
- First Analysis: Review film criticism and model. Students produce their first film criticism.
- Student Guided Screenings: Through conferencing and feedback, students continue to complete screenings and criticism throughout the semester.

## Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web

content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

It is expected that materials endorsed by Montclair State University will be used in this course as part of the concurrent enrollment agreement. In that way, both the academic rigor and topical content of these pieces will be appropriate for a freshman undergraduate student. Students can anticipate that reading material is relevant, timely, thought-provoking, mature, and rigorous. (Statements such as these will be included on the course syllabus).

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List and the Core Film List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

## Instructional Materials

Teachers may utilize a variety of instructional resources, including print and digital materials, multimedia, visual and audio supports, interactive technologies, authentic texts, assistive technologies, and other district-approved resources. Any teacher-selected ancillary instructional materials must receive prior approval from the Department Supervisor and should provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to support diverse learner needs.

- American Film Institute: https://www.afi.com
- Cinematography Theory and Practice by Blain Brown
- Cutting Rythms: Shaping the Film Edit by Karen Pearlman
- Documentary Film by Patricia Aufderheidi
- Documentary Voice & Vision by Kelly Anderson, Martin Lucas
- Documentary Voie & Vision Activites: https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138795433/default.php
- The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video by Tom Schroeppel
- The Internet Movie Database: https://imdb.com
- The Internet Movie Script Database: https://imsdb.com
- Video Production: Disciplines & Techniques

## Teacher Resources

- How Film Scores Play with our Brains https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCpYbSz1KqE
- Long and Short Cuts https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f78muH3MG7M
- Refer to film list above
- Text: Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader, Corrigan

- Text: Making Movies, Sidney Lumet
- Text: Understanding Movies, Louis Giannetti, Prentice Hall
- YouTube introduction to Cuts and Transitions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAH0MoAv2CI

## Suggested Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

Possible accommodations include:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing/reading
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques
- Offer oral assessments
- Supply study guide questions and access to class notes
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts
- Individualize reading choices based on ability and level
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Small group and one on one assessment
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed
- Use art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan