# Writing: Non-Scripted Film Production

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **20 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

## Brief Summary of Unit

Guiding Quotation: "Every time I go to a movie, it's magic, no matter what the movie's about." — Steven Spielberg

Throughout this course, students develop advanced filmmaking skills by studying, planning, producing, revising, and presenting original non-scripted films. Through the lens of writing, students transfer their knowledge of storytelling, filmmaking, and composition to the creation of original non-scripted films as they develop documentary concepts, plan and storyboard projects, enlist stakeholders, scout locations, film, edit, revise, and publish multiple short- and long-form productions. Using an iterative design process, students continuously refine their work through reflection, revision, and reshoots as needed, demonstrating increasing mastery of both filmmaking techniques and visual storytelling.

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: July 2026

## Pacing

The formal class will meet two days during each rotation with the third day spent on-site producing, editing, or conferencing. Any out-of-school filming will be permitted as open campus rules apply.

## 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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| 9.4.12.CI.1 | Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas (e.g., 1.1.12prof.CR3a). |
| 9.4.12.CI.3 | Investigate new challenges and opportunities for personal growth, advancement, and transition (e.g., 2.1.12.PGD.1). |
| 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). |
| 9.4.12.CT.2 | Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving (e.g., 1.3E.12profCR3.a). |
| W.IW.11–12.2 | Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.A | Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.B | Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.C | Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.D | Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. |
| W.IW.11–12.2.E | 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.IW.11–12.2.F | Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic). |
| W.NW.11–12.3 | Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. |
| W.NW.11–12.3.A | Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its |

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| | significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events. |
| W.NW.11–12.3.B | Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. |
| W.NW.11–12.3.C | Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution). |
| W.NW.11–12.3.D | Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters. |
| W.NW.11–12.3.E | Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative. |
| W.WP.11–12.4 | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach; sustaining effort to complete complex writing tasks; tracking and reflecting on personal writing progress (e.g., using portfolios, journals, conferencing); or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. |
| W.WR.11–12.5 | Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. |
| W.SE.11–12.6 | Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA or APA Style Manuals). |
| W.RW.11–12.7 | Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes. |

## Essential Questions

- How are works influenced by those that preceded them?
- How does a film utilize dialogue, cinematography, editing, color, and sound to establish a cohesive theme?
- How does a production delegate work effectively?
- How does a production effectively establish mise-en-scene?
- How does one conduct meaningful interviews?
- How does one conduct valuable and critical research to documentary filmmaking?
- How does screenwriting differ from traditional prose?
- How does the time period or cultural context in which a film is made impact its narrative?
- What are all of the aspects of film production?
- What defines a good script?
- What defines a good script?
- What is the three-act structure?

## 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.

- Analyzing characterization in film.
- Applying all of the steps of film production such as screenwriting, storyboarding, enlisting actors, location scouting, filming, and editing.
- Breaking down the three-act structure.
- Establishing the mise-en-scene in an original work.
- How to write an original script.
- Identifying narrative conventions and adapting them to original work.
- Utilizing film hardware.
- Utilizing film software.
- Writing and producing informational films.
- Writing and producing narrative films.

## 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 Forums

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 Assessments:

- 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
- Common Lit Reading Assessment, administered three times per year
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics

## Learning Plan

Throughout the course, students engage in a workshop model that emphasizes creativity, independence, revision, and authentic production. Instruction is differentiated to address students' distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, and cultural backgrounds while encouraging students to take ownership of the creative process from concept development through publication.

Viewing filmmaking as a form of writing and composition, students develop original documentary concepts and work through the complete production process by researching topics, planning projects, storyboarding, writing scripts, identifying stakeholders, scouting locations, filming, editing, revising, and publishing multiple long- and short-form films. Grammar instruction is embedded within authentic writing experiences through mentor texts, teacher modeling, and mini-lessons, while teachers emphasize the writing process as much as the final product. High- and low-stakes writing opportunities, including proposals, research, reflective writing,

production planning, and film design documents, support students as they synthesize information and refine their creative work.

Sample Informational Project Plan:

- Develop and pitch documentary concepts.
- Research topics and identify stakeholders.
- Storyboard and script documentary projects.
- Schedule and conduct interviews.
- Capture interviews and B-roll footage.
- Edit, revise, and refine completed films.

## 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.

- Advanced Film Scorecard: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uhgTFnRT4WK_uS9-8OzsUTZnhluozdZs_LSIKmhSfXE/edit?usp=sharing

- Girl Crush (Short Film)
- Masterclass: How to Write a Short Film (https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-short-film-step-by-step-guide)
- Mute (Short Film)
- NFI - How To Make a Short Film (https://www.nfi.edu/how-to-make-a-short-film/)
- No Film School: 6 Essential Things You must Do to Produce a Short Film (https://nofilmschool.com/how-to-make-short-film)
- Studiobinder: How to Make a Short Film (https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/how-to-make-a-short-film/)
- Studiobinder: The 49 Best Short Films of All Time that Every Filmmaker Can Learn From (https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/best-short-films/)
- The Bouquet (Short Film)
- The Connecting Train (Short Film)

## Teacher Resources

- Marzano Standards Based Grading: https://marzanoacademies.org/reporting-and-grading/
- Text: Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader, Corrigan
- Text: Making Movies, Sidney Lumet
- Text: Understanding Movies, Louis Giannetti, Prentice Hall

## 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

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