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“Language and Society in Film Syllabus (專門英語)”

Course outline:

A background in popular culture is an essential tool for communication in English. When people communicate, they are sharing not only vocabulary and grammar, but also ideas and information. Everyday English communication is littered with pop-culture references about literature, celebrities, news, and film. Moreover pop-culture is not simply a form of entertainment. It is also a reflection of social mores, attitudes, and beliefs -- in short, it can illuminate the attitudes of a culture and society. More importantly, pop-culture often engages with social problems and issues, and attempts to challenge and/or break down established views and norms. In this class, we examine films like *Titanic* and *Erin Brockovich*, and use these as materials to study English language, culture, and society. We also use these films to discuss contemporary social issues including class, industrial pollution, and technology.

(*Method of instruction*): Each week we practice English conversation, listening, and discussion by examining a three to five minute scene from a popular English-language film. During the semester, we watch a total of five such film clips. At the beginning of each class we read about the background to the film, and study necessary vocabulary. Next, we watch the scene and focus on listening to comprehend key vocabulary and content. Following this, we discuss the contents of the scene and its relation to our personal experiences, as well as contemporary social issues. Lastly, we do group or individual activities to further develop our understanding of the key subjects and themes raised in the film. In the middle of the semester, we review key vocabulary and contents from the films in a short mid-term quiz. As a final project for the semester, students choose one of the five film scenes to memorize and act out in front of the class.

Course goals:

- Develop natural, in-context English language speaking and listening skills
- Express our opinions about social issues through discussion and writing
- Examine how fiction stories are constructed and learn to summarize their contents
- Understand the connections between emotion and language by acting out a scene from a popular film

Homework

Each week students practice reading and writing paraphrases and summaries of film plots. In addition, we read articles from popular and scholarly magazine and news sources to deepen our understanding of themes touched upon in class films.

Message to students

By connecting language learning to your interests you can challenge yourself to improve while having fun at the same time. Popular films and movies can be an enjoyable and motivational way to study.

語学学習に面白みを感じないと、長く続けることが難しい。継続するためには、自分の興味がある分野と結びつけることが大切。幅広い分野の生の英語に触れることができるのは映画ならではの。楽しく英語を勉強するにはとても最適と考えられる。

Textbook

There is no textbook for this class. All handouts and readings will be provided by the instructor. Links to class handouts are included in the syllabus.

Active learning

This is a highly-active, student-centered class. Rather than listening to lectures from the instructor, students work in groups to explore complex social issues and literary themes through the use of popular English-language films. Moreover, students probe the connections between emotion and language by acting out a scenes from films and presenting these to the class.

Method of Evaluation:

Final project: 40%

In-class work: 30%

Homework: 20%

Review quizzes: 10%

Schedule:

Class 1

Film: [*Roman Holiday \(1953\)*](#)

Class plan:

- Self-introductions and introduction to the class
- Watch video clip from *Roman Holiday* and complete part one of the [Lesson Plan](#)
 - Talk about your dreams and things you have always wanted to do
 - Conversation and discussion practice

Homework:

- Read “[Using and Citing Sources](#)” and answer the questions

Class 2

Film: *Roman Holiday* (1953)

Class plan:

- Discuss “Using and Citing Sources”
- Complete part two of the Lesson Plan
 - Practice inviting, accepting, and rejecting requests
 - Talk about a holiday or vacation that you went on

Homework:

- Write about a holiday or vacation that you went on
- Read the [Film Summary](#) for *ET*. Write a one-paragraph paraphrase of one of the summaries. Write a one-sentence summary of your paraphrase.

Class 3

Film: *ET* (1982)

Class plan:

- Discuss and share student paraphrases and summaries
- Discuss superstitions and the supernatural
- Complete part one of the Lesson Plan
 - Practice using words and phrases
 - Listening and conversation practice

Class 4

Film: *ET* (1982)

Class plan:

- Complete part two of the Lesson Plan
 - Talk about childhood and challenges of growing up
 - Make a dialogue about seeing something unbelievable

Homework:

- Read the [Film Summary](#) for *Titanic*. Write a one-paragraph paraphrase of one of the summaries or the synopsis. Write a one-sentence summary of your paraphrase.

Class 5

Film: *Titanic* (1997)

Class plan:

- Discuss student paraphrases and summaries
- Complete part one of the Lesson Plan
 - Words and phrases
 - Listening and conversation practice
 - Discuss the topic of “class”

Homework:

- Read: Monica Hall, [“Titanic as Metaphor”](#)

Class 6

Film: *Titanic* (1997)

Class plan:

- Discuss reading “Titanic as Metaphor”
- Complete part two of the Lesson Plan
 - Discuss the topic of “freedom”

Homework:

- Write about one of the following topics: ① The concept of “class” in Japan; ② what “freedom” means to you.

Class 7

Review Lesson

Class plan:

- Review quiz about contents of prior films and past vocabulary
- Do [Reported Speech](#) WS

Homework:

- Read the [Film Summary](#) for *Erin Brockovich*. Write a one-paragraph paraphrase of one of the summaries or the synopsis. Write a one-sentence summary of your paraphrase.

Class 8

Film: *Erin Brockovich* (2000)

Class plan:

- Discuss student paraphrases and summaries
- Complete part one of the Lesson Plan
 - Discuss the topic of environmental problems
 - Practice using words and phrases
 - Listening and conversation practice

Homework:

- Read Kate Abby-Lambertz [“Top City Officials Charged in Flint Water Crisis”](#)

Class 9

Film: *Erin Brockovich* (2000)

Class plan:

- Discuss reading “Top City Officials Charged in Flint Water Crisis”
- Complete part two of the Lesson Plan
 - Role play a court scene between the prosecution and the defense in a pollution case

Homework:

- Read the Film Summary for [Back to the Future](#). Write a one-paragraph paraphrase of one of the summaries or the synopsis. Write a one-sentence summary of your paraphrase.

Class 10

Film: *Back to the Future* (1985)

Class plan:

- Discuss student paraphrases and summaries
- Complete part one of the Lesson Plan
 - Discuss the topic of time travel
 - Practice using words and phrases
 - Listening and conversation practice

Homework:

- Read [“Is Time Travel Possible?”](#)

Class 11

Film: *Back to the Future* (1985)

Class plan:

- Discuss reading “Is Time Travel Possible?”
- Complete part two of the Lesson Plan
 - Discuss the topic of time travel

Homework:

- Make groups and choose one of our five class films to memorize and act out for the final class project.

Class 12

Practice

- Practice memorizing and acting the script from your film scene in groups
- Work on pronunciation, intonation, and emotion

Class 13

Practice

- Practice memorizing and acting the script from your film scene in groups
- Work on pronunciation, intonation, and emotion

Class 14

Act a Scene

- Act out the scene you have memorized with your group for the class
- Take notes and write comments on the other groups’ performances

Class 15

Act a Scene

- Act out the scene you have memorized with your group for the class
- Take notes and write comments on the other groups’ performances