

# The Language of Film

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## Course Objectives

Movies have a language of their own, a set of visual and aural devices they use to tell a coherent story and convince viewers of their filmed reality. Additionally, filmmakers have their own language to describe how a film is shot and assembled. There's also a language used by reviewers and critics of film, a language of examination and interpretation. By viewing and discussing movies and pieces of movies, and by looking into the history of cinema, students will develop a better understanding and appreciation of how filmmakers tell a story, the various elements and tasks that go into the construction of a film, and how to write critically about film.

## Content

Areas explored include film history, genres, sound and sound design, color vs. black and white, lighting, cinematic trends, title sequences, set design, cinematography, editing, directing and directors, film acting, film criticism, audience, trailers, and the control and rating of film content.

## Assessments and Assignments

Readings, discussions and writings will raise students' awareness of film interpretation and allow them to be more active viewers and participants in the film experience, much in the same way we expect students to both enjoy and critically comprehend prose and poetry. Students will be assessed based on class participation, several essays and reviews, regular responses to professional reviews, a research paper on a film of historical significance, and a final presentation and essay on a film of their choosing.

## Texts

*Awake in the Dark* (Roger Ebert); additional reviews, interviews and commentaries.

## Films

Together we'll watch pieces—some brief, some lengthy—of many films, including *Star Wars*, *Hidden Fortress*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *West Side Story*, *Jaws*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *Breathless* (the Godard version), *Beauty and the Beast* (Cocteau), *The Dark Knight*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The French Connection*, *Metropolis*, *The Battle of Algiers*, *City Lights*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and *Rocky*. Complete films we'll watch may include *Nosferatu*, *Fargo*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Station Agent*, and *Psycho*.