



PIEDMONT

PIEDMONT HIGH SCHOOL

800 Magnolia Avenue • Piedmont, California 94611-4087

510.594.2626 phone • 510.450.0425 fax

Proposal for a New Course

Course Title: Film as Literature (semester-long course)

Department: English

Grade Level: 11 & 12

Proposed date of implementation: Fall 2022

Origin of Request

Teacher: Mercedes Foster

Department: English

School: Piedmont High School

Date: February 10, 2021

Course Description: (Please write a brief course description)

Learning to read visual media is a critical skill in our modern digital culture, and a natural progression from classic literary analysis. In this course, students will use the literary terminology and analytical techniques learned in their English classes to critically explore the movies that have contributed to their social and intellectual identities. The class will watch and critically analyze film techniques, screenwriting choices, sound design, and directorial decisions, and will use what they have learned to produce their own media.

Prerequisite(s)

Required: English 1-2, English 3-4, Social Psychology

Co-requisite(s)

None

1. Needs Statement/Needs Assessment

What need will this course fulfill?

There is a critical need at PHS for more humanities courses that present opportunities for students to understand how media both shapes and reflects our culture, which is aligned to the Social Justice Standards our school district has adopted. Additionally, film is identified in the California Common Core Standards as a way of exploring a broad range of periods and cultures. And, film will be used as a tool to promote social-emotional learning—a district-wide area of focus.

How was this need determined?

1. Students must develop a more critical eye about the media they ingest.
2. Students have expressed frustration that there are too few opportunities in the college preparatory required humanities courses to explore art and literature beyond the classic canon.
3. Students need additional time and guidance in communicating effectively with each other about topics that matter to them.
4. In a recent survey of current PHS 10th and 11th graders, 28 of 62 students who completed the survey indicated they would most likely enroll in this course if the course was offered.
5. Results from the PHS 2018-19 CAASPP test indicate that student performance in the Listening strand of English Language Arts needs improvement. This course will address the appropriate Common Core ELA Speaking/Listening standards through the use of media literacy.

Why is this need not met by the current curriculum?

Although the Piedmont High School humanities courses traditionally have included the occasional film or film clip as part of the curriculum, the material is generally used to supplement other material. Rarely is film or video explicitly examined as a piece of art, let alone examined critically as a product of our culture. Exploring film takes time that is not available in the college preparatory English classes.

Have you considered other alternatives to meet this need? If so, explain.

The English Department has attempted to meet this need with films viewed in classes, but the minutes necessary to show them are difficult to find in an English class without losing valuable instruction time for other aspects of the English Language Arts curriculum. Assigning films for homework does not work well due to our students' limited time and not all students have access to the material. For this course, time will allow for all films on the syllabus to be shown in class.

What prerequisites will there be?

This course is open to 11th and 12th grade students only so the prerequisites are ENG 1-2, ENG 3-4, and Social Psychology.

Why do you think this course is the best solution in meeting the need?

In addition to a stand-alone class providing the time needed to view and evaluate the film, a structured film class will be a valuable tool in supporting students' social-emotional health. Each instructional unit, which combines exposure to sophisticated media with the tools to understand and discuss complex ideas, offers opportunities for students to talk about the emotional and social impact of films while providing a rich environment for meaningful personal growth and connection with others. This class will be an opportunity to explore diverse perspectives of female, LGBTQ, and BIPOC filmmakers and help students build the critical vocabulary they need to understand and discuss complex contemporary issues.

2. Effect on Other Aspects of the School Program

From what other subjects do you anticipate that students will be drawn?

This course is not similar to any other course offered at Piedmont High School; therefore, it is not likely to drain a preexisting course of its students. The impact most likely will be a redistribution of students from a range of elective courses.

Will the course require specially trained teachers not now on the staff?

This course does not require a specific teaching credential. Teachers in the English department have the skills necessary to teach the course; however, the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is available to provide coaching and support the teacher when planning lessons that involve exploring diverse perspectives of BIPOC and LGBTQ filmmakers.

3. Projected Cost

The classrooms have projection equipment and students have Chromebooks and access to online editing software. The new STEAM building has a sound booth editing room. The projected cost for media is \$500. Media to be purchased will be accessible to students through classroom instruction.

4. Graduation Requirement

How does this course fulfill PHS Graduation Requirements? Is it UC Approved? Which UC Subject Requirement does it meet (a-g)?

This is not a graduation requirement. It is an elective course that will be submitted for UC A-G approval. It would fall under the G Elective designation.

5. Similar School Comparison

Lowell High has a Film as Literature course. Many other schools have a Digital Media class (e.g., Oakland Tech) or a Film and Media Arts Department (e.g., South Torrance High), and others have a Film component built into their AP curriculum (e.g., Palo Alto).