

American Film Workshop



AMERICAN FILM WORKSHOP

Interface has designed a unique 9-session program to help students interested in film pursue that interest and distinguish themselves from other college applicants!

Students will have the opportunity to discuss films with a professional film reviewer, Mark London Williams, who writes about all aspects of the cinema for America's top publications about film.

With Mr. William's guidance, students will also have the opportunity to prepare a piece of writing about film to be submitted for publication – getting published is a powerful way to strengthen an application!

Mr. Williams is a wonderful teacher as well as a writer, and these workshops will be both informative and fun.

For 9th-12th graders.

Program Overview



WHAT YOU GET

- Instruction by a professional film writer and teacher, **Mark London Williams**
- The class is limited to **8** students to allow for a lot of interaction and feedback. So apply early!
- Each class will last 75 minutes.
- Each workshop session will be based around an assigned film, and the discussions across the weeks will cover writing, acting, directing, editing, visual effects, production design, and scoring.
- With Mr. Williams' help, students will also draft an article about film – film reviews, film criticism, commentary on particular aspects of a film, such as directing or cinematography, film criticism, etc.
- Additionally, Interface resource expert Susan Goodkin will lead a session in which students will learn about how to submit their pieces for publication. Ms. Goodkin will also discuss additional ways for students to pursue their interest in film that will strengthen their college applications.

OPTIONAL

Students can lead a discussion of Interface's International Film Discussion group.

Students can be teaching assistants for future American Film Workshops.

Both of these opportunities will help students strengthen their college resumes!



CLASS BREAKDOWN

Session 1: *Casablanca* - Introduction to American film's "Golden Age," with an overview of the studio system, the stars, and specific discussion of *Casablanca*: How it was cast, etc. Also an overview of its historical context in WWII. Film craft emphasis: **Writing**, Howard Koch, other "studio era" writers from different fields (theater, journalism, etc.).

Session 2: *Rebel Without a Cause* - Postwar American movies, the arrival of Technicolor, and the invention of the "teenager." How have teen roles changed since? Or have they? Also, a look at its L.A. locations. Film craft emphasis: **Acting**, and a look at the postwar "Method acting" studios (primarily in NY) that gave us Dean, Brando, et al. How was it different than other kinds of film acting?

Session 3: *To Kill a Mockingbird* - Though not set in the 60s, we'll look at the Civil Rights Era that gave rise to both book and film, and discuss the art of "adaptation." Additional film craft discussion: **Production design**. The legendary Henry Bumstead (we'll discuss why he's legendary!) won an Oscar for his work on this film. He recreated a town that many still swear is real -- and in fact the town they grew up in!

Session 4: How Students Can Strengthen Their College Resumes Through Their Interest in Film. Susan Goodkin will lead this session. Students will learn about opportunities to pursue their interest in film that will strengthen their college resumes, including creating blogs, creating an independent study, attending summer programs, and more. Susan will also discuss submitting pieces about film for publication, and will provide students with a list of publications that accept teen writing. We will also discuss posting on the blog created for this class.

Session 5: *A Space Odyssey* - Our first science fiction film in the group. We'll discuss its historical context in the late 60s, and the work of Stanley Kubrick. Film craft focus: **Scoring** and **Visual Effects**. What constitutes an effective musical score for a film? Why did Kubrick decide to stick with his "temp track" of classical cuts rather than commission an original score? And how has VFX work progressed -- or not -- since this pioneering work?

Session 6: *Groundhog Day* - Our main comedy on the list: What do we mean by "genre," anyway? Is it a comedy? A drama? Both? If Bill Murray is constantly time traveling (or "looping," as the case may be), why isn't it science fiction? Or is it? Film craft focus: **Editing**: How does the craft of editing work with the writing and directing to "keep track" of the story?

Session 7: *The Iron Giant* -- Film craft focus: Animation. What kinds of stories lend themselves better to animation than "real life?" Originally, this was a story set in England, but was changed to America in the 1950's. What are the reasons to change an original when "adapting?" (We'll discuss *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Fellowship of the Ring* in this light, too). How do the themes in this story compare with other well-known animated films? What defines when a story is "for kids," or for everyone? Is it the medium? Or the content?

Session 8: *Rent* -- -- Film craft focus: Music and composition. Stepping into the 21st century, we look at a modern movie musical. What does it mean to tell a story with music? And how does this film compare with other musicals you may know? (*Singin' in the Rain*, *Westside Story*, even the *Wizard of Oz*). What sorts of ideas or stories is it telling? And when we consider the influence the opera *La Boheme* had on it, should we consider this an "adaptation" as well? We'll also discuss the works of composers like Bernard Herrmann, John Barry, Ennio Morricone, John Williams and more in non-musicals, and what affect music has on visual stories.

Session 9: *Lord of the Rings* -- Film craft focuses: Cinematography, Directing, and VFX. Our final film lets us look at the fantasy genre, and culminate various discussions about cinematography, visual effects, writing and adaptation, scoring, production design, casting, etc. (What if it wasn't filmed in New Zealand, for example?).... We'll also consider the character of "Tom Bombadil," and why he was left out of the movie version, the differences between "fantasy," "science fiction" and other genres, and how you inform an audience about the world you're building for the story.



MARK LONDON WILLIAMS - INSTRUCTOR



Mark London Williams: Mr. Williams writes about film for numerous publications including the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Variety*, one of America's premier sources for news about film, and is currently a Hollywood columnist for a British film publication. Additionally, he has taught writing at Disney's Creative Academy. He is also the acclaimed author of the teen/young adult time-travel series, *Danger Boy*, as well as a playwright whose plays have been produced from California to London.

SUSAN GOODKIN – INSTRUCTOR



Ms. Goodkin is a graduate of Harvard College, Harvard Law School and Oxford University, where she studied on a Rhodes Scholarship, the world's most prestigious academic scholarship. Ms. Goodkin is a writer and college consultant whose articles have been published in magazines and leading newspapers throughout the United States. As a consultant, she specializes in helping students improve their resumes for college; she has helped many of her college advisees create blogs and publish their fiction and non-fiction work, which over the past few years alone has helped her students get into colleges including Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Caltech, MIT, Princeton, and U.Penn. A former courtroom attorney, Susan's presentation skills have made her a sought-after speaker, both nationally and internationally, on topics including how to get into top colleges in the United States.