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Film Analysis and Contemporary Issues: The Surveillance State

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Introduction

The Engineering & Science University Magnet School is a 6-12 STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) themed inter-district magnet school. Temporarily located on the outskirts of New Haven, CT, the school is awaiting its permanent home, which is being constructed on the campus of the University of New Haven (UNH). The school is designed to be a feeder school for the UNH Engineering program. ESUMS students have the opportunity to co-enroll in UNH courses as early as the 10th grade dependent on academic performance. Additionally, UNH offers a number of scholarships for ESUMS graduates. ESUMS is considered an urban school drawing 60% of enrollees from New Haven, while the remaining 40% come from the surrounding suburban towns. The ESUMS student body is ethnically diverse**:** 8% of students identify as Asian, 44% identify as Black or African American, 18% identify as Hispanic, and 31% identify as White. ESUMS is a newer school. 2014-2015 marked the school's first graduating class of 56 students. Class cohorts are generally small, averaging approximately 80 students per grade.

Although ESUMS is considered a successful school, a significant achievement gap exists within the school itself. While a substantial portion of the inaugural graduating class will be attending competitive schools and universities including Yale University, Wentworth College, UNH, and Howard, another portion is lagging behind. A third of the current 11th grade cohort scored under 400 on the critical reading portion of the SAT placing them into a remedial/transitional English course for the senior year.

Rationale

This curriculum unit makes use of film to build and enhance students' analytical reading and writing skills. Throughout the unit, students will identify and analyze the cinematic tools and choices a director employs to create meaning. This analysis will mirror the same close reading skills described in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are the same practices students engage in when deconstructing traditional literature or written text. The curriculum is designed to support students who may exhibit deficiencies in decoding complex written texts by providing the opportunity to hone their comparative and analytical thinking/writing

abilities without the barrier of the written text. The unit is to be embedded in a semester long film studies elective. The elective and unit are both writing intensive and designed to support students with developmental literacy outside of a traditional remedial setting. Support for this practice is built into the CCSS, specifically standard CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed); and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Additionally, growing support for this practice exists among educators. Jessica Keigna, a member of *Center for Teaching Quality's Teacher Leader's Network* describes the way film can be integrated into the English classroom in an article published with Education Week. Film can be used to facilitate student interaction with texts on multiple levels: 1) factual—the who, what, when and where of a text 2) Inductive—the how and the why of a text and 3) Analytical—the so what, or breaking down of the cinematic elements to understand their impact. "Film presents a complicated text that is approachable for all kinds of learners, making it an excellent tool for teachers who want to push students towards analytical thinking in the classroom.[1] "

Film analysis and literary analysis draw on the same set of skills and therefore support the development of student writing and thinking. Like literature, film analysis draws on a number of theories to construct meaning, including feminist criticism, psychological criticism and New Criticism. The Common Core State Standards unmistakably harken back to the theory of New Criticism, a pedagogy popular throughout the mid-century that places an emphasis on the text alone. According to Daniel Katz, director of Secondary Education and Secondary Special Education Teacher Preparation at Seton Hall University, "In New Criticism, the text is treated as self-contained, and it is the job of the reader to investigate it as an object to be understood via the structure of the text and without reference to external resources such as history, culture, psychology or the experiences of the reader," (Katz)[2] . Close reading and analysis of particular word choice or literary devices are examined as parts of a whole that interact to create meaning—the text itself. While many educators, including Katz, believe the New Criticism approach should be supplemented by other pedagogies or literary theories, close reading and analysis remain integral to the development of strong reading, writing and thinking abilities. Applying close reading and New Criticism methodologies to the reading of film provides students with meaningful and engaging practice.

To connect with the ESUMS STEM theme, students will study three films—each dealing with ethical questions of surveillance. Students will examine *The Conversation* (1974), *Eagle Eye* (2008) and *Citizenfour* (2014) to consider the ideologies these texts produce regarding surveillance and the evolution of surveillance technology. Students will explore the ways viewers are encouraged or discouraged to identify with particular characters and consider the way this spectator identification constructs the messaged agenda of the film. At the culmination of the unit, students will write a comparative analysis on two of the texts studied throughout the unit. An additional text, *Enemy of the State (*1998), may be offered as well. This last text provides a pre 9/11 Hollywood example of film dealing with these same topics.

Content Objectives

The goal of the unit is threefold. First, students will strengthen analytical thinking and writing skills through the study of film. Second, students will develop a language and understanding of the techniques used to construct meaning in film; and third, students will explore the similarities and differences between film and literature, specifically emphasizing the understanding that artists' choices impact meaning.

The unit focuses on spectator identification, which is the understanding that films create a relationship between the viewer or spectator and particular characters (usually the protagonist). Through spectator identification the film communicates its agenda or ideology. This ideology is sometimes critical of the dominant narrative and other times in support of it. For example, in the film *Eagle Eye* (discussed in greater detail below) a top-secret government super computer manipulates the life of protagonist, Jerry Shaw, in order to lead him to heroically prevent the assassination of the entire Presidential cabinet. In this sense the film works to support the use of surveillance technology as a necessary deterrent to terrorism but only when human oversight is ensured. On the other hand, *Citizenfour* (also discussed in greater detail below) uses documentary film to detail the actions of Edward Snowden, a government whistleblower who in 2013 leaked information about the undisclosed National Security Agency's surveillance domestically and abroad. Both *Eagle Eye* and *Citizenfour* use a variety of cinematic techniques including camera positioning, pacing and narrative structure to foster spectator identification. Through this identification the viewer empathizes or connects with protagonists whose stories lead viewers to very different observations about the role of surveillance.

Enduring Understandings

- Filmmakers use cinematic tools and techniques to create meaning.
- Cinematic techniques construct a viewer's experience of a film much like literary devices construct a reader's experience of a text.
- Film viewers are encouraged to identify with particular characters or elements of a film. This identification helps create the ideology/agenda of the film.
- Analysis is the breaking down of something into parts to understand how it works. Literary analysis and film analysis rely on the same critical thinking skills.

Essential Questions

- What is the language of film?
- How does film reflect the beliefs and values of society?
- How do films make us think?
- What is the relationship between the viewer and the film?
- Who is responsible for creating meaning in film?

The films used throughout the unit span 40 years, beginning with *The Conversation,* released in 1974 and ending with *Citizenfour,* released in 2014. This broad time span also provides an [] opportunity to explore the ways beliefs about the role and value of surveillance have changed over time. Although the focus remains on new criticism, nonfiction texts should be included to provide students with the addition of a historical lens.

What follows is a discussion and analysis of the three films this unit is centered on:

The Conversation (1974) directed by Frances Ford Coppola

Synopsis: Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) is a surveillance specialist who has been hired by a client to record a conversation between the client's wife and her lover. When Caul repairs a distortion in the recording, he hears the woman assert, "He'd kill us if he had the chance." This discovery sets the action of the film in motion as Caul seeks to prevent the murder of the young couple. In the end it is revealed that he misinterpreted the recording and the young couple murders the client. Caul's inability to read human emotions leads to his misinterpretation of surveillance data, which implicates him, at least morally, in the murder as well.

Analysis: Throughout the film the viewer is encouraged to identify with both Caul and the murderers, Mark (Fredrick Forrest) and Ann (Cindy Williams). This is achieved primarily through sound manipulation and camera positioning which mimic the surveillance apparatus. In a sense, the spectator of the film becomes part of the surveillance structure as the narrative is pieced together through information Caul has gathered; however, contrary to the goal of surveillance, both techniques work to obscure truth instead of revealing it.

The film opens with a bird's eye view of a crowded San Francisco park. As the camera slowly zooms into the landscape, a mime performs, moving between park goers before settling next on Hackman's character to imitate him. Caul is the first major character the viewer encounters, which encourages identification with him. Interestingly, the spectator's first encounter of Caul shows him as the watched and not the watcher. The mime in the sequence mimics his coffee drinking and walk. As the sequence continues, the viewer hears a distortion of electronic beeps over the jazz band, which is also situated in the park. The scene then cuts to a man on a rooftop with what appears to be a rifle and then cuts again to the young couple in the crosshairs of a scope. This positioning of the couple also encourages the viewer's connection to the murderers. Mark and Ann are the second major characters the spectator encounters and they are first encountered in a position of great vulnerability. The film sets up the belief that the lovers are in immediate danger, framed within the crosshairs of the rifle. A few frames later reveal the crosshairs are revealed to be a part of a listening device, but the spectator identification has already been established. Ann and Mark are constructed as the victims and not as the villains the viewer comes to understand at the end of the film.

Since the viewer is in the position of the surveillance equipment, the viewer's imperfect perception of reality is amplified. Here, the film seems to suggest that the danger of surveillance is, in part, its inability to capture a complete story, coupled with the inadequacies of human interpretation. At the climax of the film, Caul attempts to use his surveillance equipment to prevent what he believes will be the murder of the young couple. Caul finds himself in a hotel room adjacent to the one the couple occupies. He attempts to listen and record the activity that takes place there, but is unable to do so. At one point in the scene he observes a bloody body being wrapped in the curtain of the balcony door. His inability to intervene shocks his nerves, reminding him of an earlier instance—the Teamster murder which has happened outside of the film time. Caul is gripped with an intense guilt caused by the failure of his surveillance abilities.

In the end of the film the role of watched and watcher is reversed; echoing back to the opening scene in which Caul is mimicked by the mime. The final scene depicts Caul in his apartment. He is playing the saxophone

when he receives several calls indicating he is now under surveillance by the firm Ann has inherited from her deceased (murdered) husband. Caul frantically dismantles his apartment in search of the bugging device but is unable to locate it. The result is what appear to be mental breaks of sorts concluding the film with a portrait of the results expanding surveillance capabilities have on [] human experience.

The film provides a cautionary statement on the role of surveillance. Alexander Hules, writing for *The Atlantic* in an article titled, "Why *The Conversation* Should Be Required Viewing at the NSA," asserts the relevancy of the movie. "In obvious ways, the film's about the perils of surveillance. But more crucially, it's about the perils of the mindset that enables surveillance. At the beginning of the movie, Caul sees people solely as sources of information. As he says in the opening sequence—while he's spying on the couple—"I don't care what they're talking about. All I want is a nice, fat recording."[3] Tracing the impact of surveillance on the watcher by forcing the viewer into the position of the watcher, allows the viewer to consider these implications from an angle a written text is unable to provide.

Eagle Eye (2008) directed by D.J. Curoso

Synopsis: Jerry Shaw (Shia LaBeouf) and Rachel Holloman (Michelle Monaghan) are two strangers whose lives have collided. When both characters receive phone calls from a mysterious woman who demands their cooperation in return for their safety and their families' wellbeing, the two become the country's most wanted fugitives. Using everyday technology, the mysterious caller manipulates their lives, often bringing them within a hairs breath of their deaths. In the end it is revealed that a national defense super computer has become corrupted and seeks to assassinate the presidential cabinet. Shaw and Holloman intervene to prevent the digitally activated coup.

Analysis: Similar to *The Conversation* a significant part of the viewer's experience is rendered through the lens of surveillance, implicating the viewer in the super computer's (ARIIA) malfunction and attack on the State. Throughout the film, images are framed within a title and time stamped filter, which creates the impression that the viewer is seeing Shaw and Holloman through ARIIA's surveillance apparatus. The camera moves between the eye(s) of the surveillance technology to that of the characters; constantly shifting the position from which the viewer experiences the film. The film opens on a military operation in Afghanistan. Two young boys are running through a village when the film cuts to a caravan driving along a dirt road. Only 00:01:12 into the film the viewer's perspective is shifted to that of the surveillance lens. In a series of rapid cuts the car is seen through the cross hairs of a riflescope, the viewer is transported to the interior of an electronic intelligence room before returning to a shot of the caravan this time through a digitalized filter. The sequence continues with a cut to a soldier launching a small drone off a mountainside and then cutting again to a view of the caravan—this time through the eye of the drone. The series is disorienting to the viewer and overloads the senses, positioning the viewer as a computerized receptacle of data—a point of view, which mimics that of ARIIA herself.

Because much of the film is viewed through the lens of the surveillance apparatus, the spectator identifies with ARIIA, whose character is only known as a disembodied female voice until an hour into the film when Jerry realizes she is a computer. ARIIA directs Shaw and Holloman into a Circuit City home theatre display where she uses the monitors to demonstrate the depth and breadth of the data she maintains on the characters lives. "This is you. This is Jerry Shaw; a series of purchases, preferences, and quantifiable data points that we define as your personality," ARIIA's voice-over projects. Simultaneously, a series of images, documents and videos collected over Jerry Shaw's lifetime appear on the multitude of screens. When Holloman questions why the voice refers to itself as *we*, an image of the preamble to the declaration of

independence appears on the central television screen. ARIIA's voice then reads the preamble, altering the ending, "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, all programed options, all sector searches and downloaded points of data will lead to this central command." The invocation of this US Seminole document further encourages spectator identification between the viewer and ARIIA. Although ARIIA exists only as a disembodied voice, she ensures the safety of the protagonist, Jerry Shaw, and asserts a laudable purpose—to protect the United States. The invocation of the document is essential to the viewer's identification with ARIIA. This moment develops the viewers trust in ARIIA and provides a confidence that she will maintain Shaw's well being—the character the viewer is truly encouraged to root for.

Eagle Eye offers a clear admonition about the unintended consequences of [] unrestrained data collection and surveillance. The end of the film reveals ARIIA's intent to use Shaw to unlock a command allowing her to assassinate the presidential cabinet. The attempt is ultimately thwarting and staying true to the genre of Hollywood action, Shaw becomes the hero. At 1 hour and 48 minutes, the camera pans into a meeting room in which the cabinet officials discuss the termination of the ARIIA program,

> *Mr. Secretary we can't just stop intelligence gathering because of what happened here.*
>
> *No, we can't (beat). All I know is that we made a great many mistakes and good people paid the ultimate price for them.*

In this instance the film directly comments on the use of mass data collection and surveillance technology. The seeming conclusion the film arrives at is that these are necessary technologies but society must be cautious and intentional about usage. One question remains, why did ARIIA believe the government needed to be disposed of? The opening of the film might suggest that the military has been too quick to assassinate targets whose identity is unconfirmed. Looking through the surveillance lens, the military attacks a target during a funeral ceremony causing significant civilian deaths. It is possible that ARIIA is responding to this action when she engages the assassination command.

Citizenfour (2014) directed by Laura Poitras

Synopsis: This documentary film chronicles the story of Edward Snowden's 2013 leaks about the National Security Agency's mass surveillance gathering practices. The film begins when the director, Laura Poitras, receives encrypted emails from an anonymous source claiming access to the classified documents. Much of the film is shot in Snowden's Hong Kong hotel room where Poitras and journalist, Glenn Greenwald, document the leaking of the documents as well as Snowden's own story. The film provides insight into the broad government surveillance programs, the treatment of whistleblowers and the retaliation journalists face when publishing work that is critical of these surveillance programs.

Analysis: *Citizenfour* is a documentary film that depicts the process of documentation. The behind-the-scenes feel, which is created by the director's occasional visibility or verbal presence in the frame, mirrors the intent and subject of the film. Poitras' decision to use a minimalist documentary style is essential to the viewer's engagement with Snowden and Greenwald. The film is laying bare some of its inner-workings, just as Snowden and Greenwald seek to bring clandestine government operations into the light of day.

Although the film is documentary and does not provide a single narrative arch, spectator identification still

occurs. The film is sympathetic to whistleblowers and seems to assert that Snowden's decision to leak the documents is justifiable. Spectator identification is achieved in a variety of ways; most notable is the amount of time the camera spends on close-ups of the faces of Snowden and Greenwald. One significant example of this occurs 1 hour and 11 minutes into the film. In this scene Snowden is pictured at the bathroom sink altering the style of his hair and beard in order to disguise himself. At this point Snowden has revealed his identity as the source of the leaks and his image occupies television screens and newspapers the world over. The pacing of the film slows down in this moment and the viewer is made to feel the significance and consequence of Snowden's decision to come forward. He is afraid that he will be arrested and extradited to the United States where he faces three felony charges under the espionage act—a result of the leaks. The camera focuses on Snowden's face as he scrutinizes his appearance in the mirror. Snowden then walks to the window and looks out over Hong Kong. The camera cuts to a lingering shot from Snowden's eye, which has the effect of raising tension. The viewer, from Snowden's position can feel his nervousness, which contributes to the significance of the moment. The viewer empathizes with Snowden even if they remain critical of his actions.

The film also uses sound to create moments of tension that also help to establish the viewer's empathy for Snowden and Greenwald. A diegetic sound like a distorted guitar feed is repeated throughout the film and helps create the mood of tension. In one instance, Greenwald is driving through the dark. He has just learned that his partner has been detained at an airport as a result of Greenwald's connection to the Snowden leaks. The dark frame and music create an ominous feel, thus helping to establish spectator identification with Greenwald.

Teaching Strategies

Film as Text

Throughout the unit, students will examine and analyze film in order to develop critical thinking and writing ability. Film replaces written text, providing an alterative medium for students to engage with. As stated earlier, the use of film is intended to remove the barrier of decoding; thus, allowing students access to complex texts and ideas. In an article published with American Secondary Education, Robert A Lucking argues, "Contemporary films may well represent the most viable appendage to our literary heritage that has surfaced in the last one hundred years, and although a number of skills common to the analysis of fiction can be used in studying film, it must be viewed as a distinct art form." Lucking goes on to assert the importance of film in the classroom though certainly he is correct in distinguishing the difference between the two mediums. Still, the intersection of skills establishes cause for the privileged use of film in this curriculum.

During the unit, students will view films both in their entirety and as excerpts of selected clips or scenes. These excerpts will be viewed multiple times in order for students to practice observing, note taking and analysis. Explicit instruction on reading film and thinking about frame composition should be modeled. As assessment, students might select a scene and explain how the cinematic techniques help create spectator identification. Similarly, students might select a scene and analyze how the cinematic choices create tone.

Below is a list of scenes from the aforementioned films that are useful for modeling close analysis:

The Conversation:

1. Opening Scene (00:00:00 – 00:04:11)
2. Hotel Scene (01:31:00)
3. Mental Break (01:47:00)

Eagle Eye

1. View through Surveillance (00:01:12)
2. ARIIA is Revealed (00:59:00)
3. We Can't Stop Data Gathering (01:49:00)

Citizenfour

1. Snowden's Hotel Room (00:31:00) *In this scene the viewer is first introduced to Edward Snowden.*
2. Snowden's Partner (00:40:00)
3. Snowden's Disguise (01:11:00)

Note taking

Note taking is essential to the development of close reading. Authors of the Carnegie Corporation Study from Vanderbilt University, *Writing to Read,* explain "Note taking involves sifting through a text to determine what is most relevant and transforming and reducing the substance of these ideas into written phrases or key words. Intentionally or unintentionally, note takers organize the abstracted material in some way, connecting one idea to another, while blending new information with their own knowledge, resulting in new understandings of texts.[4] " Students practice this skill in English classrooms by annotating texts, or creating dialogical notebook entries. This kind of close reading, or in the case of film—close viewing, helps the reader/viewer identify the impact the writer or filmmaker's choices have on the work as a whole. Free technology such as Socialbook[5] allows students to make notes on a film and share that commentary with others (see teacher resources). If technology access is a barrier, dialogical notebooks (or two column notes) could be substituted as a more traditional method of note taking. A dialogical entry provides a form for note taking in which evidence or observations are listed on the left margin of the page and student reactions or ideas that emerge from that evidence appear on the right. For example, students might be required to note an observation about setting, lighting, sound, or camera angle in the left margin and then explore its purpose or effect on the viewer in the remainder of the page. The dialogical notebook essentially creates a space for students to talk back to the text. This model helps students to focus their observations and prevents the task of analysis from becoming overwhelming. The Facing History Website[6] and the AP Central[7] page of the College Board site offer more information about two-column journals.

Setting
Lighting
Sound
Camera Angle

Response Journals

After initially watching complete films students will record their thoughts, reactions, and ideas in a response journal. This is an informal but sustained writing that can be assigned as homework or completed in class. The assignment encourages students to make connections, analyze and evaluate the film.

Evaluation criteria should be provided for each entry. For example, the teacher may require students to write

about sound, tone/mood, or character development. A length requirement can also be used as criteria to ensure elaboration. The response journal is a place to collect thoughts that may later inform the extended, formal analysis (performance task).

Comparative Film Analysis (Performance Task)

At the culmination of the unit students will select two of the three films and write a comparative analysis. The analysis will consider spectator identification in order to explore the commentary each film is making about surveillance. This writing should move through the writing cycle—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The process will result in a polished piece of writing that becomes part of a student's writing portfolio.

Seminar Discussions

Throughout the unit, students will engage in seminar discussions about the films and segments of the films studied throughout. When preparing for seminar discussion students should view a scene multiple times, taking notes as they watch. The teacher may wish to provide a graphic organizer or assign dialogical notes to guide students in this process. Alternatively, the teacher may require students to write 2-3 questions about the film. It is important to remind students that they need not know the answers to the questions they craft. Instead, emphasize that the questions are used to propel the conversation forward. Question stems such as Costa's Levels of Questioning[8] may also be provided to help students craft strong questions.

During the seminar discussion the teacher should speak minimally in order to create space for students to arrive at analysis independent of instructor input. The role of the teacher is to track and monitor the conversation, intervening only when necessary. Desks must be arranged in a circle so that all participants can see one another. Discussion should flow freely and students are not required to raise hands.

Students should be evaluated based on their participation in the seminar discussion. A rubric, such as the example below, should be provided and discussed in advance. Reluctant contributors may be allowed to record notes on the conversation as it unfolds. They may then show their notes for credit. At the culmination of the seminar discussion students will complete a page long response journal addressing the following question(s): What ideas struck you during the seminar? What new ideas do you know have? What is still unresolved/what lingers? These response journals may also be used to inform the writing of the performance task.

Speaking & Listening[9]

Prepare for and participate in formal and informal conversations, discussions, and presentations by building on others' ideas and expressing original ideas clearly and persuasively.

Novice (1)	Emerging (2)	Competent (3)	Exemplary (4)

- Little or no preparation evident. - Does not demonstrate listening with note taking or body language. - Participates minimally or not at all.	- Prepared for discussion with some notes or a partial statement. - Demonstrates some listening with sparse notes or appropriate body language. - Participates with brief comments, agreement/disagreement, or clarifying question.	- Prepared for discussion with written statement or notes. - Demonstrates listening by taking notes on discussion, or responding appropriately to conversation. - Responds to questions being asked, agrees/disagrees with a peer, or asks a question.	- Prepared for discussion with comprehensive notes and statement. - Demonstrates listening with detailed notes, clear body language and participation. - Responds to questions being asked with statements, further questions, or connections.

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

Objective: Students will be able to take a stance on a controversial issue and support that position using evidence and rhetoric.

1. *Warm up:* What is privacy? What kinds of things limit or enhance privacy? Explain. Do all people have the same privacy?

Teacher note: Set a timer and ask students to free write in response to these questions for 7-10 minutes. The questions are designed to engage students in the thematic scope of the unit and assess their background knowledge. One students have completed the free write ask them to share their responses with a partner. Next, select 3-4 students to share out their responses with the whole class. Use this to facilitate a conversation about privacy.

Following the brief discussion, introduce students to the unit topic and performance task. Students should have a clear understanding of the performance task well before they begin writing it. Explain that the class will be studying three films that concern issues of privacy and surveillance. Inform students that at the end of the unit they will select two of the three films to write a comparative analysis of.

2. Structured Controversy: Divide the class into groups of 4 and distribute articles. Two members of each group should receive articles that are supportive of increased surveillance. The other two members should receive articles that are critical of surveillance. See teacher resources for article suggestions.

3. In pairs students will read, annotate and discuss the article. Next, pairs will come together to reform groups of four. Within each group the pairs will take turns presenting their ideas while the opposing pair listens. The listening pair then repeats back to the presenters what they have understood. The pairs should not switch roles until the presenters are satisfied that the listeners have fully understood the points they have sought to make.

4. After both sides have presented the pairs abandon their initial arguments and seek to come to a statement they can agree on. If agreement cannot be reached, students should attempt to clarify their differences by writing separate statements. More information about this strategy can be found at Teachinghistory.org (see teacher resources).

5. Each group of four will present their statement or statements to the class.

Teacher note: Although the unit as a whole is focused on the analysis of film, it is important to spend some time developing student understanding of surveillance. If students are not given adequate time to develop a thoughtful position, their ability to recognize the ideologies of the films will be limited to statements such as, *the film says surveillance is good* or *the film says surveillance is bad.* The unit is intended to help students develop and observe more nuanced positions.

Lesson 2

Objective: Students will be able to use note taking and "close reading" to analyze film.

This lesson assumes students have watched *The Conversation* in its entirety. This could be assigned for homework, made available in a media center during study halls, or screened in class depending on the student needs and access to resources. After watching the film students will have completed a journal entry detailing their reactions and ideas (see teaching strategies).

1. *Warm up:* Ask students to pair with a classmate and then read their journal responses aloud to one another. Students will then select their best 1-2 sentences and highlight or underline those ideas. The teacher will facilitate discussion through a whip around. Each student will share out the sentence(s) they underlined in the journal responses. After each student has shared ask: 1) Are there any common ideas that emerged? 2) What is one thing that stuck out to you? 3) What questions do you still have?

2. Clip Screening: Distribute a graphic organizer or direct students to take dialectical notes while they watch the screening. Inform students that the scene twice will be played twice. Direct them to make notes about camera angle, cuts/editing, sound and setting. It is important to narrow and categorize the elements students will observe so that the task does not become overwhelming. As students become more proficient readers of film, this scaffolding may be removed. Using an LCD projector or large television, play the opening scene of *The Conversation* (00:00:00 – 00:04:11). In between screenings allow students several minutes to add to their notes or observations. After screening the clip a second time, provide a few more minutes before beginning discussion of the clip.

3. Clip Discussion: Ask students: *What did you notice about sound? What kinds of sounds did you hear?* The teacher should record student responses on the white board or document camera. Once a number of observations have been collected, move students towards analysis. Ask: *Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include these sounds? What effect does it have on you as a viewer?* Repeat this process to examine camera angle, editing and setting.

Introduce the concept of spectator identification. Say: *In films, just like in books, viewers are encourages to identify with some characters instead of others. Filmmakers use cinematic techniques such as camera angle, cutting/editing, sound and setting to create that identification between viewer and character. This identification often communicates the message or agenda of the film.*

Ask: *Which character or characters does the viewer identify with in the opening scene of The Conversation? What does the filmmaker do to encourage this identification?*

4. Clip Screening: Repeat the process for clip screening using the "hotel scene" (01:31:00). In this scene Harry Caul listens through the wall of a hotel room in an attempt to record the murder he believes will happen in the next room. As before, student should take notes in order to facilitate discussion. Ask students: *What did you notice? What cinematic techniques struck you?* Note that the students are still using the framework provided (camera angle, cutting/editing, sound and setting) but the question is less specific. This starts to remove some of the scaffolding, allowing students to explore their observations more organically. Ask: *Why do you think the filmmaker made these cinematic choices? What effect does it have on you as a viewer?*

5. Closure: Using large sticky notes or and electronic exit ticket program, ask students to respond to the following: What do you think *The Conversation* is saying about surveillance? Why?

Lesson 3

Objective: 1) Students will be able to compare and contrast films including the cinematic choices the film employs and the messaged agenda of the films. 2) Students will be able to prepare for and engage in collaborative discussion.

This lesson assumes students have watched both *The Conversation* and *Eagle Eye* in their entirety. As before, this could be assigned for homework, made available in a media center during study halls, or screened in class depending on the student needs and access to resources.

1. *Warm up: What effect does surveillance have on the watcher? What effect does surveillance have on the watched?*

Teacher note: Set a timer and ask students to free write in response to these questions for 7-10 minutes. The questions are designed to engage students in the thematic scope of the unit and assess their background knowledge. One students have completed the free write ask them to share their responses with a partner. Next, select 3-4 students to share out their responses with the whole class.

2. Inform students that today's class will be spent in seminar discussion. Desks should already be arranged in a circle so that ever student can see one another. Distribute discussion rubric and leveled question stems handout. Review both the rubric and handout.

3. Explain that students will compare and contrast *The Conversation* to *Eagle Eye*. Students will focus on four scenes but may discuss other portions of the films as they see fit. Begin by screening the opening scene to *The Conversation* (00:00:00 – 00:04:11). Using the notes or organizer from lesson 1, students will record additional observations and refresh their memories about the scene. Next, screen "The View Through Surveillance" from *Eagle Eye.* As before, distribute a graphic organizer or direct students to take dialectical notes while they watch the screening. Inform students that the scene twice will be played twice. Direct them to make notes about camera angle, cuts/editing, sound and setting. In between screenings allow students several minutes to add to their notes or observations. After screening the clip a second time, provide a few more minutes before beginning discussion of the clip.

4. Direct students to the leveled question handout and ask they write two level 2 or 3 (analysis and synthesis) questions about the clips. Before the discussion begins, students will take a moment to evaluate their

preparation for the discussion. Because preparation has been scaffolded, most students will score themselves as strong or exemplary. This helps to build confidence and investment in the seminar discussion.

5. During seminar discussion the teacher tracks the conversation but intervenes as little as possible (see teaching strategies). If the conversation reaches a lull, allow silence or a few moments. Students have the questions they generated to facilitate the conversation. Once students have exhausted the discussion, pause to show another set of clips.

Teacher Note: Both of the aforementioned scenes place the viewers eye as the watcher through surveillance equipment but both so in different ways. Strong student generated questions/observations might be: *Why does the scene in Eagle Eye use so many quick cuts? How would the viewer's experience of Mark and Ann be different if we didn't first see them through the scope of what looks like a gun? Compare and contrast the surveillance equipment used in the scene from The Conversation and Eagle Eye.*

6. To further the comparison, screen additional clips: *The Conversation* ("Mental Break Scene" 01:47:00) and *Eagle Eye* ("We Can't Stop Gathering Data" 01:49:00). As described before, students will take notes or complete graphic organizer while watching clips. After students have had sufficient opportunity to make observations, return to the seminar discussion.

Teacher Note: Both clips are taken from the ends of the films and offer insight into the messaged agenda of the films. *Eagle Eye* suggests surveillance is necessary but must have human oversight, while *The Conversation* suggests human interpretation is imperfect. Further, it demonstrates the negative impact surveillance has on the watcher; it creates a sense of paranoia.

7. Following the seminar discussion, students will evaluate themselves and reflect on their performance.

8. Homework: students will complete a page long response journal addressing the following question(s): What ideas struck you during the seminar? What new ideas do you know have? What is still unresolved/what lingers? These response journals may also be used to inform the writing of the performance task.

Resources

Teacher Resources

Bell, Kathleen. "Non-Print Media: Film in the Classroom: Reason, Resource, and Reference." *The English Journal* 69, no. 6 (1980): 94-96. Accessed May 20, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/816802.

This brief article provides support for using film in the classroom. Additionally the article includes suggestions for using film to enhance critical thinking.

Graham, Steven, and Michael Herbert. 2010. Accessed July 27, 2015.

http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/WritingToRead_01.pdf

Researchers at Vanderbilt University completed this report, which details the strategies that effectively increase students' reading comprehension.

Keigan, Jessica. "Using Film to Teach Common Core Skills." Education Week Teacher. December 12, 2012. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2012/12/12/tln_keigan.html.

This short article provides justification for using film to support the development of students' analytical thinking abilities.

"Teaching History.org, Home of the National History Education Clearinghouse." Structured Academic Controversy (SAC). Accessed July 30, 2015. http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21731.

This resource describes the structured controversy classroom activity. The resource provides a more complete description of the activity and examples of handouts.

Tryon, Chuck. "Using Video Annotation Tools to Teach Film Analysis." ProfHacker Using Video Annotation Tools to Teach Film Analysi. June 2, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/using-video-annotation-tools-to-teach-film-analysis/57171.

This article describes some of the free technology that is available for annotating film and text.

Student Resources

Cheshire, Godfrey. "Citizenfour Movie Review & Film Summary (2014) | Roger Ebert." Roger Ebert Reviews. October 4, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/citizenfour-2014.

This review provides helpful background information that will help students understand the context in which *Citizenfour* was produced.

"Film Terms." Film Criticism: Basic Film Terms. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://greermiddlecollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/basic-film-terms-handout.pdf.

This resource provides students with definitions of the most common film techniques. The definitions are written in student friendly language.

Francis, David. "5 Reasons Why The NSA's Massive Surveillance Program Is No Big Deal (And 2 Reasons It Is)." Business Insider. June 11, 2013. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.businessinsider.com/nsa-surveillance-prism-phone-nsa-big-deal-2013-6.

This article provides nuanced support for the broad use of surveillance. The article could be used as part of the structured controversy activity.

Huls, Alexander. "Why The Conversation Should Be Required Viewing at the NSA." The Atlantic. April 7, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/04/why-em-the-conversation-em-should-be-required-viewing-at-the-nsa/360213/.

This article places the film, *The Conversation,* in a contemporary context. The article discusses the messaged agenda of the film, so it should be read only after students have had opportunity to analyze the film on their own.

"Obama's Speech on N.S.A. Phone Surveillance." The New York Times. January 17, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/18/us/politics/obamas-speech-on-nsa-phone-surveillance.html?_r=0.

This resource provides both the written text and video of President Obama's speech concerning the NSA phone surveillance program. This might be used to provide background knowledge for students early in the unit. Students might also practice rhetorical analysis using the texts.

Rapp, David. "Privacy vs. Security." Privacy vs. Security. 2015. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3751958.

This article explores the pros and cons of surveillance technology in schools. The article could be used as part of the structured controversy activity.

Walpin, Gerald. "We Need NSA Surveillance." National Review Online. August 16, 2013. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/355959/we-need-nsa-surveillance-gerald-walpin.

This article provides support for the broad use of surveillance. The article could be used as part of the structured controversy activity.

Whitehead, John. "Is High-tech Surveillance in Schools a Security Need or a Money Scam?" The Huffington Post. February 3, 2013. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-w-whitehead/the-fight-against-schools_b_2232112.html.

This article takes a stance against the use of surveillance technologies in schools. The article could be used as part of the structured controversy activity.

Appendix

Common Core Standards

While the teaching of this unit requires touching on multiple standards, three of the CCSS are emphasized and explicitly assessed. Through close reading and analysis of written and visual texts, students will demonstrate CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 “Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).” As stated before, this is a writing intensive unit designed to support students who need more practice in this area; therefore, students will demonstrate

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10, “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, and audiences.” As a final assessment, students will write a comparative analysis essay, which allows them to practice CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2 “Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.”

Notes

1. Keigan, Jessica. "Using Film to Teach Common Core Skills." Education Week Teacher. December 12, 2012. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2012/12/12/tln_keigan.html.
2. "Dear Common Core English Standards: Can We Talk?" Daniel Katz PhD. September 19, 2014. Accessed April 4, 2015. http://danielskatz.net/2014/09/19/dear-common-core-english-standards-can-we-talk/

3. Huls, Alexander. "Why The Conversation Should Be Required Viewing at the NSA." The Atlantic. April 7, 2014. Accessed July 30, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/04/why-em-the-conversation-em-should-be-required-viewing-at-the-nsa/360213/.
4. Graham, Steven, and Michael Herbert. 2010. Accessed July 27, 2015. http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/WritingToRead_01.pdf http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/WritingToRead_01.pdf
5. https://www.livemargin.com/socialbook/client/landing_page.html
6. https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/teaching-strategies/two-column-note-taking
7. http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/ ap04_preap_1_inter_st_35891.pdf
8. http://blog.adambabcock.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Costa-House-Levels-of-Questions.pdf
9. This rubric was developed by Steven Staysniak, New Haven Public Schools.