

# CTPR 335 Editing Syllabus Spring 2012

## USC School of Cinema/ Television

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Class Meetings: Monday 7:00-10:00 PM,

Location: SCA 259

### Course Description

Is editing an art or a craft? What exactly is its contribution to the whole fabric of a dramatic film? What is the role of the editor and how is it best fulfilled during preproduction, production and (inevitably) post-production. What is the essence of a truly rewarding relationship between editor and director? What are the key technical aspects of the editorial process and how does the director (or editor) maximize his knowledge of them?

These are some of the questions to be posed and explored in this class.

This course will use lecture and discussion to examine the role of the editor in the filmmaking process: Most importantly, it will afford hands-on experience with Avid Media Composer as well as practice executing someone else's changes. It seeks to provide a comprehensive introduction to the theory, technique, art and craft of editing.

Students will learn the basic tasks and vocabulary of the editing room. Editing exercises will focus on story-telling, visual and aural literacy as well as the dramatic build of a scene, the psychology of the characters, emotional beats, and the effect of sound and music, rhythm and pacing.

The object of the class is to provide the student with the organizational, analytical and practical editing tools to prepare them to undertake more advanced editing courses at USC. Students are encouraged in their editing *to explore their creative impulses and experiment with the medium*. It should also give an idea of what to expect in the professional world.

## Class Format

Class work will consist of:

- 1) A written and oral film analysis by students of a three to five minute film clip of their own choosing. One or more of the scene analyses will be presented in class each week. The object of the analysis is to discover the editorial choices that make the scene work. Each student will be expected to bring a tape or DVD of the scene as well as his or her written report. The report should include the names of the director/s and editor/s of the film.
- 2) Editing assignments, using professional dailies, on Avid Media Composer, which will be done during non-class hours and presented for analysis during class. Students will analyze each other's projects.
- 3) Presentation of examples of professional editorial challenges and solutions via film clips during class. (depending on class size/time)
- 5) All students must complete the lab tutorial by the second meeting of class (1/23/12).

## Editorial Assignments

You will output your assignments as QuickTime movies on an external drive – a thumb drive is fine.

Each QuickTime needs to be labeled:

**LASTNAME\_TITLE\_CUT#\_DATE**

Example: JONES\_VISITOR\_CUT#1\_4/12/11

When you output your work make sure that you select the proper screen ratio which, for the most part, will be 4x3.

THIS is not an Avid Media Composer class. I will be giving you tips and tricks, but there will be no actual Avid instruction.

You will spend most of your time in this class cutting film. I will be giving you changes to execute. You will be in a model of a professional cutting room. You will learn how to cut as most of your predecessors did, by doing it, examining your work and the work of your classmates.

Make sure that whatever drive you use, is clearly labeled with your name, class number and section so that when you lose it, it can find

you ;-). Drives left behind in the classroom will be turned in at the front desk in the basement.

Each assignment must be identified with a title card as follows: s

Student's name  
Class number and section  
Project title and version (ie: first cut/re-cut)  
Date of the output

**NOTE: You are not allowed to post any of your class exercises anywhere on the internet!!!** The material we use in class is copyrighted.

### **Class attendance and participation:**

Students are expected to attend every class and to be punctual. They are encouraged to engage in discussions, ask questions, and give their opinions. These contributions are crucial to both the collaborative and learning processes and will play a part in determining your grade.

All assignments must be turned in on time and specific schedules and deadlines met. An important element of success in filmmaking is the ability to meet deadlines. Showing up for the beginning of class, organizing your time and anticipating and planning for disasters is essential. Turning in assignments after their due date will affect your grade.

If you need to miss a class you are responsible for getting any information covered in the class and for all handouts. This information must be obtained from either a classmate or the SA.

I would like to be informed, via email to Barbara, by the preceding Sunday evening if you will be absent from class and why.

Also note that you must turn off all cell phones and pagers before entering class. Please: no "text messaging" or game-playing--especially angry birds--during class

Neither food nor beverages (other than water) are allowed in the SCA building.

### **Grades will be based upon the following:**

- 1) The thoroughness of your work on, and the completion of all assignments including editing projects and all re-edits. An estimation of your progress during the semester. (Because of the

nature of the assignments, about 70% of your grade will be based on your editing work and the improvements you are able to achieve in your re-cuts.)

- 2) Class participation as it demonstrates your ability to communicate and work constructively with others. This includes consideration of your professional behavior: meeting scheduled dates and promptness. About 10%
- 3) A written, and oral analysis, of a scene from a film of your own choosing (about 5% of your grade).
- 5) Final project (about 15% of your grade).

NOTE: Students will be graded on a curve.

If you are in danger of failing, you will be notified in writing. We will then work together to come up with a plan to enable you to pass.

There will be no "incompletes" granted except in the case of severe medical or other serious emergency.

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of USC's add/drop and withdraw deadlines.

### **Academic Integrity**

The School of Cinema-Television expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, or submitting any work that you have not done. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Students with disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to me or the SA as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Their phone number is 213/740-0776.

**COURSE PLAN:**

Please note that this course plan is liable to change several times during the semester, depending on the availability of guest speakers or the progress of your own work.

**Session 1: January 9, 2012:** Introduction to the Course.  
**The Power of Editing:** Screening of a sequence of "*Let Me In*" (edited by the instructor) with discussion of the contribution of editing to its emotional effect and audience involvement.

Assignment # 1: Select a three to five minute scene from a motion picture of your choice to examine from an editorial standpoint. Prepare to present the scene and analyze it in front of the class. The object of the analysis is to discover the editorial decisions that make the scene work. The first presentation of the scene analyses will be in Session 3 (1/30).

Also: arrange to view the movie *The Cutting Edge* which we will discuss in Session 3 (1/30). LAB TUTORIAL: given by Lab Technicians and SA.

Avid MC Assignment #1: Cut Visitor scene 11. Due Jan 23.

**Session 2: Jan 23, 2012:**

**From Script to Screen:** First steps in navigating the journey from words on the page towards the final product. +

**Visitor editing assignment due.**

Go over cuts of Visitor and suggest changes.

**Session 3: Jan 30, 2012: Examining the cut:** how does film language work-shot to shot. Screening from instructor's recent work "*Friday Night Lights*"

Review Visitor recuts.

Scene Analysis

Avid MC Assignment #2: Cut NYPD Blue. Due Feb.6

**Session 4: Feb 6, 2012:**

**Examining the sequence:** juxtaposition of scenes to achieve narrative clarity and emotional connection.

Screening of "*The Godfather*" final sequence..

Go over NYPD Blue and suggest changes

Presentation of scene analysis.

Avid MC Assignment #2a: Re-cut NYPD Blue. Due Feb 13

**Session 5: Feb 13, 2012:**

**Plasticity of the Medium:** All, yes, all the things editors do: Review and discuss excerpts of film "The Cutting Edge"

Go over NYPD re-cuts.

Presentation of scene analysis.

Avid MC Assignment #2B: Cut NYPD Blue, cont'd. Due Feb 27

**Session 6: Feb 27, 2012:**

**Dialogue cutting:** how an editor achieves verisimilitude and dynamism in the simplest yet most complex of human interactions.

Screening: "As Good as it Gets"

Presentation of scene analysis.

Go over NYPD re-cuts.

Avid MC Assignment #3: Cut: Miracles . Due March 5.

**Session 7: March 5, 2012: The Action Sequence:** how shot selection, pacing, and other expressive elements can excite the audience. Screening: "Alias" pilot (instructor's work) and Bourne Identity

.Scene analysis presentation. Go over Miracles Cuts.. Avid MC Assignment #3A: Cut Miracles, cont'd. Due March 19

**Session 8: March 19, 2012:**

**Music and movies:** how films use music to generate emotion, pacing, tone and point of view. Screening: temp and final music for scenes from instructor's work. Michael Giacchino's work vs. the instructor. Bake off!!

Go over Miracles re-cuts.

Scene analysis. Avid MC Assignment #4: Cut Young Indiana Jones First Half. Due March 26.

**Session 9: March 26, 2012:**

**Sound design:** How sound deepens and heightens the authenticity of the dramatic experience. Screening from instructor's work. Suspense, terror, release!

Scene analysis. Go over Young Indiana Jones.

Avid MC Assignment #4A: Cut Young Indiana Jones, cont'd..

**Session 10: April 2, 2012:**

**The Last Frontier: VFX.** From Green Screen to CGI and beyond!! Screening from instructor's recent work.

Go over Young Indiana Jones.. Scene analyses.

Avid mc Assignment #4B: Young Indiana Jones 2<sup>nd</sup> half and recut First half.

**Session 11: April 9, 2012:**

**Comedy: It's all about rhythm (and a few other things).** Screening: "The Pallbearer" and "What's Up Doc" (deemed funniest comedy of all time by certain tastemakers)

Go over Young Indiana Jones.

Scene analysis. Avid mc Assignment #4C Young Indiana Jones: add sound and music.

**Session 12 April 16, 2012:**

**Documentary: Truth really is stranger.** Screening: From instructor's work: "Metropolitan Avenue" (organizing political documentary). Al Pacino's "Wilde Salome".

Review Young Indiana Jones

Avid Mc Assignment #5 Gladiator

Scene analysis.

**Session 13: April 23, 2012:**

**Some other storytelling techniques I love:** Including use of Voice Over, jump cutting, non traditional structure)

Screening: "Night and Fog", Godard, MTV.

Go over Crimson Tide

Scene analysis

Avid MC Assignment #5A: Gladiator

**Session 14: May 7, 2012**

8.00 pm. Presentation of final projects and delivery of take home final exam.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

In addition to Norman Hollyn's textbook (THE LEAN FORWARD MOMENT), the following books are good sources for aesthetic and technical information about editing. I will occasionally refer to them.

Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of the Film Language*. A very detailed, thorough and incredibly tedious (but valuable) look at how to block a scene to create the best shots for editing. If you've ever tried to plan shots for a group of eight people around a dinner table, you'll appreciate this book. TECHNICAL.

Bayes, Steve. *The Avid Handbook*. This is an excellent reference book for the intermediate Avid editor, complete with tips and tricks on organizational skills, the Avid program, and the hardware. TECHNICAL.

Boorman, John and Donahue, Walter. *PROJECTIONS*. This is a periodic book series that often includes interviews with directors. Some of their discussions are quite

amazing in their description of storytelling. The excerpt from Walter Murch's interview about THE ENGLISH PATIENT that I use in class originally appeared in this series. AESTHETIC.

Case, Dominic. *Film Technology in Post Production*. TECHNICAL.

Cohen, Steve. Avid Agility Working Faster and more Creatively with Avid Media Composer. TECHNICAL

Crittenden, Roger. *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing*. AESTHETIC.

Dancyger, Ken. *The Technique of Film Editing*.

Davis, Richard. *Complete Guide To Film Scoring*. We will be discussing film editing and music during one of our classes. This is a good companion for those of you who want to dig deeper into the topic.

Dmytryk, Edward. *On Film Editing*. A great discussion of editing, from a personal point of view. Also valuable from the same author are *On Screen Writing*, *On Screen Directing*, and *On Screen Acting* and *On Film*. AESTHETIC.

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*. I haven't actually read this book, but I have had it recommended to me. It covers the pre-production, shooting and editing of documentaries.

Koppelman, Charles. *Behind the Seen: How Walter Murch Edited Cold Mountain Using Apple's Final Cut Pro and What This Means for Cinema*. Despite the pompous title, this is a really great book which describes what it was *really* like in the editing room on COLD MOUNTAIN, from the prep work that Murch typically does before the film is shot, through the later previews. Rather than a book about Final Cut (though it does talk a lot about that) it is more a look at the real world of editing. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. AESTHETIC and PRACTICAL.

LoBrutto, Vincent. *Selected Takes: Film Editors On Editing*. A wonderful series of interviews with some of the top editors of the past and present. AESTHETIC.

Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye, A Perspective on Film Editing*. A transcription of some lectures that Murch gave, in which he introduced his hierarchy of reasons to make an edit, and much much more. Personally, I find that this material is much better covered in the Michael Ondaatje book below. AESTHETIC.

Oldham, Gabriella. *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. This is the book I mentioned above. An incredible series of interviews with some of the top, most thoughtful, editors around. THIS IS A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED addition to our handout readings. AESTHETIC.

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. This is an incredible series of interviews with one of the top film and sound editors in the art form today. Far more accessible and interesting than *In The Blink of an Eye*, it goes over many of the real world concerns in shaping characters and filmic storytelling. AESTHETIC.



Pepperman, Richard D. *The Eye is Quicker: Film Editing: Making a Good Film Better*. A profusely illustrated discussion of film editing, using frame grabs from well-known movies, to make general points about different styles of editing. AESTHETIC.

Rabiger, Michael. *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*. A very detailed study of the issues in directing. Its discussion of editing is very valuable for what it reveals about the storytelling mind, from the director's point of view.

Reisz, Karel and Millar, Gavin. *The Technique of Film Editing*. One of the seminal texts on editing. While outdated in terms of some stylistic choices, it remains one of the classic texts on editing. AESTHETIC.

Rosenblum, Ralph. *When the Shooting Stops... The Cutting Begins*. Rosenblum, a veteran film editor who cut many of Woody Allen's early films, talks about his experiences both in and out of the editing room. More raconteurial than instructional, it does give a nice sense of the style of a colorful editor – both in terms of editing and politics. AESTHETIC.

Rubin, Michael. *Nonlinear – A Field Guide to Digital Video and Film Editing*. A description of the history and equipment in non-linear digital editing. Pictures of the various editing systems with descriptions of each one fill up most of the back part of the book. TECHNICAL.

Thompson, Roy. *The Grammar of the Edit*. AESTHETIC.

Truffaut, Francis. *Hitchcock/Truffaut*. A series of interviews done by then-critic Truffaut of the master director, Alfred Hitchcock. It is here that his incredible theory on surprise vs. suspense is mentioned. AESTHETIC.

### **RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB**

Podcasts (subscribe using the iTunes Music Store or a service like Podcast Alley)

Avid Technology Podcast – Interviews with filmmakers and software designers such as Jabez Olssen, editor of King Kong, and Phill Avanzatto, lead animator at PURE.

Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz – Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production.

Creative Screenwriting Magazine. An awesome podcast. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the "final rewrite").

DV Show. A weekly podcast devoted to all things digital video.

FCP Tips. Short video podcast with tips and tricks on Final Cut Pro.

Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.

KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business. Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.

Kenradio Broadcasting. A daily podcast that goes into the issues in the communication industry today. With the entertainment and communication industries getting closer together everyday, this is a crucial podcast to keep you informed. *This is essential listening.*

This Week In Media. This podcast, along with another podcast "This Week In Tech", is a great series of discussions about topics that should be of interest to you - "Who Uses VHS?", distributing movies on iTunes, the Red camera, and more. Host is Daisy Whitney.