

CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

Fall 2014

Section 037- 18527

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Class Meetings: Wednesday, 7-10 p.m. (SCA 204)
Optional Lab: Thursday, 7-10pm (SCA B148) with Reine-Claire Dousarkissian

Office Hours: Monday 10-12 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Editing is much more than putting images together. At its best, it is the conscious action of bringing out a film's text and subtext, to fulfill a larger vision. In this class you will learn how to read a script **for story**, analyze the shot footage **for story**, and put it all together to **fulfill that story** (whether that comes from you or someone else).

This course will focus on the brain processes that make the difference between picture editing and *great* picture editing. It will cover both the theory and the technique of editing. You will edit or re-edit, nearly every week, a series of scenes that are designed to gradually expand the types of editing experiences that you have. The accumulation of these editing experiences should give you an overview of the complete process -- aesthetic and the practical -- teaching you to how to make *informed* editing choices.

In addition, you will be given a working knowledge of how to organize an editing room and operate the various tools that you need to make your editing decisions. The bulk of your hands-on editing tutoring will be given by Reine-Claire Dousarkissian during her optional Thursday evening Labs (which are designed for CTPR 535 and more of which below), along with the tutorials on lynda.com (available at <http://itservices.usc.edu/lynda>). These Lab classes, which you'd probably pay a metric crap ton for on the outside, will build your understanding of the various tools you will be working with, build assistant editor skills and provide you with an alternative to online learning. You will start out in these Lab classes learning all of the technical aspects that you will need for this class. As the semester continues you will begin to learn skills that may take you beyond what you do in this class, but are essential if you are to work in any capacity in an editing room today.

Projects will be edited using two non-linear digital editing machines, primarily the Avid Media Composer, version 8.0. During part of the semester you will be editing on Adobe Premiere, from the Adobe Creative Suite CS6. During part of the semester you will also learn how to match back your edit to film, using the Digital Intermediate (DI) process for Resolve. You will be given a background in some assistant editor techniques -- synching (in the Avid and Adobe), digitizing, creating EDLs/AAFs, and organizing and media management. You will also get an overview of the entire filmmaking process from the point of view of the editing room. But more important than learning the nuts and bolts techniques of how to prepare your footage for editing, you will learn how to prepare *mentally* for editing: how to look at a scene for optimum editing in order to best bring out your artistic ideas. You will discover editing principles and aesthetics that you can use no matter which format you edit with and what format your project is intended for (television, feature, documentary, etc.).

During your time in this class you will be editing in pairs, learning as many techniques as possible in order to prepare you to undertake the editing process in other USC courses and in your post-school careers, on films edited either by you or by others. You will be expected to edit your projects outside of class time and bring them into the class to present and discuss with others.

Because of the amount of material we need to cover, the 15 weeks (note that our last class happens during finals week so don't make plans for that night) time period for our classes will get pretty intense. **Be prepared for some classes to go past the official finish time.**

CLASS FORMAT:

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of the editing process (and, recently, more and more things are being made the responsibility of the editing staff). Along the way, therefore, you will get a sense of the entire flow of film editing – including its thought processes, technical needs, scheduling, and politics.

The first week will be an introductory week in which I will discuss a large variety of topics including how the class will work, the process of editing, the nuts and bolts of the editorial process, and present a few pieces of film for examination. We will introduce or refresh the concepts of the “Lean Forward Moment” and the “Rule of Threes” that you might have learned in CTPR 295 and 310 (or CTPR 335, if you've taken that) and which you've learned by reading my book cover to cover, right? We will start to pave the way for their expansion. We will also discuss variations on the syllabus that we may want to make.

After that, our weekly meetings will generally include a presentation by one or two students who will examine a scene from a favorite film of theirs, emphasizing the editorial choices made in the creation of that scene. I will also discuss different aspects of editing, using film clips to illustrate the topics. Over the course of the semester, these talks will provide a more or less complete discussion of the thought processes and techniques of the editing process, from picture editing to sound and music across a wide spectrum of projects.

I will also post several handouts for each class online on a class website (I'll give you the URL once I create it – until then I will probably just give you a Dropbox link. These are required reading, in lieu of a textbook. Occasionally I will assign a section from Lynda.com (<http://itsservices.usc.edu/lynda>). Some of these will elaborate on our class discussion, some will be preparation for the following week's class, others will be interviews with filmmakers about the process of editing, and some will be Avid or Adobe tutorials.

At least half of each class will be devoted to the screening and critiquing of the scenes that you will have edited, in pairs, during the preceding week. The class and I will generally give you re-editing notes and you will return to the editing room during the next week for a second cut. If necessary, we will meet once or twice in the editing rooms where you and I will get some hands-on experience together.

A final component of our classes will be a discussion of the politics of editing — from working closely with directors, producers and writers, to interactions with the studios and the preview process.

Along the way, you're going to learn how to make sense of a lot of footage, how to use your NLE (non-linear editor) in a professional way, how to create lists for a DI, how to work better in Adobe Premiere, how to think about music, sound and effects to tell your story, and a whole slew of skills that will better prepare you for the more advanced work here at USC. You'll probably also be able to use it when you graduate (and, yes, you *will* graduate someday).

Just like movie theatres and playhouses, I'm going to ask every one of you to **turn off all cell phones** before coming to class. Ringing phones and buzzing pagers are really disruptive in class and just plain rude to me and your fellow classmates. Unlike movie theatres and playhouses, I have no problem if you keep your laptops or smartphones/iPads/tablets/phablets etc. **open and active** during class. I warn you though, if you do this I am occasionally going to ask you to do research online during the class, and you may have additional notes to add during the discussion that you get from the web. I also love it when you take notes, either written or on that laptop. In fact, if there's one thing that I've found is that you folks never take enough notes. ***Please take notes in class. Please please please.***

During all phases of the class I encourage questions and comments. We all need to be challenged. That includes me.

WEEKLY COURSE BREAKDOWN

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

1	08/27/14	Intro To The Editing Thought Process	How to Think Like An Editor. Script analysis. The Rule of Threes and The Lean Forward Moment. Your favorite short films. Editing as re-editing. Lined Scripts Select partners
2	09/03/14	Examining the Cut	Examining the individual cut. How shots can be restructured. Pulldown When to cut. When not to cut. The L-cut. Examining a script for editing (more detailed discussion of Script Analysis) Lining the script pages. Organizing an editing room. The politics of the editing room The Rule of Threes reinforced. Loglines, scene analyses and Lean Forward Moments (NOTE: Add/Drop period ends Sept 12)
3	09/10/14	Examining The Scene, Trusting The Audience/Viewing Dailies	How scenes can be constructed. Trusting an audience. Synching dailies – an overview. How to organize an editing room in a film world. Academy Leaders. Proper naming conventions. Logline #1 due.
4	09/17/14	Examining The Sequence	Restructuring and rearrangement. Dailies notes. Television, features, and other forms of politics. Preparing dailies for the eventual DI. Script Sync

5	09/24/14	Music Design	Using music to tell a story. Spotting music and Lean Forward Moments. What music can do to accentuate your scene and script analysis. What everyone does for music in film. Moving towards a final mix. Musical style.
6	10/01/14	Sound Design/Post Post Production (Finishing)	Spotting effects. How to use sound to fulfill your scene and script analyses. Pre-mixing, final mixing. Doing the DI Lab work, cutting negative, etc. Post scheduling.
7	10/08/14	Opticals and Visual Effects	Midterm evaluation Manipulating the film image within the context of the script analysis. Traditional opticals, CGI. Blue Screen and how to use it. How an editing team works with creation and editing of optical effects.
8	10/15/14	The Action Sequence	Moving to Adobe Premiere. Why? What is necessary for modern editors to know. Creating an action sequence. How a scene analysis may differ in an action sequence. How it doesn't.
9	10/22/14	Humor in Editing	Telling a story with real footage. How it is the same as the dramatic footage we've been studying, how it is different. Style in documentaries. Storytelling in documentaries
10	10/29/14	Documentaries	Structure in comedy editing. Rule of Threes as it applies to comedy. Setting up beats.
11	11/05/14	Web Series/Shorts	Music videos Commercials Guest speaker?? How to look at longer formats. Cutting longer form vs. shorts. Examining the sequence for your final project. Refining loglines. Looking at web videos, wedding and event videography and a host of new formats for our stories. How does this affect the editing process?
12	11/12/14	Script Supervising/Assistant Editor Tasks	Move back to Avid. Structure in less-obviously structured material. Museum films. Films as art. Scripts and analysis
13	11/19/14	Experimental Films	Logline #2 due

	HOLIDAY	THANKSGIVING	No class
14	12/3/14	Possible Guest Speaker	
	12/10/14	STUDY WEEK. No class	
15	12/17/14	Style. Wrapping Up. Looking Ahead	Change partners. Freelance life. What is style? What do I mean when I talk about creating and living within a style? Editing difficult material. How to look at longer formats. An introduction to Advanced Editing A look back and a look forward

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Beginning with the first week, you and your partner will be required to edit and/or re-edit a scene every week. You will present it at the next class, and accept criticism from your classmates and me so you can re-edit the scenes for a screening during the following week. My comments will be given **verbally** during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Once during the semester, you will be required to choose a short scene from a project you admire, and analyze it from the point of view of its editing — its style and content and anything else that we have learned up until that point. The scene can be from a film of any kind, a television show, a commercial or a music video — whatever. In short, you can choose anything where editing is involved. You will screen the scene in class and present that analysis following the screening, **both written and orally**. You will be expected to bring a copy of the film to class **along with your typed report** on the date it is due. We will have the availability to screen from a DVD or a QuickTime file of *most codecs*. Once again, my comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Twice during the semester you will be required to create a logline for a film (you can find a further explanation of this in Chapter One and Two of "The Lean Forward Moment,") but don't worry, we'll talk about what this means when the assignment is given out. You will be expected to hand in this logline at the beginning of the following class.

You will be able to attend the Lab taught by Reine-Claire Dousarkissian in SCA B148 in the basement Post Production area on Thursday nights, from 7pm until 10pm. At some point during the semester you may be strongly encouraged to attend the Premiere Pro tutorial taught that evening if you can. While there you will learn the techniques that good editors and assistant editors need to know about the editing process, and be able to ask questions that arise during the editing of your own scenes. *Attendance will be taken there and passed along to me.* In order to help gauge the class level, you will be given a short assessment during the first week of class. You will not be graded on this.

For one exercise you will re-edit one of the 508 films that was created last semester. Note that this cannot be a film that you worked on in any way. In fact, I'd prefer if it was a film that *wasn't* made in your section. We're going to see how the things that we've learned in the class help us to reshape films that others struggled with before.

At the end of the semester you will assemble all of the scenes of a film that you will be editing into one long sequence with music and sound effects. At the final class you will hand in that Quicktime or DVD.

I will provide you with written notes later that week. I expect you to attend that final class, even though it is during the final exam period, since there will be some discussion and hopefully a guest speaker.

Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. **ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT EVERY CLASS and LAB.** Written explanations will be necessary *in advance* for all excused absences. **Unexcused absences will be reflected in the course grade.** In addition, students will be expected to be at class on time; *lateness will also be reflected in your grade.* Please make use of my e-mail address or phone service number above if you have an unavoidable problem. If you cannot make the class or will be late, let me know by the evening before the class. [Sorry for all of the bold facing, underlining and italics, but this section cannot be emphasized enough. Responsibility is an important skill for an editor.]

Since film editors are judged on their ability to complete their work in a timely manner, you will likewise be responsible for completing each stage of every project on time and in a professional manner.

TEXTS:

You will be required to purchase a copy of Sam Kauffman's book AVID EDITING. Many of you will have already gotten this from CTPR 507, Production I, where you were required to have it for the Avid lessons you were given. You are also recommended to have my book, THE LEAN FORWARD MOMENT. I only recommend it, because I feel guilty assigning my own book as a *required* text – but I think that it is particularly valuable to this class, since the Lean Forward Moment and other concepts that I talk about in the book, form the core of this class. It discusses, especially in its initial chapters, the concepts of loglines, scene analysis, the Rule of Threes, and the Lean Forward Moment, all of which will be major components of how we look at the editing process. There is a long chapter on editing, and I discuss THE GODFATHER in detail in the book, the same section of which we will probably screen the first evening of class.

I am also highly recommending your purchase of another book — Gabriella Oldham's *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. This is an incredible series of interviews with some of the top, most thoughtful, editors around. I will often refer to these interviews in class. It would be most helpful if you could read the complete interviews.

There are other texts that I am going to be recommending – both aesthetic and technical. I'm going to put them up on the web site, rather than stretch this syllabus out even more.

GRADES:

The primary component of your grade will be your weekly editing assignments. This involves several factors. The first is your ability to complete these assignments every week, whether they are original edits or recuts. The second is your ability to verbally present a cogent case for every editorial choice you have made during the editing of your scenes. I will challenge you on your decisions as often as I can. This is not because I disagree with them. I need to make sure that each decision was conscious and thought out. As the term progresses, this thoughtful aspect of your editing will become more and more important. Third, you will be graded on your progress during the semester. You will be expected to begin to think more like an editor in your work and your discussions of that work. Your thoroughness, completeness and attention to detail any instructions will all contribute to your grade

You will also be judged on your ability to work constructively with others, to accept criticism, and to refine your work on the basis of that criticism.

The above work will constitute **approximately 50%** of your grade. The following skills will also contribute to your grade:

The written and oral analysis of the film scene that you presented to the class (**approximately 10%**)

Satisfactory and *on-time completion* of your log-line assignments (**approximately 10%**)

Prompt attendance at *and participation in* all class meetings and the Avid Lab portion of the class. The participation aspect can't be stressed enough. (**approximately 10%**)

In lieu of a final, you and your partner will need to complete an edited sequence, constructed from a number of scenes that you will have been editing over the course of the final weeks of the course (**approximately 20%**).

Meeting all scheduled dates for all projects will be factored into the above numbers. Late log lines, weekly class assignments and the final project (especially the final project) will be reflected in your grade. *If you hand it in late, expect me to deduct from your grade.*

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

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

PRESENTATION OF EDITED MATERIAL:

The surest way to drive me absolutely up a tree is to bring DVDs and Quicktimes to class that aren't prepared properly. **Just like in the real world, all material must be properly prepared for screening.** It will be your responsibility to make sure that your outputs are complete, with sound, and in viewable condition. You should check your materials *before leaving the editing station* and on a different machine if possible. We will discuss proper leadering and slating at various points during the semester. You will then be expected to leader/slate your tapes every week after that.

Your DVDs can be either playable DVDs or Data DVDs with QuickTime files. You can also bring files in on a thumb drive.

EXTRA SPECIAL NOTE: Since there will be some weeks when we won't be able to watch everyone's cuts, I will sometimes need to take your DVDs or thumb drives home with me. As a result, they should be properly identified on the outside case as well as on the output. This means your name, our class number (CTPR 535), its name and scene number (if appropriate) and the edit date. Some of you may also want to send me QuickTime films. You will need to have these properly named and slated, including the Total Running Time.

At some point early on in the semester (once the roster settles down), we will start to use an online review and approval system named Critique. I'll talk more about that in class, but this is a system that is in use at the major studios and will provide a screenable Quicktime for you. You will learn to transcode and upload your files to this password protected service.

Note: We will frequently screen your scenes right off the Isis shared storage system, but you will still be required to bring a backup to class.

OFFICE HOURS AND OUT OF CLASS CONSULTATION

My office hours are on Monday (10-12) though I am available at many other times. I will also return emails in a more-or-less prompt manner. The best way to reach me is my email address -- hollyn@usc.edu. I am particularly bad about picking up phone messages, so please try email first.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on our quiz, submitting any work that you or your partner have not done, and looking into the soul of the person next to you (**Sorry, that was an old Woody Allen joke.**). Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or doubts about these policies, consult "Scampus" and/or confer with your SA or me.

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 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.