CTPR 285: Lateral Thinking for Filmmaking Practice

Semester: Spring 2015
2 Units
Class times:
Friday 1:00-1:50 topic/lecture section
   – SCI 106 (except JAN 30 in SCA 112)
   2:00-3:50 breakout/discussion/work sections:
   Savoca – SCA 209
   Juteau – SCA 203
   Valcarce – SCA 259

Cinematic Arts Film and Television Production majors only

Section 18468D
Professor: James Savoca
Email: jpsavoca@gmail.com
Phone: 347-404-4120
SA: Brian Brooks
Email: brian.brooks.ii@gmail.com
Phone: 443-465-6918

Section 18465D
Professor: Juli Juteau
Email: julijuteau@yahoo.com
Phone: 310-315-3093
SA: Lina Suh
Email: suh.lina@gmail.com
Phone: 347-409-4072

Section 18467D
Professor: Marcel Valcarce
Email: valcarce@usc.edu
Phone: 818-599-2780
SA: Guillermo Ortiz Pichardo
Email: ortizpic@usc.edu
Phone: 213-327-7605

Office Hours: by appointment
Overview:
One of the major and unacknowledged aspects of filmmaking practice is the centrality of an ongoing evolving relationship to technology. Film itself started as a radical technology at the turn of the 19th century, and evolved in complex ways through the remainder of the 20th Century. The addition of sound, color, and, at the end of the 20th Century, the transformation of an analog process to digital technologies all transformed not only how films were seen, but also radically altered how filmmakers conceived projects while at the same time creating new methods of film distribution/transmissions. These transformations take the form of intuitive changes which ‘work with’ the manner in which the new technologies allow different, new and fundamentally creative activities that flow from the evolving technologies. Therefore, the working filmmaker must forge a relationship with film practice that is open, fluid and responsive not only to the relationship of the film project to an intended (or unintended) audience, but to the constantly evolving technologies themselves. Perhaps even more important is to see the changes in technologies as opportunities to evolve the film medium itself, and to personally use the changes as methods of evolving as a film practitioner.

Course objective:
In order to facilitate such a mindset from the beginning of a film practitioner’s career, this class will explore through discussion, lecture, demonstration and student projects, a basic introduction to thinking ‘outside the box’, across disciplines, and laterally—across the creative/intellectual environment instead of through a single, narrow field. It is expected that the student would understand the wide range of activity and processes, creative and ethical that constitute contemporary filmmaking practice.

Textbooks:
No text is required, but suggested readings are listed at the end of the syllabus.

Required Technology:
This is a hands on class focused on creating short projects which you will distribute through the internet. You will be required to have and bring to class the following:

For recording video: Any small camera which can record a minimum resolution of 1280x720. A cell phone camera, DSLR, GoPro, or any such device.

For editing/assembling: A laptop, tablet, or cell phone with simple video editing software.
Windows Movie Maker 2012 (Windows) FREE.
Lightworks (Windows) FREE.
iMovie (OSX).
Avidemux (Windows/OSX) FREE.
YouTube Editor (Web) FREE.

We will also be demonstrating some visual effects techniques using Adobe After Effects, so you will need access to that software. A student version of the Adobe Creative Cloud is available for $19.99 per month (this also gives you access to Photoshop and Premier for video editing).
**Required Apps:**

“1 Second Everyday” - available for IOS and Android. Cost is $0.99

**Class Schedule & Week By Week Outline:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>BREAKOUT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1 – JAN 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introductions, read syllabus out loud, screen last semester's E1's.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss E1 - “Future”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screen “Future” example.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> create E1</td>
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<td>*Part Two of E1 will be created during Week 14 and screened Week 15.</td>
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<td>E1 due to SA on 1/21.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2 – JAN 23</strong></td>
<td><strong>Power of emotion discussion, pick one of three emotions, brainstorm.</strong></td>
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<td>Introduction to wild possibilities.</td>
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<td>Discuss E2 - “Emotion” and E3 “1Second everyday.”</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> create E2</td>
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<tr>
<td>E2 due to SA on 1/28.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> start E3 as of Jan 24</td>
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<td>E3 due to SA on 4/29.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3 – JAN 30 <em>(room change: SCA 112)</em></strong></td>
<td><strong>Screen E2</strong></td>
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<td>Developing Ideas</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4 – FEB 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Screen E2, break into three groups of seven, collaborate on E4.</strong></td>
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<td>Working in Collaboration</td>
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<td>Discuss E4 - “Interactive Storytelling”</td>
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<td>Screen examples.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> work on E4</td>
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<td>E4 due to SA on 2/18.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5 – FEB 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>No breakout – one class.</strong></td>
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<td>Passion &amp; the Creative Self.</td>
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<td>VFX Demos; Color Correction, Camera stabilization, Keying and Compositing.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> create E4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6 – FEB 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>Screen E4</strong></td>
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<td>Sound</td>
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Week 7 – FEB 27
Mashup
Discuss E5 - “Mashup”
Assignment: create E5
E5 due to SA on 3/4.

Week 8 – MARCH 6
Image
Discuss E6 - “Perspective”
Assignment: create E6
E6 due to SA on 3/25.

Week 9 – MARCH 13
Image
Mid-term evaluations.

Week 10 – MARCH 20 – SPRING RECESS - *NO CLASSES*

Week 11 – MARCH 27
Perception & Representation
Discuss E7 - “Activism”
Assignment: create E7
E7 due to SA on 4/1.

Week 12 – APRIL 3
Self Distribution
Screen E7

Week 13 – APRIL 10
Virtual Production lecture and
Motion Capture demo at USC
Mocap stage, Zemeckis building (RZC) Rm 118.
Assignment: prepare for next week's
discussion

Week 14 – APRIL 17
Open discussion.
Assignment: create 2nd part of E1
E1 due to SA on 4/22.

Week 15 – APRIL 24
Screen E1 as entire class.
E3 due to SA on 4/29.

Week 16 – May 1
Screen E3 as entire class.
*No breakout – one class.
EXERCISES:

E 1: Conversation With Your Future Self (Future) individuals.
If you could speak to *future you*, from 3 months in the future, what would you ask yourself? How would you respond? What do you think the *future you* might ask *present you*? You will record the present part of an interview with your future self (the future portion will be filmed week 14). Make a list of the questions you will ask and responses to questions from the future. You can approach the responses in two ways. One is to think of specific questions you will ask when you record the future part of the interview in a few months. However, you may find that you think of things you could ask past you, at the time you shoot that part. So you may want to record generic simple answers.

In (week1): Write and shoot the “present” part of the interview.
Total length of your finished interview should not exceed 2 minutes.

E 2: Emotion, 1 week – individuals.
Create a visual piece where the sole objective is to make the viewer experience the emotion you've selected. It can be a narrative or non-narrative film, sync or non-sync sound, moving images and/or still images. Music is not allowed, as sound design is highly encouraged. Total length should not exceed 2 minutes.

E 3: Everyday, – individuals.
Using the “1 Second Everyday” app, either on a mobile phone or tablet, starting on Jan 24, you will shoot 1 second of footage everyday until April 28. This will be a *diary* of your life; what you see, hear and experience. Total running time: 95 seconds.

E 4: Interactive Storytelling (Collaboration) 2 weeks - groups of 7 students.
Create a story where the viewer has the ability to choose how the story evolves. Write and film a story with multiple decision making points where the narrative branches. The story should have 3 possible endings depending on the path the viewer chooses. "VFX Requirement: 3 visual effects shots involving compositing must be included. More information will be given in class on week 4."

Workshop (week 4): Create the story and branching structure, divide up the required scenes.
*Homework:* Begin shooting and assembling your scenes.
Workshop (week 5): Demo creating decision points using youTube annotations and linking.
*Homework due week 6:* Complete shooting, upload segments, create interactive decision points.

Total length of your finished film should not exceed 9 minutes (including all branches).

E 5: Mashup (Derivative Works) 1 week – groups of 3 students.
Create a derivative work combining videos and audio created by others and sourced from the internet. This can take several forms:
- Construct a new narrative by combining scenes from disparate sources.
- Create a cross genre movie trailer by re-combining scenes from a film in a new way which casts the film in a different light, e.g. Mary Poppins and a horror film. Create a music video by combining user generated copies of an original video. Create a mashup of your own choosing.
E 6: Perspective, 1 week – individuals.
Place a cellphone or other small recording device in a situation that would be too small, remote or precarious for a camera person to shoot. Break size, gravitational and motion limitations to take the viewer places not normally seen. Consider unusual things or positions to attach the camera to. Edit footage with original sound and music. 1 to 3 minutes.

E 7: Activism, 1 week – groups of 3 students.
Collaborating in groups of two, combine original footage with found imagery (no more than 10%) to create a call to action about a topic that is important to you. Final edited project should include original sound and music and run between 1 and 3 minutes.

Exercise submission guidelines:
All assignments for this class will be submitted as a link to an uploaded video. We recommend you use YouTube or Vimeo for this purpose.

You will need to send a link to the video to your SA no later than the project deadline specified in the syllabus. All submitted videos must remain available for viewing until after the end of the semester for grading purposes.

When exporting a project for submission to your video streaming service use the following settings:

You should submit a Quicktime or AVI video file with the following settings:

Video encoding: H.264 codec with high quality (multi-pass) settings.
Frame rate = Use the native frame rate that you shot and edited in, ideally 23.976fps (or 24fps).
Size = 1280x720 pixels or smaller. Ideally 16x9 aspect ratio.
Video bit rate between 5,000 kbps (Standard Quality) and 20,000 kbps (High Quality).
Audio = 16 bit stereo at 44.1 Khz, AAC compression at 96 or 128 kbps.

Youtube Specs: https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en
Vimeo Specs: https://vimeo.com/help/compression

Rules:
Scheduled topics assignments and due dates are subject to change.

Computers, cel phones, and other devices may NOT be used to take notes during class. Students will receive a downgrade of one notch (e.g. B to B-) for each violation of this policy.

No food or beverages of any kind are allowed in the classrooms.

No projects will be accepted later than the last day of class (May 1), if not turned in prior to May 1, project will receive an “F.” All late projects will receive a full letter grade reduction (from A to B, for example).
Only absences related to medical need will be excused and only with a letter from your Doctor.

Students are responsible for all projects even if they are absent on the day a project is assigned.

Non-attendance policy:
Absences are permitted only with doctor’s notices; otherwise two absences equals one letter grade reduction (from A to B, for example), and three ‘lates’ will equal one absence.

**Grading:**
Exercises will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Exercise meets the guidelines of the written assignment in terms of length, audio or visual elements, and general content.
- Exercise is turned in on time at the beginning of class with all audio and/or video elements intact and in the requested format for screening.
- Exercise shows clear effort and input of the filmmaker, is not sloppy or last minute.
- Exercise continues to show originality, experimentation and growth.
- Student collaborates well with partner/s if exercise is a group project
- Exercise has a clear concept or message which is presented in a logical and engaging manner.

**Totals:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>E2</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>E3</td>
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<td>E6</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E7</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Recommended texts:**
- *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media* by Bruce Block
- *In The Blink of an Eye* 2nd Edition by Walter Murch
- *Short: An International Anthology of Five Centuries of Short-Stories, Prose Poems, Brief Essays, and Other Short Prose Forms* edited by Alan Ziegler
- *Zen in the Art of Writing* by Ray Bradbury

**Students with Disabilities:**
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.
**Statement on Academic Integrity:**
USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus)) or ([http://scampus.usc.edu](http://scampus.usc.edu)) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/). Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: [http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html](http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html).

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC’s Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at [blackboard.usc.edu](http://blackboard.usc.edu).

**Disruptive Student Behavior**
Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* [https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/](https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are
encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.