CLASS SYLLABUS - Spring 2015
Thursdays from 10AM - 12:50 PM in RZC 108

Colloquium on Motion Picture Production Techniques:
Basic procedures & techniques applicable to production of all types of films; demonstrated by production of a short film from conception to completion.

Instructor:
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Office hours: By appointment -- email, phone or Skype
Student Assistant (SA):
Edwin Soto 425-501-3224 edwinsoto19@gmail.com

CLASS OVERVIEW:
From idea and script, to shooting and editing, you will learn the fundamental components of motion picture production while collaborating with classmates on short form digital video projects.

The class will take a hands-on approach and introduce you to both the creative side (script analysis, working with actors, visualization, etc.) and the basic technical side (camera, lights, editing, etc.) of the filmmaking process.

Beginning with a well-written scene, we will uncover:
• Character emotional beats, beats that the actors and director will develop;
• Body language, shot selection and blocking of action that is as powerful as dialogue;
• Cinematic elements (lighting, visual design, picture editing and sound design) that grow out of these elements and magnify their effect a thousand-fold.

Through class exercises, analysis of films and completion of your own projects you will begin to understand how the many layers of cinematic storytelling - technical, aesthetic, and emotional- work together to reach an audience.

385 PROJECTS
Each student must participate in seven main projects/assignments:
1. Camera Basics Project: Each student will produce, direct and shoot a short scene of one minute or less, demonstrating a state change in a character or environment.
2. Edit Project: Students will form teams and edit a scene from dailies provided. (Boston Legal)
3. Coverage Project (in groups)
   • 2 page scene, 2-3 minutes from existing screenplay
   • 2 actors, 1 location Ordinary People, Good Will Hunting
   • One partner serves as Producer/Director while the other serves as Cinematographer/Editor.
4. Final Group Project
   • Each student will prepare a brief pitch
• Students will then work with a partner to write an original or adapted script of no more than five pages for consideration for a 2-4 minute short film that could be produced with limited budget, no more than three actors and a limited number of locations.
• Four scripts will be selected by class vote, and writers for the selected scripts will play the roles of Producer/Assistant Director or Producer/Production Designer on their respective teams.
• Remaining students will fill roles of Director, Cinematographer/Editor and Production Sound/Editor. As a team, students will produce a 3-5 minute fully edited and sound designed short.

5. Periodic Creative Workouts
• Periodically throughout the semester, you’ll be asked to complete brief creative assignments meant to get your juices flowing and which are expected to take approximately 15 minutes. These will be graded on a “Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory” basis.

VIDEO PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:
* All projects will be shot on digital video and edited in Avid Express DV.
* Include a mandatory and readable USC credit at the end your other credits:
  “Student Produced at the University of Southern California + the year.”
* Projects must be uploaded to the class Youtube account, BE LABELED WITH YOUR NAME, PARTNER’S NAME (if applicable) and NAME OF THE ASSIGNMENT and SET TO PRIVATE. Check to insure your project has uploaded and plays properly. Extensions will not be granted based on failed uploads and it is UP TO YOU to insure proper labeling.

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES
The School will provide:
• Semester-long checkouts- digital cameras. Students will also have access to basic light and sound kits and edit on Avid Xpress DV, even if you own other editing software, because the University provides support for this software. It will also be easier to get help from classmates if you’re in the Avid lab, using the same type of equipment.

You will provide/purchase:
• A good set of headphones: Production Students should consider Sony MDR 7506 headphones, everyone should have headphones that cover their ears well because the edit lab can be noisy and you must be able to hear subtleties as you mix your sound tracks. HEADPHONES MUST COME WITH A ¼” ADAPTER TO WORK IN THE LAB.
• 16 GB HD Memory Card. Can be purchased at Target, Best Buy, Office Depot or online.
• A removable hard drive and flash drive for use in the AVID LAB.
• Any related supplies for each production such as prop or wardrobe purchases or rentals, location rental fees and food for actors and crew. These expenses will vary depending on the scope of your project, but should not exceed roughly $50 per student for any of the first three projects or $100 per student for the final project.

PRODUCTION SAFETY
You must attend the Safety Seminar before you can receive a production number (which enables you to check out equipment and edit in the lab. YOU MUST ALSO FOLLOW the regulations contained in the Safety Handbook. Consult with your instructors before placing yourself or others in
a potentially dangerous situation. Find safe ways of shooting what you want to do. Failure to procure permits for stunts or to adhere to safe shooting procedures can have a range of consequences - from loss of a grade to suspension from USC. Most effects can be suggested more effectively through creative directing and editing than by actually showing the event on-screen. **Any use of stunts or weapons in your projects requires a pre-production conversation with your instructors first and then with the Safety Consultant. Obtain this BEFORE shooting.**

**ACTORS**

USC students can work with SAG (Screen Actors Guild) actors for their course projects without providing any monetary compensation. USC has an agreement with SAG, which does not apply to the independent projects that students do outside of USC.

In posting Casting Notices, CNTV students must describe their projects as USC projects, not “spec” or independent projects,” since this is against the USC SAG agreement. **Actors MUST be provided with tape copies of their work (in a timely fashion).**

**USE OF MINORS**

If you want to use minors (actors under 18) in your films, you must conform to state regulations by limiting the number of hours they work and assuring their welfare by the presence of a licensed teacher/social worker. You can get details from SPO (Student Production Office).

**IMPORTANT:** If you have questions about any of these policies, **check first with your instructor & then with Joe Wallenstein, Director of Physical Production (213.740.7126).**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY and ETHICS in CNTV 385**

It is extremely important that you protect your opportunity to learn and not hand it over to someone you feel is more experienced- this is the equivalent of plagiarism. **In your partnership projects, we expect you to trade off operating the camera, directing actors, and editing the video. We ask you not to act in your own films since this distracts you from all the other tasks you have on set. You may if you wish, ask classmates to act in your individual projects but you must use outside actors for the projects.**

Do not ask or allow people outside the film school or in advanced classes to crew for you; this is the equivalent of asking someone else to write a paper for you, which is a violation of academic integrity. The USC Student Conduct Code fully discusses issues of academic integrity and student conduct (see your issue of Scampus). Film/video projects can be viewed as similar to written papers. You are the sole author and producer of your individual project.

Motion picture production also involves additional issues of professional conduct on and off campus. USC student filmmakers need to observe the highest professional standards of behavior with actors, crew and location owners. The reputation of each class of filmmakers affects the reputation of the USC School of Cinema and our relationship with the rest of the campus, the Screen Actors Guild and the wider community of Southern California.

**If you are uncertain about something you are about to do- in terms of ethics or safety- that is a good clue that it needs to be discussed with your instructor! If you cannot reach me to discuss it in time, then postpone the idea until you can discuss it first.**
DEADLINES
The attached 385 Class Calendar outlines all assignment deadlines. Assignments are to be turned in at the BEGINNING of the class, even if you feel that it is unfinished. If for some reason you do not have a completed film by the deadline, show it as a “work-in-progress” with the opportunity to screen it for your instructors when it is complete. **Films arriving after the start of class will have a 1/3 letter grade penalty and will be screened at the instructor's discretion.**

Deadlines are an essential part of a group project. Being on time is part of the craft of producing films and we encourage you to work on your time organization skills if you have trouble meeting deadlines. Your work (or missed work) will have an impact on five other people and their group project grade.

ATTENDANCE/TIMELINESS
Due to the limited number of class days and extended class periods of CTPR 385, as well as the emphasis on group assignments, it is expected that every student will attend every class meeting. Any time a student must miss from this class inhibits the learning experience for other students. You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire class. **IF YOU CANNOT MAKE IT TO CLASS, YOU MUST NOTIFY YOUR INSTRUCTOR 24 HOURS PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF CLASS AND GET YOUR ASSIGNMENT TO CLASS SO THAT IT MAY BE SCREENED, EVEN IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND.** Participation is a large component of the course grade and frequent absence and failure to arrive on time will negatively impact your grade.

YOU MUST BE ON TIME – AN UNEXCUSE LATENESS IS AN ABSENCE

MID-SEMESTER CONFERENCES:
Your instructor will allow time for recommended mid-semester conferences to discuss your work and your progress. **If at any time you wish to discuss your work, your progress, or anything else, please contact your instructor to set up an appointment. My office hours are largely done by phone or Skype.**

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 and should be delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am–5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY
The USC campus has a good safety record and every effort is made to keep the neighborhood safe. For your own precaution, as you would anywhere in L.A., walk with others at night or call Campus ride service. Work with classmates when shooting in public, so that one of you is alert to safety issues while the other is filming. USC equipment should also be safeguarded in public. Think ahead for possible problems and use common sense.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
HEALTH & WELL-BEING
Film production is intense. However, one important part of production is managing one’s time, energy, and health. If you are feeling overwhelmed, discuss your experiences with fellow students or with one of your instructors. Chances are, others are also feeling the stress and would welcome letting it out. Scale your projects to a size that you can produce them without neglecting your other courses and estimate your time realistically. Have back-up ideas, alternate locations, equipment, and a variety of actor contacts. Expect the unexpected. These are skills you will need throughout your career!

FILES AND HARD COPIES - Please bring a file with you for Class 2. All homework must be turned in at the beginning of each class as a hard copy.

PRIDE IN WORK – Don’t send in a tweet. All homework needs to be proofed for spelling and grammar.

ANNONIMOUS GROUP FEEDBACK – At the end of each group project each student will anonymously rate his teammates for participation, timeliness, attitude and helpfulness. Negative

GRADES
Your grade for 385 will be based on your personal growth as a filmmaker, your willingness to explore themes and techniques, your mastery of craft and your development in relation to your classmates. It will be measured with a variety of assignments (see following assignment page). You will be graded A through F (including pluses and minuses) upon completion of the course. Grades of "Incomplete" are given for medical emergencies only. Emergencies are narrowly interpreted.

385 Grading Breakdown - Attendance and promptness mandatory
20% Class participation (discussions, feedback to other students, etc…)
10% Creative Workouts (4, 3 points each)
10% Camera Basics Project (individual)
6% Boston Legal Editing Exercise
10% Coverage project (in partnerships)
4% First draft of Final Project script (in partnerships)
20% Final Group Project (Split 50/50 group vs. individual)
10% Planning & preparation tools
10% Notebook - assembled
10% Shared Group grade: Final edited digital project
Personal Reflections on collaboration experience
20% Final written exam

NOTE: 385 DEMANDS INTENSE PLANING AND PRODUCTION WORK THAT TAKES PLACE OVER WEEKENDS. IT IS 100% MANDITORY YOU ARE PRESENT AND FULLY PARTICIPATE IN ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES. PRODUCTION OF 385 PROJECTS OFTEN CONFLICT WITH OTHER CLASSES, ESPECIALLY AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER. IF YOU CAN NOT ATTEND
100% OF THESE PRODUCTION EVENTS, THEN YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE THIS CLASS.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>IN CLASS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>CL1-2</td>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>- Read V&amp;V Chapters 1 &amp; 18</td>
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<td>1/15-22</td>
<td>- Introductions</td>
<td>- <strong>CAMERA BASICS</strong></td>
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<td>Syllabus Review</td>
<td>Individually, shoot a sequence of stills that is one minute or less in which</td>
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<td>SAFETY MEETING</td>
<td>something happens to cause a change to occur. Cut in camera, meaning each</td>
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<td>- Joe Wallenstein walks us through USC Safety regulations.</td>
<td>shot should be laid out in order to tell a story and show a change in</td>
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<td>- Flow Chart</td>
<td>character. (I RECOMMEND THESE BE DONE WITH SMART PHONES AND TRANSFERRED TO</td>
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<td>- Story of Self</td>
<td>iPHOTO OR MEMORY STICK)</td>
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<td><strong>IDEA TO STORY</strong></td>
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<td>- Architecture of a Movie</td>
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<td>- Who, not what.</td>
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<td>- Why, what, where, how.</td>
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<td>- Character, Objective</td>
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<td>- Backstory</td>
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<td><strong>READ V&amp;V Chapters 1 &amp; 18</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CAMERA BASICS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>VISUAL LANGUAGE</strong></td>
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<td>- Shot selection</td>
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<td>- Composition</td>
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<td>- Camera Movement</td>
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<td>- Coverage – exercise</td>
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<td>- Short Films</td>
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<td>- Character = Action,POV</td>
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<td>- Iron Man</td>
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<td><strong>IMAGES GALLERY</strong></td>
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<td>CL3</td>
<td><strong>CAMERA CHECK-OUT</strong></td>
<td>- Read V&amp;V Chapter 3</td>
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<td>1/29</td>
<td>- Meet at Equipment Center</td>
<td>- Creative Workout: Images</td>
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<td><strong>CAMERA INTRO WORKSHOP</strong></td>
<td>Sequence of five photographs that evoke an emotion and tell a story bring</td>
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<td>- Learn about how to use them</td>
<td>hard copies to class.</td>
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<td>- In-class camera exercise</td>
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<td><strong>VIEW CAMERA BASICS</strong></td>
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<td>- Cutting the scene - basics</td>
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<td><strong>READ V&amp;V CHAPTER 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>COMPLETE AVID ONLINE TUTORIAL</strong></td>
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<td>(approx 90 minutes)</td>
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<td><strong>CREATIVE WORKOUT: SCENE ANALYSIS</strong></td>
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<td>Choose a short scene (no more than 3 minutes) from a favorite movie and</td>
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<td>identify the shots used to make up this scene. Draw rough storyboards to</td>
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<td>go along with your shot list.</td>
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<td>CL4</td>
<td><strong>EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 1</strong></td>
<td>- Read V&amp;V Chapter 4 &amp; 5 (100-118 only)</td>
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<td>2/05</td>
<td><strong>BOSTON LEGAL EDIT PROJECT</strong></td>
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<td>Using the skills we’ve covered so far, roughly piece</td>
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together a scene from the TV show Boston Legal with your partner.

| CL5 | 2/12 | EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 2  
- Meet in AVID Lab  
- Pick groups  
- Review Boston Legal Cuts  
- Assign Scripts/groups for Coverage Projects | - Read V&V Chapter 6 (123-133 only) & 21  
- Coverage Project  
- Pre-visualization  
Script, storyboards and shot list for your coverage project. Begin pre-production Casting |
| CL6 | 2/19 | CINEMATIC TIME & SPACE  
- Continuity  
- 180 Degree Rule  
- 30 Degree Rule  
- Blocking exercise | - Read V&V Chapters 6, 5 (118-122 only) & 7 (150-162 only)  
Shoot your coverage projects. Begin thinking of final project story ideas. |
| CL7 | 2/26 | VIEW COVERAGE DALIES - final project story ideas | - Read V&V Chapters 13 & 16  
- Edit and finish coverage projects  
- Prepare to pitch final project Script idea |
| CL8 | 3/05 | VIEW FINAL COVERAGE PROJECTS PITCHING YOUR STORY IDEAS  
Vote on 5 Script ideas | - Read V&V Chapter 2  
- BEGIN WORK ON FINAL PROJECT SCRIPTS  
- 1st drafts  
- Group Story meeting – Writers write |
| CL9 | 3/12 | Script Structure – Final Draft  
- The complete Screenplay | - Read V&V 7 (141-150)  
- WRITE FINAL PROJECT SCRIPTS  
- Write 2nd draft Share with Group by Sunday |
| 3/19 | NO CLASS | SPRING BREAK | SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK |
| CL10 | 3/26 | Choose Scripts-Groups  
- Assign Crew Positions  
Screen Play readings – Comments  
- Vote on scripts  
- Budget  
- Schedule - board  
- Locations – permits - scout  
Production Board  
Budget – A brief | - Read V&V Chapter 21  
- Scripts to TR Hard copies to class  
- Preliminary Location Scout - Bring location photos to class.  
Prepare equipment list  
- Budget  
- Schedule - board  
- Casting  
- Shot list  
- Previs  
- Storyboards  
- Animatics |
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| CL11  | PRODUCING                                                            | - Final Locations
- Tech scout
- Production Design
- Wardrobe/Props
- Final Budgets
- Call Sheets
- Lighting Review
- Read V&V Chapter 17
- Writer/Producers and Directors work on Final revising scripts
- Casting breakdowns, hold casting sessions
- Audition at least six people for each role and bring in top three to view for class for each role. Editors should help cut these down for class. |
| 4/02  | Blocking review                                                     | Final Production board
Schedule and - Run of the day The production meeting
- Beat Breakdowns/transitions
- Managing Talent
- The Creative Environment
- Writer/Producer/Directors scout and lock locations, pre-production and production design needs.
- Rehearse Actors
- Directors and Cinematographers meet to discuss shot list/storyboards, come to class with both as well as lighting ideas
- Prepare for shoot. Shoot. Editors break down shot footage and prepare select takes to bring to class. |
| CL12  | Review Dailies – REVIEW FOR FINAL                                    | Editors begin working on rough-cut and Bring in Director toward end of process for feedback. Sound Designers begin pulling sound effects and music in preparation to edit.
- RETURN CAMERA GEAR – LATE FEE OF $50 |
| 4/9   | W/HMAUSUSS ROUGH CUT Evaluations                                     | - Finish Final Cut
- FINAL EXAM – Take Home
- RETURN CAMERA GEAR – LATE FEE OF $50 |
| CL15  | FINAL PROJECT SCREENING                                             | - Producers and Editors insure all cast and crew get copies of final project |
| 4/30  |                                                                      | - |