

USC School of Cinematic Arts

**CTPR 285: Lateral Thinking for Filmmaking Practice**

Semester: Spring 2016

2 Units

Class times:

Friday 1:00-1:50 topic/lecture section:

SCI 106

2:00-3:50 breakout/discussion/work sections:

Savoca – SCA 209

Juteau – SCA 203

Valcarce – SCA 214

**Cinematic Arts Film and Television Production majors only**

Section 18455D

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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:

### TOPIC

*Week 1 – JAN 15*

Introductions.  
Discuss E1 - “Future”  
Discuss E2 - “1 Second Everyday”  
Screen “Alternative Self” & “1 Second Everyday”  
examples.

Assignment: create E1

E1 due to SA on 4/21.

(JS,M,J)

*Week 2 – JAN 22*

Introduction to Wild Possibilities.  
Discuss E3 - “Emotion”

Assignment: create E2

E3 due to SA on 1/28.

Assignment: start E2 as of Jan 24

E2 due to SA on 4/28.

(JS,M,J)

*Week 3 – JAN 29*

Developing Ideas.  
(J)

*Week 4 – FEB 5*

VFX Demos; Color Correction,  
Camera stabilization, Keying  
and Compositing.  
Discuss E4 - “Interactive Storytelling”  
Screen examples.

Assignment: work on E4

E4 due to SA on 2/18.

(M)

*Week 5 – FEB 12*

Passion & the Creative Self.

Assignment: create E4

(JS)

*Week 6 – FEB 19*

Lateral Strategies.

(M)

### BREAKOUT

Introductions, read syllabus out loud,  
screen last semester's E1's and E2's.

Power of emotion discussion,  
pick one of three emotions, brainstorm.  
Screen last semester's E3 “Emotion.”

Screen E3.

Screen E3, break into FOUR groups;  
collaborate on E4.

Production groups work/collaborate on  
E4.

Screen E4.

*Week 7 – FEB 26*

Mashup

Discuss E5 - “Recontextualization”

Assignment: create E5

E5 due to SA on 3/3.

(M)

Screen E4

Break into SEVEN groups;  
brainstorm ideas and begin  
collecting footage for E5.

Mid-term evaluations.

*Week 8 – MARCH 4*

Image

Discuss E6 - “ Perspective”

Assignment: create E6

E6 due to SA on 3/24.

(J)

Screen E5

Mid-term evaluations.

*Week 9 – MARCH 11*

Image

(JS)

Screen E5

Mid-term evaluations.

*Week 10 – MARCH 18 – **SPRING RECESS - \*NO CLASSES\****

*Week 11 – MARCH 25*

Perception & Representation

Discuss E7 - “Activism”

Assignment: create E7

E7 due to SA on 5/14.

(J)

Screen E6

Break into SEVEN groups.

*Week 12 – APRIL 1*

Self Distribution

(JS)

Screen E6

*Week 13 – APRIL 8*

Virtual Production lecture and

Motion Capture demo at USC

Mo-cap stage, Zemeckis building (RZC) Rm 118.

\*No breakout – one class.

*Week 14 – APRIL 15*

Sound.

Assignment: complete E1

E1 due to SA on 4/21.

Screen E7.

*Week 15 – APRIL 22*

\*No topic – meet in classrooms only!

E2 & “Choice” due to SA on 4/28.

Screen E7 & E1.

*Week 16 – April 29*

Screen E2.

\*No breakout – one class.

## **EXERCISES:**

### **E 1: Encounter with your alternate self - individuals.**

Imagine if you could communicate with yourself from an alternate dimension, or perhaps a different moment in time. What would your alternate self be like? How would their reality be different from ours. How would the communication/interaction work (face to face, through a device, etc.)? What kind of story line could be involved. This assignment is not due until the end of the semester, see how you can include some of the concepts we will be discussing. Total length should not exceed 3 minutes.

**Due April 21.**

### **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 90 seconds.

### **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.

**Due April 29.**

### **E 4: Interactive Storytelling (Collaboration) 2 weeks - groups of up to 3 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: Re-contextualization (Derivative Works) 1 week – groups of up to 3 students.**

Re-contextualization (Derivative Work) 1 week.

Create a new work by combining 2 or more existing works. This can take many forms, for example you can construct a new narrative by combining scenes from different sources, or by replacing the dialogue in an existing work with dialog from something else. Total length should not exceed 3 minutes.

### **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. Total length should not exceed 3 minutes.

### **E 7: Activism, 3 weeks – groups of up to 3 students.**

Collaborating in groups of three, 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 total length should not exceed 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(April 29), if not turned in prior to April 29, project will receive an "F." All late projects will receive a full letter grade reduction (from A to B, for example), for each week it is late.

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:**

Attendance & class participation	10%
E1	15%
E2	10%
E3	15%
E4	15%
E5	10%
E6	10%
E7	15%

### **Recommended texts:**

- *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media* by Bruce Block
- *In The Blink of an Eye* 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](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](mailto: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>) 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/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <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/>. 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/>.

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](mailto: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](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.