ITP 211: Power-Tools for Visual Communication

Course  Power-Tools for Visual Communication  
http://blackboard.usc.edu

2 Units

Lecture/Lab  Monday from 2 PM till 5 PM in OHE-540

Instructor  Larry Jordan  
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(818) 519-2183

Teaching Asst.  (TBA)

Office Hours  1 PM – 2 PM  
Biegler Hall - B-5

Open Labs  OHE-540 and OHE-542  
(Times to be announced after the semester starts)

Summary  In a world where videos move millions and a picture is more powerful - and popular - than the written word, a key survival skill in college and into future careers is how well you communicate visually.

The leaders of tomorrow need to know the power tools of visual communication today and how to use them to influence and persuade others.

From creating websites to posting videos on YouTube, your ability to effectively communicate your ideas depends, in large part, on your ability to master visual communication.

In this course, you will learn how to use software in three key areas of visual communication to create and communicate your ideas:

- Still images  
- Motion Graphics  
- Audio and Video Editing

Objective  The purpose of this course is to learn the creative, technical and communication skills necessary to produce compelling images and video.
This is not a theory class. This is a “get your hands dirty” class. It is not enough to “create.” We need to create, communicate, suggest, persuade and convince - using still and moving images – all while meeting deadlines. These skills are necessary during college and critical later in business.

This course explores the use of professional-grade software to create 2D images, 2D graphics, motion graphics, visual effects and video. As well, students will learn how to properly compress video for high-quality web distribution and mix audio for compelling sound tracks.

During the course, students will create posters, motion graphics, and video projects centered around a theme of the student’s own choosing.

**Content Goals**

1. To discover how to use the tools of visual communication to create persuasive presentations.

2. To learn the fundamentals of story-telling, structure and workflow and the importance of the call to action.

3. To actually see, not just look at, what you are creating. To create work according to directions, not just what you think the directions should be.

4. To learn how these techniques apply to other classes and careers.

**Grading**

Grading is based on class participation, lab completion, assignments and quizzes.

Here’s the breakdown of assignments and points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Pts Each</th>
<th>Total Pts</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final course marks are determined by standard formulas:

- A  93-100%
- A- 90-92%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% or below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Secrets to Success**
1. Read the instructions *before* doing the work!
2. Do the labs at the end of class, don't wait to do them later.
3. Practice seeing what’s *actually* on the screen, not what you *expect* to see!

**Class Policies**
Students are expected to:
- Attend and participate in class discussions and critiques; asking questions is encouraged!
- Complete weekly labs and assignments on time
- Complete all quizzes
- Complete assignments and projects on time

**Assignments**
It is the responsibility of the student to make sure projects and assignments are turned in on time. Make sure you follow the procedures outlined in each assignment or project. All assignments will be uploaded by students through Blackboard. Some assignments will be turned in on paper.

Late projects automatically deduct 10% of the total possible points before grading starts. A project is considered late if it is turned in after the deadline, unless prior arrangements have been made.

**IMPORTANT!**
All labs and assignments must be submitted via Blackboard in order to be graded. Emailed labs, assignments and projects will not count.

**ITP Labs**
Before logging onto an ITP computer, students must ensure that they have emailed or saved projects created during the class or lab session. Any work not saved will be erased after restarting the computer. ITP is not responsible for any work lost.

ITP offers Open Lab use for all students enrolled in ITP classes. These open labs are held beginning the second week of classes.
through the last week of classes. Please contact your instructor for specific times and days for the current semester.

**Academic Integrity**

The use of unauthorized material, communication with fellow students during an examination, attempting to benefit from the work of another student, and similar behavior that defeats the intent of an examination or other class work is unacceptable to the University. It is often difficult to distinguish between a culpable act and inadvertent behavior resulting from the nervous tension accompanying examinations. When the professor determines that a violation has occurred, appropriate action, as determined by the instructor, will be taken.

Although working together is encouraged, all work claimed as yours must, in fact, be your own effort. Students who plagiarize the work of other students will receive zero points and possibly be referred to Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (SJACS).

All students should read, understand, and abide by the University Student Conduct Code available at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/nonacademicreview.html](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/nonacademicreview.html).

**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 as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU301 and is open 8:30 AM – 5 PM, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Required Texts**

While there are no required texts, because the span of software we are covering is too broad, the suggested reading below can be an aid in understanding the material covered in this course.

**Suggested Readings**

**Relevant Lynda.com online training**

**In The Blink of an Eye (2 Revised Edition)**
Walter Murch
Silman-James - 2001

**Final Cut Pro X: Making the Transition**
Larry Jordan
Peachpit Press – 2011
Students will be required to bring a Flash memory drive or a portable hard drive to **all classes**. The ITP department will provide all students with a USB flash drive on the second day of class that will contain media used throughout the course.

**Labs**

Weekly labs focus on understanding technology and reinforce the material covered in that week’s class. All labs are due one week after they are assigned.

However, it is *strongly* urged that students complete each week’s lab in the hour of lab time at the end of each class, so that they can practice the material while the lesson is still fresh.

All labs are critiqued by either the professor or grading assistant, depending upon class size, so that students can learn from their mistakes and improve during the course of the class.

**Assignments**

Unlike labs, assignments focus on creativity. There are three assignments during the course:

- Poster with an image
- Motion Graphics video
- Video commercial

Students select the topic and the content. All assignments are personally critiqued by the professor to allow students to improve their work during the course of the semester.

**Exams**

There are two exams during the course: a mid-term and final. Each exam contains 25 short-answer questions.
Visual Communication Power-Tools  
(2 units)  

*Note: The purpose of a lab is to reinforce subjects taught in that day’s lecture. Labs are designed to be completed in class. Assignments are designed to be completed outside of class. (Details on all Assignments will be handed out the first day of class.)*

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Key Points</th>
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| Lecture 1 | Aug. 21 | PLANNING FOR THIS COURSE - WORKFLOW  
Course introduction – what we are doing this semester  
Discussion of goals and theme for semester  
Workflow for digital projects and assets  
Media Basics: Digital Media Fundamentals.  
File formats for audio, video, images, text & animation  
**Non-graded quiz:** “Help Me Get To Know You”  
*Lab #1: Due at the start of Lecture 2*  
**Topic: Set goals for semester assignment** |
| Lecture 2 | Aug. 28 | ADOBE PHOTOSHOP - INTRODUCTION  
Intro to Graphic Production and Photoshop  
Basic tools, Selections, Layers, Effects  
Basic photo and image manipulation techniques  
Using the Shape tool  
*Lab #2: Due at the start of Lecture 3*  
**Topic: Composition basics** |
| Lecture 3 | Sept. 4 | ADOBE PHOTOSHOP - COMPOSITING AND TEXT  
Understanding the power of fonts to convey emotions  
Framing, balance, and composition techniques  
Combining layers to create complex images  
Working with text and shadows  
*Lab #3: Due at the start of Lecture 4*  
**Topic: First draft: Image for Assignment 1** |
| Lecture 4 | Sept. 11 | ADOBE PHOTOSHOP - MASKS and IMAGE REPAIR  
Digital Image Editing  
Image manipulation and clean-up  
Drawing on a path  
Masks – what they are and how to create them  
Advanced selections  
Using blend modes  
Using filters to create special effects  
*Lab #4: Due at the start of Lecture 5*  
**Topic: Masks and image repair** |
Lecture 5  Sept. 18  PLANNING FOR VIDEO PRODUCTION
Video production – get ready for your commercial
How and what to plan, how to get it all done, how to
decide what is important and what should be left out.
Balancing technology with story.
Storyboarding
The importance of emotion, reactions, and breathing
Basics of camera angles, placement, and framing
Basics of lighting
Basics of production audio
Lab #5: Due at the end of class
  Topic: Storyboard a dramatic scene

Lecture 6  Sept. 25  APPLE COMPRESSOR
Understanding video/audio compression
Optimum settings for video compression
Compressing video for the web and YouTube
Lab #6: Due at the start of Lecture 7
  Topic: Create a compressed video file
Assignment #1: Poster due

Lecture 7  Oct. 2  MID-TERM EXAM
  25 short-answer questions
GUEST LECTURE: Norman Hollyn
  (USC School of Cinematic Arts)
Techniques of Visual Story-telling
  No lab this week

Lecture 8  Oct. 9  APPLE MOTION (Part 1)
Motion graphics - harnessing the power of Motion
Understanding behaviors and filters
Animating backgrounds
Animating text
Lab #7: Due at the start of Lecture 9
  Topic: Create a motion graphic

Lecture 9  Oct. 16  APPLE MOTION (Part 2)
Creating movement with behaviors
Animating a still image
Applying effects
Working with sound
Drawing paths and random shapes
Lab #8: Due at the end of class
  Topic: Create a motion graphic with video & audio
Lecture 10  Oct. 23  APPLE MOTION (Part 3)
Particle systems
Replicator systems
Blend modes
Working with filters
Compositing techniques
Creating an effect for Final Cut Pro X
Export and compression

Lab #9: Due at the start of Lecture 11
Topic: Animate stills, add with audio

Lecture 11  Oct. 30  APPLE FINAL CUT PRO X - EDITING
Introduction to editing digital video
An 11-step workflow to focus your energy
The importance of telling a “story”
Creating a new project, importing media
Reviewing clips, and editing a basic story.
No Lab this week.

Assignment 2: Motion Graphics project due

Lecture 12  Nov. 6  APPLE FINAL CUT PRO X - TRIMMING AND AUDIO
Trimming an edit to improve story-telling
The story of “John and Martha”
Adding transitions
Working with audio
Lab #10: Due at the start of Lecture 13
Topic: Edit a dramatic scene

Lecture 13  Nov. 13  APPLE FINAL CUT PRO X - EFFECTS AND EXPORT
Audio, sample rates, and human hearing
How to add, edit, and mix audio
A survey of simple visual effects
Integration of Motion projects into Final Cut
Lab #11: Due at the start of Lecture 14
Topic: Edit a short documentary
| Lecture 14  | Nov. 20 | AUDIO MIXING IN ADOBE AUDITION  
Audio and sound design  
The fundamentals of hearing and digital audio  
Audio editing  
Audio effects and filters  
Audio mixing  
**Lab #12: Due in class**  
*Topic: Audio mix a short documentary*  
*This Lab is NOT graded.*  
**Assignment 3: 30-second video commercial due** |
| Lecture 15  | Nov. 27 | Discussion on how to get a job. |
| FINAL EXAM  | Dec. 11 | **Final Exam**  
25 short-answer questions  
**IN-CLASS REVIEW OF ALL STUDENT PROJECTS**  
Students present and discuss their projects to the class |