Section 037-18642D
Instructor: Norman Hollyn   **T.A.:** TBA
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Class Meetings: Monday, 7-10 p.m.
Location: Lucas 212

Office: Marcia Lucas Post Building, Room 126
Hours: Monday 10-12 (or 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, analyze the shot footage, and put it all together to fulfill that vision** (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 — both film and electronic — that you need to make your editing decisions. The bulk of your hands-on Avid editing tutoring will be given by Richard Blankinship during his Avid labs (more of which below). 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 machine, primarily the AVID Media Composer. During part of the semester you will be editing on Final Cut Pro Suite 2. During another part of the semester you will also learn how to match back your edit to film. You will be given a background in some assistant editor techniques -- synching (in the Avid), film handling, digitizing and organizing in the both the film and digital realm. In addition to 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 working 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 on December 10th so don't make plans for that night) time period for our classes will get pretty intense. **Be prepared for classes to go about 20-30 minutes 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. 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.

After that, our weekly meetings will generally start with one student who will examine a scene from a favorite film of theirs, emphasizing the editorial choices made in the creation of that scene. I will then 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. There is a possibility that we might have a guest speaker during one or two weeks. No promises but, if they don't cancel out on me, you should have some interesting opportunities for discussion with working professionals besides me.

I will also post several handouts for each class online (in previous years, I have given them out – I will try doing that with far fewer of them this year). Some of these will elaborate on our class discussion, some will be preparation for the following week's class, and others will be interviews with filmmakers about the process of editing. Some of the material in our class quiz will come from these handouts, so I'd recommend printing them out and reading them after each class.

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. I will often give you re-editing notes and you will return to the editing room during the next week for a second cut. During parts of the semester partners will take on alternating roles as editor and director in order to provide each student with the varied experience that exists in the "real world". If necessary, we will meet once or twice in the Avid 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 and writers, to interactions with the studios and the preview process.

Just like movie theatres and playhouses, I'm going to ask every one of you to **turn off all pagers and 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. Plus, it distracts the hell out of me.

A more detailed, though ever changing, breakdown of what each class will be covering is available on my web site at

Click on the entry for **Overall Class Plan** in the navigation bar at the left.

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.

Week 1 (Aug 27)	Intro To The Editing Thought Process	How to Think Like An Editor. Script analysis. The Rule of Threes. Editing as re-editing.
September 3	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	
Week 2 (Sep 10)	Examining the Cut	Examining the individual cut. How shots can be restructured. 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.
Week 3 (Sept. 17)	Examining The Scene, Trusting The Audience	How scenes can be constructed
Week 4 (Sept 24)	Examining The Sequence	Trusting an audience. How to sync dailies. How to organize an editing room in a film world.
Week 5 (Oct 1)	The Plasticity of the Medium	Dealing with storytelling problems. Midterm evaluation Using film editing equipment - part 1 WORK IN THE AVID LAB -- Using digital editing equipment.
Week 6 (Oct 8)	Style	What is style? What do I mean when I talk about creating and living within a style?
Week 7 (Oct 15)	Opticals and Visual Effects	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.
Week 8 (Oct 22)	Sound Design	Spotting effects. How to use sound to fulfill your scene and script analyses. We might also spend some time in the Avid bays.

Week 9 (Oct 29)	Music Design	Spotting music. What music can do to accentuate your scene and script analysis.
Week 10 (Nov 5)	Documentaries	Telling a story with real footage. How it is the same as the dramatic footage we've been studying, how it is different. Lab Processes and Sound Mixing
Week 11 (Nov 12)	The Action Sequence	Creating an action sequence. Editing for story vs. editing for character (and why they aren't really different)
Week 12 (Nov 19)	Humor in Editing	Structure in comedy editing.
Week 13 (Nov 26)	Watching Dailies	How to look at longer formats. An introduction to Advanced Editing
Week 14 (Dec 3)	Experimental Film	Structure in less-obviously structured material.
Week 15 (Dec 10)	Short Short Films Wrapping Up and Moving Out	Music videos Commercials A look back and a look forward

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Beginning with the first week, you and your partner will be required to edit 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 movie you admire, and analyze it from the point of view of its editing — its style and content. You will then 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 of both a VHS and a DVD machine, of varying quality. Once again, my comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Three times during the semester you will be required to create a log line for a film (don't worry, we'll talk about what this means when the assignment is given out). You will be expected to hand in this log line at the beginning of the following class.

You will be required to attend the Avid Labs every week for the first four weeks of the class, and on alternating weeks after that, on Tuesday mornings, from 9 am until 12 noon. While there you will learn the techniques that good editors and assistant editors need to know, 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.*

There is a possibility that we will be having a weekend Final Cut Pro tutorial class immediately before the weeks we will be editing on that NLE. That class will happen either October 6th or 7th. I will let you know as soon as we can schedule that. We may also use the October 9th Avid Lab section to reinforce FCP techniques. In that case, that day's Avid Lab will be required of all students.

Near the end of the semester you will have a written quiz that will deal primarily with the hard technical skills you have been taught in regards to editing room procedures on film and Avid. The quiz will comprise topics that you've (hopefully) learned in class or covered in the Avid Lab. Right now, I've tentatively planned that quiz for either the class of November 26th or the December 3rd.

At the end of the semester, in lieu of a written final, 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 on December 10th you will hand in that tape. I will provide you with written notes later that week when you get your tapes back. I expect you to attend that final class, even though it is during the final exam period, since there will be some discussion. This final class is normally a half-class. In previous semesters, one of our guest speakers attended that evening.

Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. **ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT EVERY CLASS and AVID 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, <u>let me know by the evening before the class</u>. [Sorry for all of the bold facing, underlining and italics, but this section cannot be emphasized enough.]

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.

You will not be required to purchase any books this semester, but I would suggest you get <u>The Film Editing Room Handbook</u>, written by yours truly. This book, recently out of print (a collectors item!!) is a nuts and bolts discussion of how to set up an editing room. As such it is a complement to our discussions in class. Though many of you will not want to become professional editors, many of you will end up editing your own films at the beginning of your careers. These readings will help prepare you for that time. It may also help you remember concepts that will be covered on the quiz.

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.

As mentioned above, I will usually provide several handouts at each class. Others will be available online. All of these should be kept with you at all times (well, no... not when you're sleeping). I will post most of these on my web site, but I'm not going to be able to guarantee to post ALL of them, so don't count on getting them outside of class.

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 increasingly 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 5%**)

Competency in the quiz (**approximately 5%**).

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 15%**)

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 a number of weeks (**approximately 15%**).

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. In the years I've been teaching this has never yet happened to me. Editors can't be sick; they lose their jobs if they are.

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 film and tapes 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 videos are complete, with sound, and in viewable condition. You should check your videotapes before leaving the Avid editing station. Videotapes must be rewound to the beginning of the edited scene. 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.

Our 16mm film exercise must be properly leadered with sync start marks, and wound to the head.

EXTRA SPECIAL NOTE: Since there will be some weeks when we won't be able to watch everyone's tapes, I will occasionally need to take your tapes home with me. As a result, all videotapes should be properly identified on the outside case as well as on the output. This means your name, our class number (CTPR 535), the name/number of the scene and edit date.

WEB SITE

I have a constantly evolving Web Site designed for the class at this URL: http://www.norman-hollyn.com/535

Nearly all of the course materials will be loaded up to the Web the day that each class meets. This usually includes many of the handouts (in cases where the handouts are excerpts of longer pieces I will often post or link to the complete article), some script pages, a short description of the contents of each class, and a list of the homework assignments for the next week. On the class home page I will try (given enough time) to post articles and links that you might find of use — festival announcements, special offers and screenings, as well as class announcements. I encourage you to use the resources on the site.

Note that a copy of this syllabus will always be available on the site.

TRAINING

The bulk of your training in AVID will be supplied in the Tuesday morning Avid lab. In addition, you will need to have some basic training on 16mm film. Melinda and/or myself will provide this during non-class times. We will try and schedule two training sessions in the week of your first project on any new media.

OFFICE HOURS AND OUT OF CLASS CONSULTATION

My office hours are on Monday (10-12). Though I am often available at many other times. I will also return phone message in a more-or-less prompt manner. The best way to reach me is my email address -- nhollyn@cinema.usc.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The School of Cinema-Television 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 Malona 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 Melinda or 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.

RECOMMENDED READING:

In addition to my textbook, the following books are good sources for aesthetic and technical information about editing. I will occasionally refer to them.

Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of The Film Language*. A very detailed, thorough and incredibly tedious (but valuable) look at how to block a scene to create the best shots for editing. If you've ever tried to plan shots for a group of eight people around a dinner table, you'll appreciate this book. TECHNICAL

Bayes, Steve   *The Avid Handbook*.   This is an excellent reference book for the intermediate Avid editor, complete with tips and tricks on organizational skills, the Avid program, and the hardware. TECHNICAL

Boorman, John and Donahue, Walter. *PROJECTIONS*. This is a periodic book series that often includes interviews with directors. Some of their discussions are quite amazing in their description of storytelling. The excerpt from Walter Murch's interview about THE ENGLISH PATIENT that I use in class originally appeared in this series. AESTHETIC.

Case, Dominic. Film Technology in Post Production. TECHNICAL

Crittenden, Roger. *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing*.   AESTHETIC

Dancyger, Ken. *The Technique of Film Editing*.

Davis, Richard. *Complete Guide To Film Scoring*. We will be discussing film editing and music during one of our classes. This is a good companion for those of you who want to dig deeper into the topic.

Dmytryk, Edward. *On Film Editing*. A great discussion of editing, from a personal point of view. Also valuable from the same author are *On Screen Writing, On Screen Directing*, and *On Screen Acting* and *On Film*. AESTHETIC.

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*. I haven't actually read this book, but I have had it recommended to me. It covers the pre-production, shooting and editing of documentaries.

Koppelman, Charles. *Behind the Seen: How Walter Murch Edited Cold Mountain Using Apple's Final Cut Pro and What This Means for Cinema*. Despite its pompous title, this is a really great book which describes what it was *really* like in the editing room on COLD MOUNTAIN, from the prep work that Murch typically does before a film is shot, through the later previews. Rather than a book about Final Cut (though it does talk a lot about that) it is more a look at the real world of editing. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. AESTHETIC and PRACTICAL.

LoBrutto, Vincent. *Selected Takes: Film Editors On Editing*. A wonderful series of interviews with some of the top editors of the past and present. AESTHETIC.

Murch, Walter. *In The Blink of an Eye, A Perspective on Film Editing*. A transcription of some lectures that Murch gave, in which he introduced his hierarchy of reasons to make an edit, and much much more. Personally, I find that this material is much better covered in the Michael Ondaatje book below. AESTHETIC

Oldham, Gabriella. *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. This is the book I mentioned above. An incredible series of interviews with some of the top, most thoughtful, editors around. THIS IS A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED addition to our handout readings. AESTHETIC

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. This is an incredible series of interviews with one of the top film and sound editors in the art form today. Far more accessible and interesting than *In The Blink of an Eye*, it goes over many of the real world concerns in shaping characters and filmic story telling. AESTHETIC.

Pepperman, Richard D. *The Eye Is Quicker: Film Editing: Making a Good Film Better*. A profusely illustrated discussion of film editing, using frame grabs from well-known movies, to make general points about different styles of editing. AESTHETIC.

Rabiger, Michael. Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics. A very detailed study of the issues in directing. Its discussion of editing is very valuable for what it reveals about the storytelling mind, from the director's point of view.

Reisz, Karel, and Millar, Gavin. *The Technique of Film Editing*. One of the seminal texts on editing. While outdated in terms of some stylistic choices, it remains one of the classic texts on editing. AESTHETIC

Rosenblum, Ralph. *When The Shooting Stops... The Cutting Begins*. Rosenblum, a veteran film editor who cut many of Woody Allen's early films, talks about his experiences both in and out of the editing room. More raconteurial than instructional, it does give a nice sense of the style of a colorful editor -- both in terms of editing and politics. AESTHETIC.

Rubin, Michael. *Nonlinear - A Field Guide to Digital Video and Film Editing*. A description of the history and equipment in non-linear digital editing. Pictures of the various editing systems with descriptions of each one fill up most of the back part of the book. TECHNICAL

Solomons, Tony. *The Avid Film Editing Room Handbook*. This book is an excellent introductory work to the Avid. Though it isn't a how-to book in the classic sense, it does give the new Avid user a good sense of how to perform varying levels of tasks. TECHNICAL

Thompson, Roy. *The Grammar of the Edit*. AESTHETIC.

Truffaut, Francis. Hitchock/Truffaut. A series of interviews done by then-critic Truffaut of the master director, Alfred Hitchcock. It is here that his incredible theory on surprise vs. suspense is mentioned. AESTHETIC.

RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:

Podcasts (subscribe using the iTunes Music Store or a service like Podcast Alley)

Avid Technology Podcast – Interviews with filmmakers and software designers such as Jabez Olssen, editor of King Kong, and Phill Avanzatto, lead animator at PURE.

Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz – Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production.

Creative Screenwriting Magazine. An awesome podcast. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the "final rewrite").

CreativeCOW.net. An increasingly infrequent, but really good series of interviews from the people at creativecow, one of the premiere website/bulletin boards for the DV filmmaker. Lots of great topics here.

DV Show. A weekly podcast devoted to all things digital video.

FCP Tips. Short video podcast with tips and tricks on Final Cut Pro.

Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.

KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business. Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.

Kenradio Broadcasting. A daily podcast that goes into the issues in the communication industry today. With the entertainment and communication industries getting closer together everyday, this is a crucial podcast to keep you informed.

This Week In Media. This podcast, along with another of Leo LaPorte's podcasts "This Week In Tech", is a great series of discussions about topics that should be of interest to you – "Who Uses VHS?", distributing movies on iTunes, the Red Camera, and more.

A copy of this Syllabus is available on my web site at
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