

# **CTPR 241: Fundamentals of Cinematic Technique**

## **Course Syllabus -- Fall 2010**

**Instructor:** David Maquiling — Writing/Directing/Editing  
(c) (201) 936-7355; [dmaq@grasslandfilms.com](mailto:dmaq@grasslandfilms.com)

**Instructor:** Charles Rosher, ASC — Cinematography  
(c) (818) 298-1999

**SA:** Giles Andrew  
(c) (646) 643-9052; [gilesandrew@mac.com](mailto:gilesandrew@mac.com)

**Course Numbers:** 18450D

**Room:** SCA Room 363

**Class Hours:** Mondays: 9:00 am – 12:50 pm

**Office Hours:** TBD

**Catalogue Description:** Introduction to cinema production techniques and equipment, including producing, directing, camera, lighting, and editing.

### **CLASS OVERVIEW**

CTPR 241 (2 units) is a component of a broader sequence which is designed to introduce students to the fundamental technical and aesthetic concepts underlying motion picture production. The class is designed to fulfill several functions. First, we will provide you with the information and support you will need to have a successful semester.

The class will present the basic technical information on camera, lighting, editing, sound, production management, acting, and directing that you must have to create your projects. We assume no prior filmmaking background.

Additionally, we will investigate the aesthetic side of cinema from the filmmaker's point of view. Through lectures, film clips, discussion and in-class exercises, we will examine the power and technique of cinematic communication.

### **ORGANIZATION**

The class will meet on Mondays from 9:00–12:50 pm, following a calendar handed out separately. Two instructors teach the course, one emphasizing directing and editing, the other cinematography, but both are responsible for class-wide issues such as safety, grading, etc. In addition to the continuing faculty, special segments will be taught by visiting faculty in Scene Study/Acting and Sound Design/Editing.

**EATING AND DRINKING IN THE CLASSROOM ARE PROHIBITED AT ALL TIMES. BOTTLED WATER IS THE ONLY EXCEPTION.**

We will be conducting brief story conferences, scheduled by A, B, and C group, as shown in the Class Calendar. In lecture and hands-on practical sessions, we will use the Sony DSR PD-170 mini-DV digital camera to demonstrate some of the following techniques.

Clips from various movies will be utilized in the discussion of concepts and theories of filmmaking. The class will cover the operation of the video camera and the basic use of lighting and grip equipment. In lighting classes we will demonstrate various lighting techniques.

### **1. Introduction to the basic principles of Cinematography:**

- a. What the job of the Cinematographer entails
- b. Pre-production design
- c. Collaboration with others
- d. Visualizing the story
- e. Camera angles and placement
- f. Aesthetics of depth of field
- g. Composition
- h. Movement
- i. Blocking
- j. Continuity
- k. The "180 line"
- l. Lighting choices and aesthetics
- m. Color theory and expressive use of color

### **2. Technical introduction to the use of the equipment:**

- a. Sony DSR PD-170 mini-DV Digital Camera
  1. Basic components
  2. Focus
  3. Exposure
  4. Time code
  5. White balance
  6. Shutter Speed
  7. Sound
  8. Tripod
  9. Care and maintenance
- b. Lighting with available light
  1. Daylight / Exposure balancing
  2. Practicals
  3. Paper Lanterns and other inexpensive fixtures
- c. Proper use of 290/241 lighting kits - fixtures and globes
  1. Basic use of grip and electric equipment
  2. Basic electricity
- d. Safety

### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

For some of you, this will be your first time handling a camera. It may be overwhelming at first. Don't worry! You'll learn by doing it. Cinematography may not be your final career path, but understanding the language of the camera and lighting will enrich your storytelling abilities and your appreciation of film.

We encourage you to explore different film genres, i.e. narrative, documentary, experimental. Similarly, we would like you to shoot in different visual styles or moods through camera and lighting choices to enhance the story. This will be a demanding semester, especially time-wise. It's important to remember to enjoy the process.

Participation is very important at all times - in class, hands-on sessions, exercises, and above all, when helping your fellow classmates make their films. Don't be afraid to ask questions. This class is for you. Your feedback regarding the structure, demonstration or discussion will be invaluable and will improve the learning experience for all of us. Please don't wait until the end of the semester to speak up.

## **LIGHTING**

As far as lighting is concerned, there's never an end to learning. The key is to start looking - to really start to SEE what is around you. What exactly does the light on your desk look like? How does the light from the lamp illuminate your desk?

How would you recreate it? What does the sunlight look like in your room in the morning? How different is it in the afternoon? Does the color change? How would you recreate that? And, above all, what mood do these different types of light create? Is that the effect you want?

Study the light you see around you that you've been taking for granted. Look at how Light falls on the people and objects it "touches".

## **RECOMMENDED ACCESSORIES**

- Basic Tool Kit
- Grip Gloves
- Mini Flashlight
- Gel book
- Headphones

## **GRADING**

Your grade will be based on the following:

- |                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. In-class exercises | 30% |
|-----------------------|-----|

We will assign a series of small-group exercises to introduce specific skills. The exercises will be shot, viewed, and critiqued in class time.

- |                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| 2. Class participation and Attendance | 10% |
|---------------------------------------|-----|

Cinema is an art of illusions, and as cinema-makers, students need to learn to see how cinematic illusions are crafted; intense analysis and class discussion are keys to such learning.

The class also includes several group exercises. Class participation by every student is essential; consequently, attendance is mandatory. Meetings will begin promptly at the scheduled time—and you are expected to be *present when class begins!*

Attendance is taken through the use of a sign-in sheet, so it is important to remember to sign in. Students with more than two unexcused absences will be downgraded one half grade (i.e. from A- to B+).

3. Demonstration of Craft 30%

The quality of cinematography, editing, and sound tracks in your class exercises and 290 projects will be evaluated.

4. Presentation 15%

You will present a short film clip of a favorite scene to the class, and analyze it according to criteria we will provide.

5. Final Assignment 15%

### **SAFETY**

No aspect of filmmaking is more important than safety. Safety issues will be given great emphasis in this class and in your 290 section. Keep in mind that under no circumstances are you permitted to do projects requiring stunts or special effects which might compromise the safety of the crew, cast or observers.

You will be given a booklet titled "HAZARDOUS SHOOTING CONDITIONS"; be sure to review it carefully for safety guidelines, since you will be required to sign a COMMITMENT TO SAFETY based on its standards.

- 1) **An actor cannot drive a vehicle while being directed or speaking dialogue.**
- 2) **Minors cannot act in your film without a Studio Teacher present.**
- 3) **No guns of any kind may appear in a 290/241 project**
- 4) **The rules for safety MUST be followed...or else the film will not be counted as one of your projects and your grade in the class will be affected.**

We are not trying to prevent you from using weapons or stunts; on the contrary, by consulting with your faculty and our safety expert, Joe Wallenstein, Director of Physical Production, you will learn how to get the shots you want safely. However, certain activities, such as explosions, car mounts, squibs, tying into electrical mains, etc. are *strictly forbidden*. Most effects can be suggested effectively through creative direction and editing.

<p><b>You face serious consequences for safety or ethics violations, including suspension and expulsion from the University.</b></p>
--

**You must have HAZARDOUS SHOOTING CONDITIONS FORMS, signed by your Professors and the Head of Physical Production, PRIOR to shooting in any situation or location that might be considered dangerous or when using of any other weapons, projectiles, or stunts. If you cannot reach us in time, postpone it!**

<p><b>NO GUNS OF ANY KIND MAY BE USED OR SHOWN IN ANY PROJECTS PRODUCED IN THE 290/241 CLASS.</b></p>
---

**All guns --prop, toy, plastic, or otherwise -- pose an unacceptable risk of accidental injury or death. If your plot requires a gun, consult with your teachers about creative ways to suggest its presence without actually showing it.**

The Stage is a place where people can be seriously injured or equipment damaged beyond repair. **PAY ATTENTION.** Wear shoes that protect your feet. **NO OPEN TOED SHOES, SANDALS, OR HI-HEELS. This also goes for when you are shooting on location.**

### **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 one of the faculty 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.

**RECOMMENDED TEXT** (*available in Bookstore, 3rd floor*)

Rea, Peter W. and Irving, David K. ***Producing And Directing The Short Film And Video*** Focal Press, 2002

Schroeppel, Tom ***The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video***  
Self-published. (May be on shelf for CTPR 290)

**ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED READINGS**

- Ball, William ***A Sense of Direction***
- Block, Bruce ***The Visual Story***
- Goldman, William ***Adventures in the Screen Trade***
- Johnson, Claudia H. ***Crafting Short Screenplays that Connect***
- Katz, Steven D. ***Film Directing Shot by Shot*** Stoneham, Mass: Focal Press
- Lumet, Sidney ***Making Movies*** New York: Vintage Books, 1996
- Malkiewicz, Kris and Robert E. Rogers ***Cinematography***
- Malkiewicz, Kris and Barbara J. Gryboski ***Film Lighting***
- Mamet, David ***On Directing Film*** New York: Penguin Books, 1991
- Murch, Walter ***In the Blink of an Eye*** Los Angeles :Silman-James Press, 1995
- Schaefer, Dennis and Larry Salvato ***Masters of Light***
- Weston, Judith ***Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television.***