USCCinematicArts

CTPR 385 (18511R)
Colloquium: Motion Picture Production Techniques

Units: 4
Fall 2015 - Thursday - 4:00-6:50 pm

Location: RZC 114

Instructor: Dave O'Brien
Office: SCA 410
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:30
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Teaching Assistant: Sam Shaib
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Course Description

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 very 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.

Through class exercises, analysis of past 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.

Course Notes

- All projects will be shot on the Canon XA-20 camera 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, 2015."
- Video projects must be uploaded to the class Youtube account, BE LABELED WITH LAST NAMES OF ALL TRIO MEMBERS (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.**
- Trade article assignments are to be uploaded to the class Tumblr.

Individual Projects/Assignments

1. Camera Basics Project: Individually, each student will produce, direct and shoot a short scene of one minute or less, demonstrating a state change in a character or environment. This assignment will be graded on a traditional letter grade basis.

2. Trade Article Re-Blogs: Five times throughout the semester, explore one (or more) of the following
   - Variety/Variety.com
   - Hollywood Reporter/hollywoodreporter.com
   - Deadline Hollywood/deadline.com/Hollywood
   - Hope For Film/hopeforfilm.com
   Choose an article that interests you and summarize the article as though you were reblogging it in no more than three paragraphs, and tell us why you think this article is interesting or relevant and post it to the class blog by **WEDNESDAY at 6 pm**.

   INCLUDE YOUR OPINION AND END WITH A QUESTION OR QUESTIONS. **INCLUDE THE LINK TO THE ORIGINAL POST AND YOUR NAME AS THE BYLINE.** YOU MUST CHOOSE AN ARTICLE THAT NO OTHER STUDENT HAS PREVIOUSLY POSTED. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

3. Final Written Exam: You will participate in a final written exam to cover material from the entire semester.

Group Projects/Assignments

1. Creative Workouts
2. Coverage Project (in trios)
   - 2 page scene, 2-3 minutes from existing screenplay
   - 2 actors, 1 location

- One trio member serve as Director, one serves as Producer/Cinematographer, one serves as Production Sound/Editor

3. Mini-Documentary Project (in trios)
   - 1-5 minute mini-documentary on a subject of your choosing
   - Focus on SHOW rather than TELL
   - One trio member serve as Director, one serves as Producer/Cinematographer, one serves as Production Sound/Editor

3. Final Scripted Project
   - Students will work in trios to write an original or adapted script of no more than five pages for a 3-7 minute short film that could be produced with limited budget, no more than three actors and a limited number of locations for consideration for the final project.
   - One trio member serve as Director, one serves as Producer/Cinematographer, one serves as Production Sound/Editor

Equipment and Facilities

The School will provide:
- **Semester-long checkouts -** Canon XA-20 cameras, one per group of three students. 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.
- **Weekly checkouts –** With consent of instructor, you will be able to check out a basic light kit and basic audio kit. Light kits will be reserved for final projects only.

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 SD 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.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
"Voice & Vision: A Creative Approach to Narrative Film and DV Production." Mick Hurbis-Cherrier, Second Edition. Available at the book store or on Amazon.

Description and Assessment of Assignments
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.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class participation (discussions, feedback to other students, etc…)		15
Five Weekly Trade Article Uploads (2 points each)		10
Creative Workouts (2.5 points each)		10
Camera Basics Project (individual)		10
Coverage project (in partnerships)		10
Mini Documentary		15
Final Project Script		5
Final Scripted Project		15

Assignment Submission Policy

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, we encourage you to 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.** "Turned in" means, in most cases, fully uploaded to the class YouTube page or posted to Tumblr.

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 two 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, PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR INSTRUCTOR PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF CLASS AND MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO 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.

Additional Policies

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 <u>does not apply to the independent projects that students do outside of USC.</u>

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).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 8/27	**INTRODUCTIONS** **IDEA TO STORY**	**Read V&V Chapters 1 & 18** **CAMERA BASICS** Individually, shoot a non-dialogue scene that is one minute or less in which something happens to cause a change to occur. Edit simply with online tools like WeVideo. **CREATIVE WORKOUT 1** In trios, choose a favorite scene from a movie and draw storyboards to outline the shots used.	
Week 2 9/3	**SAFETY MEETING** Joe Wallenstein walks us through USC regulations. **VISUAL LANGUAGE 1**	**Read V&V Chapter 20** **Complete AVID Online Tutorial** (approx 90 minutes)	**Creative Workout 1 – Scene Breakdown DUE**
Week 3 9/10	**CAMERA CHECK-OUT** Meet at Equipment Center **CAMERA & LOCATION SOUND WORKSHOP** **VIEW CAMERA BASICS**	**Read V&V Chapter 20** **Complete AVID Online Tutorial** (approx 90 minutes)	**Camera Basics DUE**
Week 4 9/17	**EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 1** Classroom 1/2 AVID Lab 2/2	**Read V&V Chapter 4 & 5 (100-118 only)** **Creative Workout 2: Boston Legal** Using the skills we've covered so far, roughly piece together a scene from the TV show Boston Legal with your trio.	**Arrive having reviewed the AVID Tutorial**
Week 5 9/24	**EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 2** Meet in AVID Lab	**Read V&V Chapter 6 (123-133 only) & 21** **Coverage Project**	**Creative Workout 2 – Boston Legal DUE**

		Upload to Blackboard the script, storyboards and shot list for your coverage project. Begin pre-production.	
Week 6 10/1	**CINEMATIC TIME & SPACE** **WORKING WITH ACTORS**	**Read V&V Chapters 6, 5 (118-122 only) & 7 (150-162 only)** **Coverage Project** Shoot and Edit your coverage projects	**Script, Storyboards and Shot list for Coverage Project DUE**
Week 7 10/8	**DOCUMENTARY** **PRODUCING** **VIEW COVERAGE PROJECTS**	**Read V&V Chapters 13 & 16** **Mini Documentary Project** Shoot and Edit Mini Documentary Projects	**Coverage Projects DUE**
Week 8 10/15	**MORE ON DOCUMENTARY** **LIGHTING**	**Read V&V Chapter 2** **BEGIN WORK ON FINAL PROJECT SCRIPTS**	
Week 9 10/22	**SCREENPLAYS & STORY STRUCTURE** **VIEW MINI DOCS**	**Read V&V 7 (141-150)** **CONTINUE WORK ON FINAL PROJECT SCRIPTS**	**Mini Docs DUE**
Week 10 10/29	**THE PRODUCTION CREW** **SCRIPT WORKSHOP**	**Read V&V Chapter 21** **Revise Scripts** **Creative Workout 3 Casting Sessions** Audition at least five people for each role and bring in top three to view for class for each role. Editors should help cut these down for class.	**Script drafts DUE**
Week 11 11/5	**VIEW CASTING TAPES** **SOUND DESIGN**	**Read V&V Chapter 17** **Writer/Producers lock locations, pre-production and production design needs. *Bring location photos to class.***	**Creative Workout 3 – Casting tapes DUE**

		Creative Workout 4 Shot Lists/Storyboards for final project	
Week 12 11/12	**RUNNING THE SET** **PRODUCTION PREP**	**Prepare for shoot. Shoot. Editors break down shot footage and prepare select takes to bring to class. Begin working on rough cut.**	**Creative Workout 4 - Shot lists DUE** **SHOOT 11/13-11/16 WEEKEND**
Week 13 11/19	**WATCH AND DISCUSS DAILIES** **FINAL EXAM REVIEW**	**Editors continue working on rough cut and Bring in Director toward end of process for feedback.**	**Dailies DUE**
Week 14 11/24	**NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING**		
Week 15 12/3	**WATCH AND DISCUSS ROUGH CUT** **CAMERA RETURNS/FACULTY EVALS**	**Sound Designers begin pulling sound effects and music in preparation to edit.**	**Rough Cut DUE**
FINAL TBA		**Producers and Editors insure all cast and crew get copies of final project**	Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC *Schedule of Classes* at www.usc.edu/soc.

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 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 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.