

USC School of Cinematic Arts
CTPR 335 Motion Picture Editing, Section 18498
Class Meetings: Tuesday 7pm-10pm
Location: SCA 363 or 356 (see below for details)

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Office hours are by appointment

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Syllabus subject to change

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Picture Editors are story tellers. Unlike writers who use text, or lyricists who use words, we use visual images, dialogue, sound, special effects and music to tell our stories. How we use these elements and why we use them is important. *Why* should I cut at this frame as opposed to this one? *Why* is it more important to use off-camera dialog as opposed to playing dialog on-camera? *Why* should a music cue start at this point in a scene as opposed to that point? *When* to cut, *when not* to cut, *when* to stylize, *when not* to and *why*.

This class is about the “hows” (using the AVID, editing techniques, the grammar and language of editing), and the “whys” (editing aesthetics, basic theory and concepts behind film editing.)

The class will partly be a hands-on course where you will learn the basics of how to use Avid Media Composer, the leading software in the motion picture post-production industry. Even though picture editing is fundamentally about story telling, it is also a technical medium needing great organizational skills. Therefore, you will also learn how to organize a project, set up bins, manage media (footage, sound effects, music), create custom settings, and how to properly present your assignments each week.

Learning the basic concepts of editing is useful for all facets of filmmaking, especially if you want to be a writer, director, producer, or even a cinematographer—for after the shooting stops, it all comes down to the editor to put the pieces together to make a story. At the end of the semester, you should not only be able to analyze any piece of media from an editing perspective and understand *why* the editor made the choices he/she did, but you will also be able to cut your own stories using your own choices.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT:

SCA approved and supported Hard Drives

*****Check SCA Community website BEFORE purchasing a drive*****

Below is the navigation to information on what hard drive to purchase.

SCA Community:

<https://cinema.usc.edu/Laptops/>

Scroll down and click "HARD DRIVES"

Head phones

You will have to purchase headphones with a 1/4" adapter for use in the labs.

SUGGESTED READING

Cutting It In Hollywood

by Mitchell Danton

In the Blink of an Eye

by Walter Murch

"Media Composer 6: Part 1 - Editing Essentials"

by Mary Plummer; Avid Learning Series

This book comes with media that coincides with each chapter. If you are a hands-on learner, this is the way to go.

"The Lean Forward Moment: Create Compelling Stories for Film, TV, and The Web"

by Norman Hollyn; New Riders Press

(mainly chapters: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

Foundations of Video: The Art of Editing with Norman Hollyn on www.lynda.com

CLASS FORMAT

Each week will be a mixture of lecture, class discussion/presentations and hands-on training. Once you begin your editing assignments, a portion of class time will be devoted to sharing individual editing assignments. An editor's work is scrutinized every day in the real world, so in this class you will be expected to show your work to everyone and get their notes.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

There will be small editing assignments done in class, and five larger editing projects that deal with different editing theories and techniques. You will work in pairs cutting raw footage (called "Dailies") from Hollywood industry films and television shows. You will be asked to cut scenes together, show your first cuts in front of the class and get their feedback, then hand in revisions based on your notes. Part of this process will also be learning the technical skills necessary to work with Avid Media Composer more creatively and efficiently. All work will be copied to your hard drive. **Bring your hard drive to class each week so you can show work in class. Absolutely NO QuickTime files will be accepted.**

There will also be a written scene analysis assignment and various oral presentations throughout the semester.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PROTOCOL

Students are expected to attend class regularly and be punctual. Class starts promptly at 7:00 pm. Excused absences will be granted only in the case of rare extenuating circumstances with an email of explanation prior to class. If you are absent without a valid excuse, and email, or are habitually late, your grade will be affected. There will be **NO USE OF CELL PHONE** functions in class. Laptops may remain open **ONLY** if they are used to take notes. Non-observance of the above will definitely affect your grade.

GRADING:

Grading will be done on a standard scale with no curve:

- A 600 pts.
- A- 550 pts.
- B 500 pts.
- B- 450 pts.
- C 400 pts.
- C- 350 pts

Editing Assignment # 1 (Boston Legal)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 2 (500 DAYS OF SUMMER scene)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 3 (Action scene)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 4 (Action scene with style/VFX)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 5 (Promo or music video)	100	points
Scene Analysis/oral class presentations	75	points
Project Organization	25	points
Class participation	100	points
Final exam	100	points
Total of	600	points

Attendance: More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade 50 pts.

Tardiness: Each unexcused tardiness is minus 5 points (tardiness is arriving after 7:15). If you KNOW you are going to be late, E-MAIL ME so that I can mark it as excused!!!

*****Participation is an important part of your grade:**

I would like everyone to be an active participant every week. Filmmaking and editing requires teamwork, collaboration, and the sharing of opinions on your work on a daily basis, so your contributions to the work of others are crucial to the learning process.

*****Do not hesitate to ask me for help, or to discuss conceptual ideas you have for your assignments:**

Editing, in the beginning, can be confusing... So please, do not let concerns over the buttons keep you from a rewarding and fun experience.

PRESENTATION of Editing Assignments

All of your editing assignments will be copied to your hard drive and shared in class; your SA and lab assistants can help with this process.

Project organization is 25 points of your total grade!!! Every week, I will inspect your drives upon viewing your assignments. I expect all projects to be organized in the same format I teach you in class. Failure to do so WILL affect your grade. Project organization will be discussed in the first few classes.

Every assignment should have:

A Title Card at the beginning with all of the necessary information and be presented in this format:

- 2 seconds of black,
- 5 seconds of Title Card that contains the following information:
 - Your name (s)
 - Project Name (i.e.: Law & Order: SVU sc.18)
 - Version (i.e.: "First Cut," "Second Cut,")
- 2 more seconds of black
- the editing assignment
- then finishing with 1 second of black at the end

RULES FOR USING SCA COMPUTER LABS

1) No food, drinks (including bottled water), gum, or skateboards in the labs, Edit or Sound Edit Suites. Violation of this rule will result in suspension of Lab or Edit Room privileges. Locker area is available for food and drink storage.

2) You must sign in at Front Desk with your Student ID and use station assigned. Any change must be done through Front Desk.

3) If you are having technical problems with your workstation, contact a Tech through the Front Desk or Help Desk.

- 4) Closing time is strictly enforced. Techs will give warnings when to begin saving. Please do not argue with them.
- 5) Lab Hours and Supported Hard Drive documents can be found at the Front Desk, Help Desk, and SCA Community.
- 6) Headphones with 1/4 inch adapters are required at each workstation. SCA does not supply headphones or adapters.
- 7) Users may be bumped after their station has been vacant for a period of 30 minutes.
- 8) For locker checkout, fill out locker form in B144. Lock must be approved before locker is assigned.
- 9) SCA Help Documents are located on each workstation desktop.
- 10) Please handle all equipment and computers professionally.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on our exams, or submitting any work that you or your partner have not done. 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 your SA 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 your SA 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.

WEEKLY COURSE PLAN:

The following is a rough outline of how the semester will progress. All material below is subject to change, dependent upon guest speaker and lab time availability.

*****Editing assignments will be done in pairs.*****

Week 1 (January 10)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

- Take care of registration
- Review the syllabus
- Discussion about the course

Practice:

-From 8-10 PM we will have an introductory tutorial on using the SCA labs and Avid Media Composer in the editing Labs (ROOM B118)

(set up project, bins, transfer media, user settings, hard drives)

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

- Purchase and format hard drive with your partner.
- Set up your editing project and bring to class
- Editing in the LAB – Create/set up your editing project:**
- Create and label your project (Boston Legal)
- Make and label bins (dailies, first cut, etc.)
- Copy current project to hard drives in lab (bring all work to class on your hard drive)

Week 2 (January 17)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

- Watch portion of “The Cutting Edge” – a brief introduction, overview and history of film editing.
- Discuss log lines and scene Analysis, beats, creating change.
- Discuss camera angles (coverage) setups and slating.
- The 180 degree rule
- The Kuleshov effect (example from my work)
- The Lined Script (see printed examples)

Practice:

- Setting up project (Editing Assignment 1: Boston Legal)
- Sub clipping and organizing your dailies to prepare for cutting.
- Start setting up your Keyboard

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

- Write out a scene analysis for your Boston Legal scene (ask SA to email you copy of the script)
- Pick a movie you like, write a log line for it.
- Bring both to class to hand in; be prepared to share with the class in an oral presentation.
- Editing in the LAB – Organize your project:**
- Find your scene for Boston Legal on classroom exercises partition.
- Organize it: subclip dailies, copy to the dailies bin, with scene numbers labeled, text view or frame view
- Copy project to hard drive
- Bring to class your organized scene (on your hard drive) and be prepared to share with the class, along with your written scene analysis and log line.

Week 3 (January 24)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

- Approaching dailies: how to watch raw footage and understand the thought process of the editor, using the scene analysis
- Cutting a basic scene
- The Lean Forward moment in a scene (example from my work)

Practice:

- Turn in logline/script analysis (be prepared to share with the class)
- Review project set up assignments
- Study dailies of Boston Legal scene
- Basic concepts of making your first cuts.
- Source/Record. Cutting in the timeline. Working with splice, lift vs. extract, and basic trimming.

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Editing in the LAB:

- Start cutting your Exercise 1/Boston Legal scene (First Assembly)
- Bring your cut on your hard drive to class

Week 4 (January 31)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

- Finish watching The Cutting Edge
- Working with Sound and Music/Creating a sound design
- Watch and discuss examples of sound FX and music in feature films or TV shows

Practice:

- Review and watch editing assignments with class (Boston Legal first assembly)
- Discuss refining your cuts

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

- Refine your Exercise 1/Boston Legal cut (Editor's Rough Cut)

Week 5 (February 7)

Lecture:

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

- More editing techniques: trim mode, scrolling, match cut
- Introduction to sound and music editing
- L-cuts, checker boarding, dialogue editing

Practice:

- Watch refined Boston Legal editing assignments and give final notes

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

- Prepare AVID project from Editing Assignment 2 dailies (Scene choices will be given in class). You will sub-clip these dailies, organize your project, and begin a first assembly of your scene.

Week 6 (February 14)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

-Cutting genres – Horror and Suspense (view and discuss examples)

Practice:

-Avid project for Editing Assignment 2 will be inspected for organization, and first assembly progress will be viewed, notes given.

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Complete your cut of Editing Assignment 2. Add sound design and music. Consider this your final version to present in next week's class.

Week 7 (February 21)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

-Watch and discuss examples of action cutting in feature films or TV shows

-Discuss action cutting techniques

-Watch dailies of action scenes (Gladiator; Thor; ER), and analyze dailies for action cutting

Practice:

-Watch Editing Assignment 2; additional changes can be made for next week if necessary.

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Prepare AVID project from Editing Assignment 3 dailies (*Scene choices will be given in class*); Begin assembling first cut of action scene. Make any additional changes to Editing Assignment 2 if necessary.

Week 8 (February 28)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

-Working with Style/VFX – part 1

-Watch and discuss examples of feature film or TV shows – stylistic vs. formal.

Practice:

-Watch 1st versions of Editing assignment 3, give notes, discuss ideas for adding EFX/style/sound and music.

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Address notes given in class; Continue working on your Editing Assignment 3, start adding EFX/style/music/sound design to your cuts to turn it into Editing Assignment 4 – focus more on sound/music for now.

Week 9 (March 7)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

-Working with Style/VFX – part 2

-How to use the EFX pallet and other stylistic techniques

Practice:

-Watch 1st versions of Editing Assignment 4, give notes, discuss more ideas for refining/adding EFX/style.

-Using the AVID effects palette

-Stylistic techniques

-Work on sound and music editing, adding EFX/style in lab

ASSIGNMENT (to complete the week AFTER we come back from break on 03/28):

-Address notes given in class; Continue adding EFX/style/music/sound design to your cuts (See below – no presentation in the following class; you will turn this in as a FINAL version on 03/28)

*****SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS MARCH 14*****

Week 10 (March 21)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

-Comedy Editing – show clips and examples. **Possible guest speaker*

Practice:

-No practice/viewing of assignments

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Address notes given in class before break; Continue adding EFX/style/music/sound design to your cuts (Editing Assignment 4 – Final version to be presented next week!)

Week 11 (March 28)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

-Intercutting

-Promos, Trailers, and Music Videos (view and discuss examples)

Practice:

-Watch final versions of Editing Assignment 4

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Start preparing/cutting Editing Assignment 5 – be prepared to present a pitch/idea/subclips/assemblies in class on 04/11.

Week 12 (April 4)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture:

-Documentary Film & Television (view and discuss examples)

Practice:

-No practice/viewing of assignments

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Continue preparing/cutting Editing Assignment 5 – be prepared to present a pitch/idea in class on 04/11. Make sure you have gone through the classroom exercises and pulled (sub-clipped) pieces to present as part of your pitch/assembly; be prepared to pitch to the class!

Week 13 (April 11)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture:

-Multi-cam editing for (sitcoms, reality TV, etc.)

Practice:

-Basics of grouping, cutting from groups, working with multi-cam footage

-Review current state of Editing Assignment 5; discuss ideas/pitches

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Put together a 1st version of Editing Assignment 5.

Week 14 (April 18)

*****CLASS IN SCA 356**

Lecture/Practice:

-View 1st version of Editing Assignment 5, give notes

ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):

-Address notes/finish cutting your promo or music video/Editing Assignment 5

Week 15 (April 25)

*****CLASS IN SCA 363**

Lecture/Practice:

- Review for the final/Last class
- Realities of the editor's job – the challenges, the usual behavioral mistakes first-time editors make and how to avoid them, the psychological aspects of working with the director and other creative people, how to run the room, how to get the job and keep it.

Practice:

- View final versions of promo or music video/Editing Assignment 5.

ASSIGNMENT

- Study/Prepare for Final.

Week 16 (May 2): *****STUDY WEEK – NO CLASS*****

Week 17 (May 9)

-Final Exam *IMPORTANT: ALL STUDENTS MUST BE PRESENT ON THIS DAY FOR THE FINAL EXAM. NO MAKE-UP DATES WILL BE ALLOWED. THIS IS SCA POLICY. PLEASE MAKE YOUR TRAVEL PLANS ACCORDINGLY!**

NON REQUIRED/ADDITIONAL READING

Murch, Walter: *In the Blink of An Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing* 2nd Edition
Silman-James Press. AESTHETIC.

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

Oldham, Gabriella. *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. This is the book 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

Koppelman, Charles. *Behind the Seen: How Walter Murch Edited Cold Mountain Using Apple's Final Cut Pro and What This Means for Cinema*. 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.

Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of The Film Language*. A very detailed 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. 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

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

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

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.

Cohen, Steve. *Avid Agility (2nd Edition)*. This is a great book that encompasses both basic and intermediate tips for the Avid Media Composer. Once you're good at the program, this book will give you a number of "Oh My God! THAT'S how to do that faster/easier" moments. TECHNICAL. Order directly from Amazon at <http://amzn.to/qX8x0y>

Davis, Richard. *Complete Guide To Film Scoring*. We will be discussing film editing and music. 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.

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.

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. AESTHETIC.

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. Less 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. *Hitchcock/Truffaut*. A series of interviews done by then-critic Truffaut of the master director, Alfred Hitchcock. His theory on surprise vs. suspense. AESTHETIC.

STUDENT SURVEY:

Name _____

Major _____ Email _____

The following is not graded. My intention is to understand everyone's capabilities and interests coming into the semester.

* What kind of editing experience have you had at USC or elsewhere? Please be specific.

* Are you familiar with any editing software? If so, please list which ones.

* Why did you choose to take this course?

* Name three things you hope to learn in this course.

* List your five favorite films... and why (this doesn't have to be about editing).

* List your five favorite TV shows... and why (this doesn't have to be about editing).