

USCCinematicArts

CTPR 385 (18511R)

Colloquium: Motion Picture Production Techniques

Units: 4

Fall 2017 - Thursday - 4:00- 6:50 pm

Location: RZC Stage E

Instructor: Dave O'Brien

Office: SCA 410

Office Hours: By appointment only

Contact Info: dpo@usc.edu, 213.610.0667

Student Assistant: Nick Oceano

Contact Info: mattachine2001@gmail.com, 213.840.1590

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, 2017."
- Video projects must be uploaded to the class Youtube account, BE LABELED WITH LAST NAMES OF ALL GROUP 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.

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 (about \$80), 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. About \$20 at Target, Best Buy, Office Depot or online, shared with trio.
- Hard drive (about \$120) and flash drive (about \$10) for use in AVID LAB, shared with trio.
- 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 two 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 overall 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).

Some projects will be considered on a PASS/FAIL basis. Grades on all GROUP, GRADED PROJECTS will be based 50% on creative execution of the project including demonstration of course concepts and 50% on effort, collaboration and performance in individual role.

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.

Projects/Assignments

1. **Individual - What Matters to Me and Why:** Individually, each student will prepare a brief presentation, no more than three minutes, in the style of a TED Talk on a cause or issue you care about. Introduce us to the topic, share a story if possible about how you came to be concerned about this cause (about yourself, about someone else) and/or talk about how you might use cinematic media to influence change in this area. **Grade will be based 50% on presentation and 50% on persuasiveness.**
2. **Individual - Trade Article Summary/Responses:** Three times throughout the semester, explore one (or more) of the following...
 - Variety - Variety.com
 - Hollywood Reporter - hollywoodreporter.com
 - Deadline Hollywood - deadline.com/Hollywood
 - IndieWire - indiewire.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 Blackboard by **Wednesday at 6 pm**. Note that these must be submitted in each third of the semester (outlined in course calendar)

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. **Creative Workouts:** Two times throughout the semester, you'll be asked to complete three smaller assignments. **Each will be graded on a pass/fail basis.**
 - Individual – Scene Breakdown
 - Group – Editing Exercise Part 1
4. **Group - Coverage Project**
 - 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
5. **Group - Mini-Documentary Project**
 - 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

6. Group - 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

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade
Class participation (discussion, feedback to other students, etc...)	15
Three Weekly Trade Articles (5 points each)	15
Creative Workouts (5 points each)	10
What Matters to Me and Why	10
Coverage Project (Trios)	10
Documentary Project (Trios)	15
Final Scripted Project	25

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. **Assignments arriving after the start of class will have a 1/3 letter grade penalty and will be presented at the instructor's discretion.** “Turned in” means, in most cases, fully uploaded to the class YouTube page or posted to Blackboard. **ASSIGNMENTS UPLOADED TO YOUTUBE MUST ALSO BE POSTED AS A LINK ON BLACKBOARD FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

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 does not apply to the independent projects that students do outside of USC.

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	Deliverables DUE	Readings and Assignments
Week 1 8/24	INTRODUCTIONS BASICS OF STORY STORYTELLING EXERCISE THE PRODUCTION PROCESS	None	Read V&V Chapters 1 & 4 WHAT MATTERS TO ME AND WHY Creative Workout 1: Scene Breakdown Choose a favorite scene from a movie and draw storyboards to outline the shots used.
Week 2 8/31	SAFETY MEETING Joe Wallenstein walks us through USC regulations PRESENT WMMW's SPACE AND TIME	Creative Workout 1 – Scene Breakdown	Read V&V Chapter 20 & 18 Complete AVID Online Tutorial (approx 90 minutes)
Week 3 9/7 Meet in AVID Lab	EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 1	Arrive having reviewed the AVID Tutorial	Read V&V Chapter 21 & 23 Creative Workout 2: Editing Exercise Using the skills we've covered so far, roughly piece together a scene from provided footage with your trio.
Week 4 9/14 Meet in AVID Lab	EDITING/AVID TUTORIAL PART 2	Creative Workout 2 – Editing Exercise due <i>Trade Article 1 prior to this Date</i>	Read V&V Chapter 10, 11 Coverage Project Scene Prep Find or write a simple scene to prepare and shoot. Prepare script, shot list and storyboards next week. RESERVE AUDIO KITS
Week 5 9/21 Meet at Camera Equipment Center	CAMERA CHECK-OUT CAMERA/ PRODUCTION SOUND WORKSHOP	Coverage Project Script, Shot List, Storyboards	Read V&V Chapter 15, 16 Coverage Project Shoot and edit your coverage project
Week 6 9/28	WATCH COVERAGE PROJECT ASSEMBLIES VISUAL LANGUAGE 1	Shot and assembled Coverage Project	Read Doc Story Chapter 3 (Blackboard) Develop Documentary Idea

Week 7 10/5	DOCUMENTARY STORY VISUAL LANGUAGE 2	Final Edited Coverage Project Present Documentary Ideas	Read Doc Story Chapter 11 (Blackboard) Research/Develop Docs
Week 8 10/12	WORKSHOP DOCS LIGHTING	Documentary Pitches	SHOOT DOCUMENTARY
Week 9 10/19	INTERVIEWS SHOOTING ACTION	<i>Trade Article 2 prior to this Date</i>	Read V&V Chapter 13, 14 SHOOT/EDIT DOCUMENTARY
Week 10 10/26	DOCUMENTARY EDITING SCREENPLAY STRUCTURE PRODUCTION CREW	Doc Rough Scene Cuts Story Ideas for Final Script	Read V&V Chapter 7 EDIT DOCUMENTARY Final Project Script Draft
Week 11 11/2	VIEW DOCUMENTARIES SCRIPT WORKSHOP PRODUCTION PREP WORKING WITH ACTORS	Final Cut, Docs Final Project Script Draft	Read V&V Chapter 2, 5 Writer/Producers lock locations, pre-production and production design needs. <i>BRING PHOTOS AND DOCS TO CLASS.</i> Creative Workout 4 Shot Lists/Storyboards for final project
Week 12 11/9	RUNNING THE SET WATCH CASTING TAPES GREENLIGHT MEETINGS	Creative Workout 4 - Storyboards DUE Casting Tapes Due	Shoot. Editors prepare assembly for SHOOT 11/10-11/16
Week 13 11/16	EDITING/SOUND DESIGN		Reshoots as needed Editors prepare final cut
Week 14 11/23	THANKSGIVING		
Week 15 11/30 Meet at Camera Equipment Center	WATCH AND DISCUSS ROUGH CUT CAMERA RETURNS/FACULTY EVALS	Final Project Rough Cut <i>Trade Article 3 prior to this Date</i>	Prepare Final Cut for Exam Time Producers and Editors insure all cast and crew get copies of final project
FINAL 12/07	Final Exam will be held 4:30-6:30 pm, Location TBA <i>Exams for classes starting "4 or after 4 but before 6pm"</i>		

STATEMENT FOR 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 me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. [Website for DSP](#) and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. [SCampus](#), the Student Guidebook, contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/COURSE CONTINUITY IN A CRISIS

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on [Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness](#).