

**SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS  
CTPR 506 - VISUAL EXPRESSION  
SYLLABUS**

**Semester:** Fall 2017

**Professor:** Bruce A. Block

**SA:** TBA

**READING & REFERENCES** (see below)

**PREREQUISITES:** CTPR 508 OR CTAN 547 OR CTIN 534

Auditing CTPR 506 is not permitted. This course does not use pass/no pass grading.

**INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE**

Just as a writer is concerned with story structure or a musician with musical structure, a picture maker must be concerned with visual structure. Visual structure is the only language available to picture makers yet it is often misused or simply ignored. The key to using visual structure is an understanding of the basic visual components and how visual structure relates to narrative/story structure. The basic visual components are: space, line, shape, color, tone, movement, and rhythm. It is through the control of these basic visual components that the picture maker stirs an audience's emotions, creates a visual style, gives unity to their work and links story structure to visual structure. The principles discussed in this class can be used to create and control pictures for any format including theatrical motion pictures, television shows and commercials, internet sites, and computer games, using live-action, traditional or CG animation. This class relates all of the visual concepts to practical production and bridges the gap between theory and practice.

**The Structure of the Class:**

1. Define each basic visual component.
2. Show how to recognize and control the components.
3. Demonstrate how these components communicate to an audience.
4. Apply the components to a text/script.
5. Discuss how the component is used technically and aesthetically in actual production.
6. Show examples from films.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

The class has two assignments that are due near the end of the semester. 1. Each student, working alone, creates a photographic notebook of 78 still photos illustrating the concepts discussed in class. 2. Collaborating in groups of four, students create a film demonstrating the principles of visual structure.

Some photos for the photographic notebook are due during the semester as works-in-progress. Notebook and film grades are based on originality, directorial clarity and realization of each visual concept. Final course grade is based on the photo notebook grade (60%), and film grade (40%). There is no mid-term grade. Late photo notebooks or films will not be accepted. The class does not allow make-up exams, extra credit papers or projects, or photo notebook/film re-dos. Due dates for the photo notebook and film assignments are announced in class.

Attendance at all film screenings, including the student films, is mandatory. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Absences will lower a student's final grade.

## **READING & REFERENCES**

The text for the class is *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block. The book is available at the USC Student bookstore, from online vendors and at local bookstores. The class lectures are divided into topics that coincide with the chapters in the book.

## **LECTURE SCHEDULE**

Listing of material for each lecture is approximate since discussion lengths will vary.

LECTURE 1: Orientation and overview of the basic visual components. Basic class terms are defined. Space is introduced and organized into four basic categories.

LECTURE 2: Definition of the four basic spatial categories continues. Examples are screened.

LECTURE 3: Discussion of surface divisions and open & closed space.

LECTURE 4: Visual Structure. The relationships between visual and narrative structure, structural analysis and visual economy are discussed. The final assignments for the class (individual student notebook and group film) are given.

LECTURE 5: Visual structure continues. The Principle of Contrast & Affinity is discussed. Graphing, structure and visual change are discussed.

LECTURE 6: Line and Shape are discussed. Linear motif, basic shapes, perception of line, and methods of creating shapes & lines are discussed.

LECTURE 7: Color structure and systems are defined to clear up and simplify an extremely misunderstood visual component.

LECTURE 8: Color continues with an explanation of color interaction and control in production.

LECTURE 9: Tone & Light are discussed as they relate to directorial emphasis and exposure control. Tone and light are related to the gray scale.

LECTURE 10: Movement is defined in relation to the screen, the camera, an object, and an object and the background.

LECTURE 11: Movement continues. Continuum of Movement is defined. Fragmented and continuous structures of movement are discussed.

LECTURE 12: Rhythm. Visual Rhythm is discussed in stationary and moving objects, and editing.

LECTURE 13: Screening & discussion of a feature length film.

LECTURE 14: Screen students' final films and discuss.

LECTURE 15: Screen students' final films and discuss. Photographic notebooks are due.

## **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. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

## **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 Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

## **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/departments/departments-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](mailto: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/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/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.

## **DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave the class pending discussions and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

Food and drinks (other than water) are not permitted in any instructional spaces in the Cinematic Arts Complex.