

USC School of Cinematic Arts

CTPR 285: Lateral Thinking for Filmmaking Practice

Semester: Spring 2018

2 Units

Class times: Friday 1:00-1:50 topic/lecture section: SCA 110

2:00-3:50 breakout/discussion/work sections:

Section 18455D Rebekah McKendry – SCA 209

Section 18453D Juli Juteau – SCA 203

Section 18454D Marcel Valcarce – SCA 214

Section 18452 & 18455

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Office Hours: by appointment

Overview:

One of the major and unacknowledged aspects of filmmaking practice is the centrality of an ongoing evolving relationship to technology. Film itself started as a radical technology at the turn of the 19th century, and evolved in complex ways through the remainder of the 20th Century. The addition of sound, color, and, at the end of the 20th Century, the transformation of an analog process to digital technologies all transformed not only how films were made, but also radically altered how filmmakers conceived projects while at the same time creating new methods of film distribution/transmissions. These transformations take the form of intuitive changes which ‘work with’ the manner in which the new technologies allow different, new and fundamentally creative activities that flow from the evolving technologies. Therefore, the working filmmaker must forge a relationship with film practice that is open, fluid and responsive not only to the relationship of the film project to an intended (or unintended) audience, but to the constantly evolving technologies themselves. Perhaps even more important is to see the changes in technologies as opportunities to evolve the film medium itself, and to personally use the changes as methods of evolving as a film practitioner.

Course objective:

In order to facilitate such a mindset from the beginning of a film practitioner’s career, this class will explore through discussion, lecture, demonstration and student projects, a basic introduction to thinking ‘outside the box’, across disciplines, and laterally—across the creative/intellectual environment instead of through a single, narrow field. It is expected that the student would understand the wide range of activity and processes, creative and ethical that constitute contemporary filmmaking practice.

Textbooks:

No text is required, but suggested readings are listed at the end of the syllabus.

Required Technology:

This is a hands on class focused on creating short projects which you will distribute through the internet. You will be required to have and bring to class the following:

For recording video: Any small camera which can record a minimum resolution of 1280x720. A cell phone camera, DSLR, GoPro, or any such device.

For editing/assembling: A laptop, tablet, or cell phone with simple video editing software.

Windows Movie Maker 2012 (Windows) FREE.

Lightworks (Windows) FREE.

iMovie (OSX) and/or SPLICE (App) FREE.

Avidemux (Windows/OSX) FREE.

YouTube Editor (Web) FREE.

A student version of the Adobe Creative Cloud is available for \$19.99 per month (this gives you access to Photoshop, After Effects, Premier, and other filmmaking apps).

The Vine Camera App for your mobile device will be required for one project.

Class Schedule & Week By Week Outline:

TOPIC

BREAKOUT

*Week 1 – JAN 12 ** Room change to SCI-106 ***

Introductions & Syllabus review.

Discuss E1.

Assignment: create E1

E1 due to SA on 1/18.

(J,R,M)

*No breakout – view intro videos
in class during last hour.

Week 2 – JAN 19

Perspective.

Discuss E2

Assignment: create E2

E2 due to SA on 01/25.

(J)

Screen E1
Screen past “POV” examples.

Week 3 – JAN 26

Image

Discuss E3.

E3 due to SA on 02/08.

(R)

Screen E2.

Week 4 – FEB 02

Lateral Thinking.

(M)

Screen E2.

Week 5 – FEB 09

Developing Ideas.

(J)

Screen E3.

Week 6 – FEB 16

Future.

Discuss E4

Assignment: create E4

E4 due to SA on 02/27. View and
comment before class on 03/02

(M)

Screen E3.

Week 7 – FEB 23 **** Room change to SCI-106 ****

Passion & the Creative Self.

Discuss E5

(R)

Create E5 & screen E5.

*No breakout – one class.

Week 8 – MARCH 02

Re-contextualization

Discuss E6

Assignment: create E6

E6 due to SA on 03/08.

(M)

Discuss E4 from internet viewing.

Week 9 – MARCH 09

Activism.

Discuss E7

Assignment: create E7

E7 due to SA on 04/05.

(J)

Screen E6

MARCH 11 – 18 SPRING RECESS - *NO CLASSES*

Week 10 – MARCH 23

Creating a Series

Discuss E8

12 groups of 5 or 6 students from any section.

Assignment: create E8

E8 pilot scripts due to SA on 03/29.

E8 pilot cut due to SA on 04/19.

E8 final cuts due to SA on 04/26.

(R)

Develop E8 idea, write

1st draft of pilot

Week 11 – MARCH 30

Review E8 pilot scripts.

Continue script review, work in groups on E8.

Week 12 – APRIL 6

Wild Possibilities.

(J)

Screen E7.

Week 13 – APRIL 13

Sound.

(M)

Screen E7.

Week 14 – APRIL 20

Self Distribution.

(R)

Screen E8 pilot cuts.

Week 15 – April 27 ** Room change to SCI-106 **

Screen E8.

*No breakout – one class.

EXERCISES:

E 1: Moments, 1 week – individuals.

The short form need not tell a story – whether it be in the form of short fiction, film or new media. In this project we will explore the other possibilities that great short content can have – such as character, tone, imagery, etc. No music of any kind is acceptable. Experiment the boundaries of the short form – creating a film where the objective is to engage the audience.

Due 01/18. Total length should not exceed 1 minute.

E 2: Perspective, 1 week – individuals.

Place a cellphone or other small recording device in a situation that would be too small, remote or precarious for a camera person to shoot. Break size, gravitational and motion limitations to take the viewer places not normally seen. Consider unusual things or positions to attach the camera to. Edit footage with original sound and music.

Due 01/25. Total length should not exceed 90 seconds.

E 3: Emotion, 1 week – individuals.

Create a visual piece where the sole objective is to make the viewer experience the emotion you've selected. It can be a narrative or non-narrative film, sync or non-sync sound, moving images and/or still images. Music is not allowed, as sound design is highly encouraged.

Due 02/08. Total length should not exceed 90 seconds.

E 4: Interactive Storytelling, 2 weeks - groups of 5 students.

Create a story where the viewer has the ability to choose how the story evolves. Write and film a story with multiple decision making points where the narrative branches. The story should have 3 possible endings depending on the path the viewer chooses. Youtube or interlude.com can be used to create this. This project will be submitted to the class blackboard website and all students need to view and comment on the videos. We will then discuss in class. More information when this is assigned.

Due 02/27. Total length should not exceed 9 minutes (including all branches).

E 5: Loop, in class – individuals.

The history of the loop dates back to the early days of cinema. Today we are obsessed and consumed by images – moving and still. In this project you will create a loop using the phone app Vine – 6.5 seconds. Objective is to create a loop which engages us in an interesting and cinematic way.

Due in class – same day.

E 6: Re-contextualization (Derivative Works), 1 week – groups of up to 3 students.

Create a new work by combining your own original content with 2 or more existing works. This can take many forms, combining different visual and audio assets. The goal is to create a new meaning which is different from the meanings in the borrowed works. The existing works must be from *different* sources, for example, you may not use 2 movies, but you may use a news broadcast and a movie. Using green screen is optional for your original content.

Due 03/08. Total length should not exceed 3 minutes.

E 7: Activism, 3 weeks – groups of up to 3 students.

Collaborating in groups of three, combine original footage with found imagery (*no more than 10% of total running time*) to create a call to action about a topic that is important to you. Final edited project should include original sound and music.

Due 04/05. Total length should not exceed 3 minutes.

E 8: Episodic, 5 weeks – 12 total groups of 5 or 6 students from any section.

In groups, create three 1-2 minute episodes of a series.

Part 1: The Pitch. Each group of students will come up with a concept for a three part series and write a short treatment in class. At the end of class each group will present their concept. The pilot script will be presented to everyone in class on week 12 and workshopped as a group.

E8 pilot script due to SA on 03/29.

Part 2: Pilot Cut. Groups will spend the next three weeks developing scripts, shooting, and creating each episode. The pilot episode will be screened on week 14.

E8 pilot cut due to SA on 04/19.

Part 3: Completed project. Groups will have one week to polish and complete the three episode series which will be screened at the last class to all sections on 04/26.

E8 final episodes due to SA on 04/26. Total length of combined episodes should not exceed 6 minutes.

Class Participation:

A large portion of this class focuses on screening and discussion of student projects. Each student is required to participate in these discussions. 10% of your grade is based on in class participation during not only screening discussions but also in the Topic portion of the class.

Exercise submission guidelines:

All assignments for this class will be submitted as a link to an uploaded video. We recommend you use Vimeo for this purpose, however YouTube is also acceptable.

You will need to send a link to the video to your SA no later than the project deadline specified in the syllabus. All submitted videos must remain available for viewing until after the end of the semester for grading purposes.

When exporting a project for submission to your video streaming service use the following settings:

Video encoding: H.264 codec with high quality (multi-pass) settings.

Frame rate = Use the native frame rate that you shot and edited in, ideally 23.976fps (or 24fps).

Size = 1280x720 pixels or smaller. Ideally 16x9 aspect ratio.

Video bit rate between 5,000 kbps (Standard Quality) and 20,000 kbps (High Quality).

Audio = 16 bit stereo at 44.1 kHz, AAC compression at 96 or 128 kbps.

Youtube Specs: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en>

Vimeo Specs: <https://vimeo.com/help/compression>

Rules:

Scheduled topics assignments and due dates are subject to change.

No food or beverages of any kind are allowed in the classrooms.

Deadlines:

** All late projects will receive a full letter grade reduction (from A to B, for example), for each week it is late.

** No projects will be accepted later than the last day of class(April 28), if not turned in prior to April 28, project will receive an “F.”

Attendance Policy:

** Absences related to medical need will be excused only with a letter from your Doctor, or notice from Student Services. Other absences will be excused only with notice from Student Services.

** Each non-excused absences will result in a grade reduction to your final grade (from A to A-, for example), and three ‘lates’ will equal one absence.

** Students are responsible for all projects even if they are absent on the day a project is assigned.

Grading:

Exercises will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Exercise meets the guidelines of the written assignment in terms of length, audio or visual elements, and general content.
- Exercise is turned in on time as specified, with all audio and video elements intact and in the requested format for screening.
- Exercise shows clear effort and input of the filmmaker, is not sloppy or last minute.
- Exercise continues to show originality, experimentation and growth.
- Student collaborates well with partner/s if exercise is a group project.
- Exercise has a clear concept or theme which is presented in a logical and engaging manner.

	Totals:
Class participation	10%
E1	10%
E2	10%
E3	10%
E4	10%
E5	10%
E6	10%
E7	10%
E8	20%

Recommended texts:

- *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media* by Bruce Block
- *In The Blink of an Eye* 2nd Edition by Walter Murch

- *Short: An International Anthology of Five Centuries of Short-Stories, Prose Poems, Brief Essays, and Other Short Prose Forms* edited by Alan Ziegler
- *Zen in the Art of Writing* by Ray Bradbury

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 and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

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.

Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

Disruptive Student 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 class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

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 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.