

**SYLLABUS FOR**  
**CTPR 335 INTRO TO EDITING**  
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

**SPRING 2019**

**SECTION** 335-18500  
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*"The notion of directing a film is the invention of critics - the whole eloquence of cinema is achieved in the editing room." – Walter Murch*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Editing is much more than putting images together. At its best, it is the conscious action of bringing out a film's text and subtext, to fulfill a larger vision. In this class you will learn how to read a script **for story**, analyze the shot footage **for story**, and put it all together to **fulfill that story** (whether that comes from you or someone else).

We will discuss techniques, tools and approaches and work to recognize, understand and begin to intuit what makes for a good cut, what builds a strong sequence and how to shape both a performance and a story.

The course will cover both the theory and the technique of editing and students will put the ideas into practice nearly every week through a series of scenes that are designed to gradually expand the types of editing experiences that you have. The accumulation of these editing experiences should give you an overview of the complete process -- aesthetic and the practical -- teaching you to how to make *informed* editing choices and to begin to develop your own personal taste and style.

In addition, you will be given a working knowledge of how to organize an editing room and operate the various tools that you need to make your editing decisions. As the semester continues you will begin to learn skills that may take you beyond what you do in this class, but are essential if you are to work in any capacity in an editing room today.

Projects will be edited using the Avid Media Composer. You will also get an overview of the entire filmmaking process from the point of view of the editing room. But more importantly than learning the nuts and bolts techniques of how to prepare your footage for editing, you will learn how to prepare *mentally* for editing: how to look at a scene for optimum editing in order to best bring out your artistic ideas. You will discover editing principles and aesthetics that you can use no matter which format you edit with and what format your project is intended for (television, feature, documentary, etc.).

During your time in this class you will be editing in pairs, learning as many techniques as possible in order to prepare you to undertake the editing process in other USC courses and in your post-school careers, on films edited either by you or by others. You will be expected to edit your projects outside of class time and bring them into the class to present and discuss with others.

Because of the amount of material we need to cover, the 15 weeks (note that our last class happens during finals week so don't make plans for that night) time period for our classes will get pretty intense. **Be prepared for some classes to go past the official finish time.**

**CLASS FORMAT:**

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of the editing process (and, recently, more and more things are being made the responsibility of the editing staff). Along the way, therefore, you will get a sense of the entire flow of film editing – including its thought processes, technical needs, scheduling, and politics.

The first week will be an introductory week in which we'll discuss a variety of topics including how the class will work, the process of editing, the nuts and bolts of the editorial process. I'll then present a series of pieces of film to look at and begin building our common language so that we understand what we are talking about when we are talking about editing and post-production. We will also discuss variations on the syllabus that we may want to make.

After that, our weekly meetings will generally include a presentation by one student who will examine a scene from a favorite film of theirs, emphasizing the editorial choices made in the creation of that scene. I will also discuss different aspects of editing, using film clips to illustrate the topics. Over the course of the semester, these talks will provide a more or less complete discussion of the thought processes and techniques of the editing process, from picture editing to sound and music across a wide spectrum of projects.

At least half of each class will be devoted to the screening and critiquing of the scenes that you will have edited, in pairs, during the preceding week. At times, we will give you re-editing notes and you will return to the editing room during the next week for a second cut. During parts of the semester, partners will take on alternating roles as editor and director in order to provide each student with the varied experience that exists in the "real world". If necessary, we will meet once or twice in the editing rooms where you and I will get some hands-on experience together.

A final component of our classes will be a discussion of the politics of editing — from working closely with directors, producers and writers, to getting jobs, getting notes and developing a distinct style.

Along the way, you're going to learn how to make sense of a lot of footage, how to use Avid in a professional way, how to work better in Adobe Premiere, how to think about music, sound and effects to tell your story, and a whole slew of skills that will better prepare you for the more advanced work here at USC.

**A NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND ADULT SUBJECTS**

Filmmaking is an art and art often involves the depiction of unsettling or disturbing imagery and language. In the films we screen and in class discussions at times you will be exposed to vulgar language, violent imagery, and/or scenes of a sexual nature. If this bothers you please do not take the class.

**PHONES DURING CLASS – NEW THIS SEMESTER**

All of us – myself included – are here to become better filmmakers through the collective experience of this 15 week course. One of the best things you can take away from any filmmaking class are friendships and collaborators. It's the opinion of this professor that smart phones and constant connection rob the present from us and disconnect us from those around us. For this reason during the 3 hours in which we meet we will have a no phone policy. This means you don't touch your phone while you're in the room, not to take notes, not to text not to take photos, none of it. If you need to use your phone excuse yourself, go outside and stay out for a *minimum* of 15 minutes. We'll see how this works out.

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**STONER POLICY**

Smoking weed and watching movies on your own time is up to you. But, don't come to class stoned. I'll know it, the folks around you will know it and you'll get 86'd from the class.

**NOTE: CLASS EXERCISES**

This semester we have a broad batch of new material to cut for our classroom exercises. During our first class we will discuss the types of material students are most interested in editing and we will revise some of the below assignments to reflect your interests.

**WEEKLY COURSE BREAKDOWN**

*Please note, that this breakdown is liable to change several times during the course of the semester, depending on the availability of guest speakers or the progress of your own work.*

Week 1 (Jan 9th)	<b>INTRO TO EDITING / CLASS</b> <i>The And</i> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Half of Class in B118B</b>	The 4 Steps of Mastery What are we really talking about when we're talking about editing. Platforms Class plan Select partners <b>2<sup>nd</sup> half of class in Editing Lab for Tech Orientation</b>
Week 2 (Jan 16th)	<b>APPROACHING A SCENE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coming up with a game plan.</li><li>• Making sure you're on the same page as the director</li><li>• First cut.</li><li>• Revisions</li><li>• <b>2<sup>nd</sup> half of class in EDITING LAB</b></li></ul>	How scenes can be constructed. Trusting an audience.  <b>Law &amp; Order: SVU Subclips due</b>  <b>Scene Presentation:</b>
Week 3 (Jan 23rd)	<b>BUILDING A PERFORMANCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The importance of reaction shots.</li><li>• How to 'land' a line.</li><li>• Editing styles and their functions in various films.</li><li>• Reviewing Boston Legal dailies.</li><li>• <b>2<sup>nd</sup> half of class in EDITING LAB</b></li></ul>	<b>Law &amp; Order: SVU Cut Due</b>  <b>Scene Presentation:</b>

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Week 4 (Jan 30th)	<b>SCRIPT TO SCREEN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The symbiotic relationship between screenwriting and editing.</li><li>• Where the rules are the same</li><li>• Where the rules are different.</li><li>• Understanding editing to make you a better writer.</li></ul>	<b>Boston Legal – Dailies Review Due</b> <b>Scene Presentation:</b>
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Week 5 (Feb 6th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CUTTING FOR COMEDY</li> </ul>	<p><b>Boston Legal – 1<sup>st</sup> Cut Due.</b></p> <p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p>
Week 6 (Feb. 13th)	<p><b>WORKING WITH SOUND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with sound</li> <li>Ambiences backgrounds and tones.</li> <li>Using sound effects to enhance a scene and build moments.</li> <li><i>Apocalypse Now</i></li> </ul> <p><b>2nd half of class in EDITING LAB</b></p>	<p><b>Boston Legal – 2<sup>nd</sup> Cut Due.</b></p> <p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p>
Week 7 (Feb. 20th)	<p><b>SCENE ANALYSIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking a scene on paper and working through the beats and how to approach it.</li> </ul> <p>Watch a couple examples of each.</p>	<p><b>Roswell – 1<sup>st</sup> Cut Due</b></p> <p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p>
Week 8 (Feb 27th)	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Scene Analysis Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 students present scenes from script to screen.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roswell – 2<sup>nd</sup> Cut Due</b></p> <p><b>One page paper – single spaced – on ‘What I’ve Learned So Far.’</b></p> <p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p>
Week 9 (March 6th)	<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Scene Analysis Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 students present scenes from script to screen.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p>
Week 10 (March 13th)	<p><b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b></p>	
Week 11 (March 20th)	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Scene Analysis Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sequences</b> – how’re they structured?</li> <li><b>Montage</b> – what is it? How is it constructed? How to build a montage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scene Presentation:</b></p> <p><b>500 Days of Summer – Cut Due</b></p>

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Week 12 (March 27th)	<b>DOCUMENTARY FILM EDITING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How to approach documentary editing, why you should learn to cut documentary and where to start watching docs.</li></ul>	<b>Scene Presentation:</b>  <b>500 Days of Summer – Cut #2 Due</b>
Week 13 (April 3rd)	<b>ACTION SEQUENCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3 types of Action sequences.</li><li>How to approach them, tools to use <i>Bad Boys 2, Skyfall, The Raid.</i></li></ul>	<b>Scene Presentation:</b>
Week 14 (April 10th)	<b>THE ART OF GETTING BY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How to get a job, what to do when you get a job, what to do when you can't get a job, how to be, how to live, why you shouldn't get a dog.</li></ul>	<b>Scene Presentation:</b>
Week 15 (April 17th)	<b>ROUGH CUTS OF FINAL PROJECTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Screening Rough Cuts, solving problems.</li></ul>	Rough cuts of Finals to be screened in class
Week 16 (April 24th)	<b>FINAL CLASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Screening Final Projects.</li></ul>	FINAL DUE w/ a one page – single-spaced – description of your approach to the scene.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Beginning with the first week, you and your partner will be required to edit and/or re-edit a scene every week. You will present it at the next class, and accept criticism from your classmates and me so you can re-edit the scenes for a screening during the following week. My comments will be given **verbally** during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Once during the semester, you will be required to choose a short scene from a project you admire, and analyze it from the point of view of its editing — its style and content and anything else that we have learned up until that point. The scene can be from a film of any kind, a television show, a commercial or a music video — whatever. In short, you can choose anything where editing is involved. You will screen the scene in class and present that analysis following the screening, ***both written and orally***. You will be expected to bring a copy of the film to class **along with your typed report** on the date it is due. We will have the availability to screen from a DVD or a QuickTime file of *most codecs*. Once again, my comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. **ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT EVERY CLASS and LAB**. Written explanations will be necessary *in advance* for all excused absences. **Unexcused absences will be reflected in the course grade**. In addition, students will be expected to be at class on time; *lateness will also be reflected in your grade*. Please make use of my e-mail address or phone number above if you have an unavoidable problem. If you cannot make the class or will be late, let me know by the evening before the class. [Sorry for all of the bold facing, underlining and italics, but this section cannot be emphasized enough. Responsibility is an important skill for an editor.]

Since film editors are judged on their ability to complete their work in a timely manner, you will likewise be responsible for completing each stage of every project on time and in a professional manner.

**GRADES:**

To make it as clear as possible, your grade will be based on a total of 600 points. The point breakdown is as follows:

- **In Class Participation & Engagement – 50 points**
- **Successful completion of Scene Presentation – 50 points**
- **Scene Analysis presentation – 100 points**
- ***Boston Legal* assignment – 100 points**
- ***Roswell* assignment – 100 points**
- ***500 Days of Summer* 100 points**
- **Final Assignment – 200 points**

Each week that you complete one of the above assignments you will receive your score via email during the following week. This does not include the Young Indy assignment. The score for that will be emailed after the semester has concluded.

**PRESENTATION OF EDITED MATERIAL:**

**Just like in the real world, all material must be properly prepared for screening.** It will be your responsibility to make sure that your outputs are complete, with sound, and in viewable condition. You should check your materials *before leaving the editing station* and on another machine if possible. We will discuss proper leadering and slating at various points during the semester. You will then be expected to leader/slate your tapes every week after that.

**SECRET SCREENINGS**

Shhh, be cool. We'll talk about this later.

**OFFICE HOURS**

Wednesday 4:30-6:30p SCA 423, or by appointment.

**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 quiz, 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 Melinda 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.

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

In addition to the required textbooks mentioned above, the following books are good sources for aesthetic and technical information about editing. I will occasionally refer to them.

Avid Learning Series. This is a series of books which are associated with the Avid Certification. There are several which take what you've learned in this class and extend them (there are also books on ProTools which I recommend). They are published by CENGAGE Learning, at <http://www.courseptr.com/avid>. I particularly like the "Professional Effects and Compositing" and the "Effects Essentials" titles. TECHNICAL

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

Bayes, Steve *The Avid Handbook (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. 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

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.



Case, Dominic. *Film Technology in Post Production*. TECHNICAL Crittenden, Roger.

*Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing*. AESTHETIC Dancyger, Ken. *The*

*Technique of Film Editing*.

Davis, Richard. *Complete Guide To Film Scoring*. We will be discussing film editing and music during one of our classes. 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.

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*. I haven't actually read this book, but I have had it recommended to me. It covers the pre-production, shooting and editing of documentaries.

Hollyn, Norman. *The Lean Forward Moment*. This book is about everything that we talk about here in terms of story, except it applies to all sections of the filmmaking process – producing, directing, writing, acting, sound, music, production design and more. AESTHETIC.

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

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.

Murch, Walter. *In The Blink of an Eye, A Perspective on Film Editing*. A transcription of some lectures that Murch gave, in which he introduced his hierarchy of reasons to make an edit, and much much more. Personally, I find that this material is much better covered in the Michael Ondaatje book below. AESTHETIC

Oldham, Gabriella. *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors*. This is the book I mentioned above. An incredible series of interviews with some of the top, most thoughtful, editors around. THIS IS A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED text. AESTHETIC

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. This is an incredible series of interviews with one of the top film and sound editors in the art form today. Far more accessible and interesting than *In The Blink of an Eye*, it goes over many of the real world concerns in shaping characters and filmic story telling. 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.

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. More raconteurial than 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. It is here that his incredible theory on surprise vs. suspense is mentioned. AESTHETIC.

#### **RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:**

Adobe Creative Suite Podcast. Delves into all aspects of the Adobe Creative Suite (duh). Hosted by Terry White, a CS5 and 6 trainer, this often goes into Photoshop and Web publishing, as well as Premiere.

Art of the Guillotine. Great website that publishes interviews with film editors, as well as news about editing.

Avid Screencasts – Unfortunately no longer publishing, the archive of past shows is a treasure trove of great tips and techniques on all things Avid.

Blog Talk Radio: BTR 123: Film Easy. Every week a new filmmaking interview or two. It has included interviews with editors, post supervisors, sound editors, VFX Supervisors and more.

Blog Talk Radio: DoubleDown Film Show. A show hosted by two NY based filmmakers that does a great job of discussing production and post production issues. One, Anthony Artis, is the author of the "Shut Up and Shoot" books about low budget filmmaking.

Digital Production Buzz – Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production. Hosted by Larry Jordan, Final Cut guru.

Creative Screenwriting Magazine. An awesome podcast, which is unfortunately no longer publishing.. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the "final rewrite").

Creative Cow also publishes a number of other podcasts and website devoted to filmmakers. It is the essential source for troubleshooting. One of their authors, Kevin P. McAuliffe, has does a great series of videocasts on Media Composer.

The Cutting Room. Put out by Art of the Guillotine's Gordon Burkell, this podcast features interviews. FCP Tips.

Short video podcast with tips and tricks on Final Cut Pro.

Fxguide. Along with fxphd, an online film school devoted to visual effects, this podcast produces some of the best discussion about digital cameras, the Red, visual effects and filmmaking.

KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business. Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.

MacBreak Studio. Steve Martin and Mark Spencer do tutorials, generally on elements of Final Cut and its related applications. Steve is owner of Ripple Training, one of the top tutorial sites.

That Post Show. A great show by Kanen Flowers which discusses topics of interest to post professionals at all budget levels. Sometimes the show is technical, sometimes it deals with work issues, sometimes it deals with aesthetics. It's always worth it.

Splice Here. Steve Cohen's always interesting, always valuable blog about editing and Avid.

The Terence and Philip Show. Discussion between two top post professionals – Terence Curren and Philip Hodgetts. They talk about issues affecting the industry, in general, and often focus on post production. Always a good place to go, after NAB to find out what trends and technologies to watch out for.

This Week In Media. This podcast, along with Leo LaPorte's podcasts "This Week In Tech", is a great series of discussions about topics that should be of interest to you – "Who Uses VHS?", distributing movies on iTunes, the Red Camera, and more.