



CTPR 327, Section 18496
MOTION PICTURE CINEMATOGRAPHY

3 Credit Units
Thursday 6:30pm - 9:30pm
USC Spring Semester 2020

IMPORTANT:

The general formula for contact hours is as follows:

Courses must meet for a minimum of one 50-minute session per unit per week over a 15-week semester. Standard fall and spring sessions (001) require a final summative experience during the University scheduled final exam day and time.

Location: SCC, Soundstage #3.

Instructor: Gary Wagner

Office: SCA 410

Office Hours: By appointment. Please contact me in advance to arrange a meeting.

Contact Info: 310.339.9626

garywagn@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant: Connor Williams

Contact Info: 661.714.1627

cswillia@usc.edu

Course Description

Cinema-TV 327 is an excellent introduction to the creative and technical challenges of motion picture photography. The content of the course will emphasize learning how to express ideas, moods, story and character using basic photographic and lighting principals to control the images you create.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

- Students will learn and shoot with the Canon XC15 camera for class exercises.
- Students will make use of the basic functions of a lens: focal lengths, aperture, depth of field, and focus, and how they are used in visual storytelling.
- Students will work on a stage and exhibit how to work with power distribution, basic professional lighting, and grip equipment.
- Students will demonstrate professional set protocol and function within assigned crew positions.
- Students will light and shoot short scenes and/or class exercises on the stage during class.
- Students will demonstrate how to block and cover a scene.
- Students will learn and utilize pre-visualization techniques to plan shots and coverage for their scenes.
- Students will execute visual and lighting continuity.

You will be exposed to a wide variety of cinematic challenges that will enable you to develop your "eye". You will learn how to expose film, as well as how to manipulate the light, camera and content of your "scenes" into a meaningful, conceptual presentation. If you commit to this learning process you will finish the course with a basic competence in these areas and should have a more refined idea concerning how best to pursue your development in filmmaking and in particular, cinematography. This is an ideal introduction to motion picture photography for aspiring cinematographers, as well as for those interested in directing, editing, art directing, writing and producing. The first few class meetings will be lectures designed to give you the basics to get you going. The remainder of the meetings will be photographing in-class "Scene Projects," the guidelines for which I will provide. Throughout the semester I will demonstrate use of equipment and various lighting techniques. I may also screen a number of clips to help illustrate various cinematic concepts. Equipment is not available outside of class periods.

Prerequisite(s): None

Course Notes

Throughout the semester I will refer to information and articles. You will be responsible to have working knowledge of the material. Weekly handouts, downloadable PDF files, and/or links to on-line information will be available online in a "327" folder on "Google Drive."

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Editing software and basic editing skills of some kind are useful, but not required.

Recommended Readings and Supplementary Materials

The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video, By: Tom Schroepel

The Filmmaker's Eye: Learning (and Breaking) the Rules of Cinematic Composition, By: Gustavo Mercado

Motion Picture and Video Lighting, By: Blain Brown

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Cinematography is first "seeing" reality, interpreting that reality, and then recreating our interpretation of that reality on film. Having the in-class projects based on existing works gives you the framework and context to overcome challenges while you create the photographic images you want. There is no reason to become unduly absorbed in the exact contextual details (i.e. acting, art direction, costumes, etc.) of the scene to the point of forgetting what the class is about - learning about cinematography. This is not a class in set design or props – we can use our imagination. No weapons, real or otherwise will be allowed in your scene projects.

The Scene Projects will be staged and photographed on the stage. Depending on the number of people in the class we will form 2-3 groups. Each person will be assigned specific crew responsibility within the group and will rotate those responsibilities for each weekly exercise. The results of those exercises will be viewed and discussed at the end of the class period.

I will provide you with specific guidelines for your in-class projects. You will be required to work with your individual groups outside of class time to create your shot list and a detailed plan for each in class project.

Each week, the cinematographers will give me a copy of their script, shot list, storyboards, floor plan and a brief synopsis describing the visual intention of the scene (what it should look like).

Grading Breakdown

Mid-Term Exam	25 points	25%
Notebook Assignment (Due Mar. 26)	20 points	20%
Class Participation / Discussions	10 points	10%
Weekly Scene Crew Participation & Collaboration (prep, shoot & wrap)	15 points	15%
DP Projects (#7-12, prep, shoot)	20 points	20%
Final Written Exam	10 points	10%

1. Quizzes and the Mid-Term are written individual exams that test your understanding of the material presented through lectures and reading assignments. Weekly quizzes are to aid in your understanding and will not be graded. The Mid-term is a graded exam.
2. The Notebook is an individual photography assignment to aid in your aesthetic application of principals discussed in class.
3. Class Participation is defined as constructive in-class activity, including, but not limited to, asking questions, giving constructive opinions on lessons and other students' work. Your thoughts, questions and ideas are valuable to the class as a whole.
4. Crew Participation is essential to the collaborative process of filmmaking. It is essential that each of you participate in the class' exercises. Come to the set/class prepared and on time. Your performance will be evaluated on preparedness, collaboration, efficiency, respect for the equipment and for crew members of your team..
5. Collaboration is defined as working well with your classmates and fellow crew members, both in spirit and as equal contributing partners. Create and environment in which your crew feels their suggestions are welcome. Treat you crew with respect and at no time should your behavior impede the learning experience of other students.
6. Scene Projects: This portion of the class will be graded, both individually and for the group. Each cinematographer must submit the above described paperwork for their scene.

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

The Notebook Assignment is due on Mar. 26, submitted to an individually assigned folder on our 327 Google Drive folder. No late submissions will be accepted!

Grading Timeline

The mid-term exam grades will be available at the next class after the exam. We will review the exam at that time and answer any questions.

Missing a Quiz or Exam and Incompletes:

The only acceptable excuses for missing a quiz or exam or for taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructor **before** the quiz or exam and present verifiable evidence in order for a make up to be scheduled. Students who wish to take an incomplete must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor before the final grades are submitted.

Absence and Lateness Policy

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional unexcused absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

If you arrive late, you **MUST** come to me during a break and let me know you are present. Please don't assume I saw you arrive. If you fail to do so, you may be marked absent.

If a student misses a class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

Course Schedule

(This schedule is subject to change as necessary and at the discretion of the instructor)

Week 1, January 16

Introduction to Class & Students

Review Syllabus & Discuss Class Objectives

Lecture: Set Safety Basics, Mechanics of Camera & Lenses, Exposure Basics

Week 2, January 23

Quiz 1

Lecture: Exposure Latitude, Zone System, Space and Lenses

Demonstration: Electrical Distribution, Intro the XC15 Camera

Exercise - no DP, learn to use the camera exercise

Help each other in your group to learn to use the camera (ISO, shutter speed, f/stops, ND filters, white balance, etc.) by doing the same 2-person shot w/ different focal lengths - 24, 32, 40, 55, 75, 100. Look at differences in spatial relationships, compression, and field of view with the different lenses.

Week 3, January 30

Quiz 2

Lecture: Quality of Light, Depth of Field, Use of Light Meters

Introduction to Grip and Basic Lighting Equipment

Basic Exercise #1 - Lighting w/ 1 light only (where do you put a light & why)

Explore various placements (different heights, full front light, ¾ front light, side light, ¾ back light, backlight only, etc.) using only one (1) light to see how the light & shadows create different visual moods . You may use different lights from shot to shot, but only one at a time. Include both over and underexposed images to see how those affect mood. Learn to use the light meter for exposure settings.

Week 4, February 6

Quiz 3

Lecture: Color Temp and Colors, contrast ratios, 3-pt. lighting

Basic Exercise #2 - Lighting Basics w/ 3 Pt. Lighting

Create various lighting setups with different key light direction, shadow placement, fill light/contrast ratio, back light, background light, etc. Use the light meter to set f/stops, establish contrast ratios, etc.

Week 5, February 13

Quiz 4

Lecture: Different Lights, electricity calculations, FC, Inverse Square

Demo additional Grip: nets, flags, diffusion,

Basic Exercise #3 - Soft Light only

Explore soft light variations by using different lights (direct or bounced) with different diffusions. Learn how to control lights w/ grip equipment. Look at the quality of the light and shadows, ease/difficulty of controlling the light.

Week 6, February 20

Quiz 5

Lecture: Composition, stage lines

Basic Exercise #4 - Single Source

Light a scene so it looks like there is only one source of light (one shadow).

Where you place a light and/or shadow can be an important decision. Multiple lights can create multiple shadows and may become distracting. Controlling light and shadows is a key component of the cinematographers' daily responsibilities. This exercise will help you learn to carefully place your shadows and lights, so that each light will have a specific purpose and will contribute to the whole in a specific way leaving only one visible shadow, as if from your one source of light (seen in frame or implied).

Week 7, February 27

Quiz 6

Review for Mid-Term

Demo Product Lighting, Additional Special Lights

Basic Exercise #5 - A Sense of Place

Starting w/ a photograph, an ECU of a face, fill in the blanks about the person in the photo who, what, where, why, etc. Give the character a life, a story. Use this information to create a short scene, using composition, lighting, camera movement, etc. to reveal the person in the photo, and the context of the mood in the photo.

Week 8, March 5

MID-TERM EXAM

Week 9, March 12

Review Mid-Term Exam

Demo Matching Stage Lines & CUs

Basic Exercise #6 – Product Photography

Find a product to light & photograph in an interesting way. This exercise is to emphasize creativity and use of grip gear. Look carefully at the details - reflections, shadows, etc. to create an interesting visual presentation. (Edit for Final Screening Class)

SPRING BREAK, March 19

Week 10, March 26

Exercise #7 - CU & Matching CUs w/ stage line - scene w/ 2-3 people and matching reverses

Generally, matching CUs in a scene would be shot with the same lens, at the same distance, and the same camera height (although this can vary according to the difference in actors heights). Additionally, you should stay on the correct side of the stage line and the light should appear to originate from the same source. This can apply to matching MSs, MCUs, CUs, and OTS (over-the-shoulder) shots. This exercise will help you to work with larger shots and more complete scenes while keeping stage lines in mind. You can, and should, still examine how the different qualities of light can inform the scene and convey different subtexts.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

Week 11, April 2 - STILL PHOTO NOTEBOOKS DUE

Exercise #8 – Motivated Source

While it is not necessary to always motivate your light from a practical source, it is equally true that we are asking the audience to suspend their disbelief so that they can immerse themselves in the journey on which we are guiding them. Anything we do, which reveals the artifice of our craft jeopardizes their suspension of disbelief and puts their emotional experience at risk. Over-lighting is one of the errors that can shatter the illusion. It is essential that we, as cinematographers, understand how light naturally illuminates people and things in all environments, so that we can make determined and deliberate choices regarding how we interpret the material for each scene. Motivating light sources is one of the tools we use – and when we choose not to, we have our reasons.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

Week 12, April 9

Exercise #9 – Match to an exterior

Find an exterior shot (day or night). Try to light your interior (set) to match the look of the exterior. Look at time of day (angle of light & color), exterior lights if night, weather (sunny, cloudy, etc.), color palette (time of day or lights at night), etc. We should feel that the lighting “is” natural – and reflects the exterior conditions. You will need to include your exterior reference photo in your final edit. When cut together, the interior should look and feel like it was a natural fit with the exterior.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

Week 13, April 16

Exercise #10 – Music Video or Commercial

This is a chance to be freely creative with colors, lighting, camera moves, etc. You can do a story, dance, etc. - just be creative!

If doing a commercial, you should create a story/scene with the product. You must include a product shot. This can be done during the exercise, or you can use the product shot from your group's previous exercise (#6) and design a commercial around that product.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

Week 14, April 23

Exercise #11 – Working with Shadows

Create a scene w/ areas of shadows that contain important information for the scene. Experiment w/ light placement and fill levels to keep information visible, even if only slightly, but expose the image w/in usable range. Lighting in this way requires much control over one's tools. Establish your scene so that your subject remains mostly in shadow, but do not let him/her vanish in the darkness. Take care so that the important details are revealed. Create a sense of tonal separation (chiaroscuro) and depth. We need to see into the shadows, but not too much. We need to see details, but in a believable way. We need to feel that the setting is honest, and that the lighting "is" natural – and is not artificial.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

Week 15, April 30

Shoot Final Exercise #12 - For this exercise, each group will be given the same simple broken dialogue scene without any stage directions. Each group will interpret the dialogue and create a scene. The dialogue should influence the visual elements of the scene, such as, the props, the setting (location, time of day, etc.), and most importantly, the staging and lighting. This is not an acting/directing class so we are mostly looking for a visual interpretation of the scene.

(Edit for Final Screening Class)

FINAL EXAM, May 7, 7:00-9:00 PM

Screening and Discussion of Exercises #6-12 (& any other exercises that you wish to screen)

Final Written Exam

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/sssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

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.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX