

USC School of Cinematic Arts  
CTPR 335 Motion Picture Editing, Section 18499R

Class Meetings: Tuesday 7pm-10pm

Location: Varies (see below and check your emails for details EACH WEEK)

Instructor: Yvette M. Amirian, ACE

[mangassa@usc.edu](mailto:mangassa@usc.edu)

Website: [www.ymamirian.com](http://www.ymamirian.com)

SA: Ryan Mekenian

[mekenian@usc.edu](mailto:mekenian@usc.edu)

Office hours are by appointment

\*\*\*Syllabus subject to change\*\*\*

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Picture Editors are story tellers. Unlike writers who use text, or lyricists who use words, we use visual images, dialogue, sound, special effects and music to tell our stories. How we use these elements and why we use them is important. *Why* should I cut at this frame as opposed to this one? *Why* is it more important to use off-camera dialog as opposed to playing dialog on-camera? *Why* should a music cue start at this point in a scene as opposed to that point? *When* to cut, *when not* to cut, *when* to stylize, *when not* to and *why*. This class is about the “hows” (using the AVID, editing techniques, the grammar and language of editing), and the “whys” (editing aesthetics, basic theory and concepts behind film editing.)

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The class will partly be a hands-on course where you will learn the basics of how to use Avid Media Composer, the leading software in the motion picture post-production industry. Even though picture editing is fundamentally about storytelling, it is also a technical medium needing great organizational skills. Therefore, you will also learn how to organize a project, set up bins, manage media (footage, sound effects, music), create custom settings, and how to properly present your assignments each week. You will work with a partner on each editing project.

Learning the basic concepts of editing is useful for all facets of filmmaking, especially if you want to be a writer, director, producer, or even a cinematographer—for after the shooting stops, it all comes down to the editor to put the pieces together to make a story. At the end of the semester, you should not only be able to analyze any piece of media from an editing perspective and understand *why* the editor made the choices he/she did, but you will also be able to cut your own stories using your own choices.

## **REQUIRED EQUIPMENT:**

### **SCA approved and supported Hard Drives**

**\*\*\*Check SCA Community website BEFORE purchasing a drive\*\*\***

Below is the navigation to information on what hard drive to purchase. You will be sharing ONE hard drive with your partner for editing assignments:

SCA Community:

<https://cinema.usc.edu/Laptops/>

Scroll down and click "HARD DRIVES"

### **Head phones**

You will EACH have to purchase headphones with a 1/4" adapter for use in the labs. When editing together, you will EACH need a set, whereas the hard drive can be shared.

## **SUGGESTED READING**

*Cutting It in Hollywood*  
by Mitchell Danton

*In the Blink of an Eye*  
by Walter Murch

*"The Lean Forward Moment: Create Compelling Stories for Film, TV, and The Web"*  
by Norman Hollyn; New Riders Press  
(mainly chapters: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

*Foundations of Video: The Art of Editing with Norman Hollyn* on [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com)

### **Avid Media Composer Guide...**

<http://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/SCA%20Knowledgebase/Avid%20Media%20Composer.aspx>

---

## **CLASS FORMAT**

Each week will be a mixture of lecture, screenings, class discussion/presentations, guest speakers, and hands-on training with Avid Media Composer software. Once you begin your editing assignments, a portion of class time will be devoted to sharing individual editing assignments. An editor's work is scrutinized every day in the real world, so in this class you will be expected to show your work to everyone and get their notes. We will also have guest speakers and, dependent on their availability, our schedule in the syllabus may shift. You will be provided handouts for any relevant lessons or techniques, as well as links and information on the SCA Knowledgebase. We do not use Blackboard in this class. However, we utilize e-mail a LOT, so please be sure to check regularly for any important updates.

## **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

There will be one written scene analysis/log line assignment. There will be three main editing projects that deal with different editing theories and techniques. You will work in pairs cutting raw footage (called “*Dailies*”) from Hollywood industry films and television shows. You will be asked to cut scenes together, show your first cuts in front of the class and get their feedback, then hand in revisions based on your notes. Those revisions, and adding various elements (music, sound, effects) will make up the remainder of your assignments. Part of this process will also be learning the technical skills necessary to work with Avid Media Composer more creatively and efficiently.

## **ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS/GRADING TIMELINE**

All work will be presented on your hard drive. Grades for each project are given at the end of the semester, so that you can continuously work on/improve your scenes even after they are “due”. We learn more techniques as the semester goes on and many students ask to adjust their earlier projects accordingly. That said, I will watch each partnerships’ projects on/by the due date and provide the proper feedback for students to move forward. Failure to present assignments by the due date will impact your grade. Due dates will be given in class.

**\*\*\*Bring your hard drive to class each week so you can show work in class\*\*\***  
**\*\*\*Absolutely NO QuickTime files will be accepted\*\*\***

Project organization is 25 points of your total grade!!! Every week, I will inspect your drives upon viewing your assignments. I expect all projects to be organized in the same format I teach you in class. Failure to do so WILL affect your grade. Project organization will be discussed in the first few classes.

Participation: I expect everyone to be an active participant every week. Filmmaking and editing requires teamwork, collaboration, and the sharing of opinions on a daily basis, so your contributions to the work of others are crucial to the learning process. This means critiquing each other’s work during screenings, asking questions when we have guest speakers, and most importantly – being a good partner. This is a partnership, and it can only work well if BOTH partners are present and working collaboratively. If I learn that one partner is not participating properly on projects outside of class, that person’s grade will definitely be affected.

**\*\*\*Do not hesitate to ask me for help, or to discuss conceptual ideas you have for your assignments:** Editing, in the beginning, can be confusing... So please, do not let concerns over the buttons keep you from a rewarding and fun experience.

## **GRADING BREAKDOWN:**

Grading will be done on a standard scale with no curve:

- A 600 pts.
- A- 550 pts.
- B 500 pts.
- B- 450 pts.
- C 400 pts.
- C- 350 pts

Editing Assignment # 1 (500 DAYS OF SUMMER scene)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 2 (500 DAYS w/GFX and SFX)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 3 (Action scene)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 4 (Action scene w/GFX and SFX)	50	points
Editing Assignment # 5 (Promo or music video)	100	points
Scene Analysis/oral class presentations	75	points
Project Organization	25	points
Class participation	100	points
Final exam	100	points
<b>Total of</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>points</b>

### **Production Division Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (i.e. 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.

In order for an absence to be excused, the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

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

## 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](http://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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](mailto: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**

## **AVID GENIUS BAR**

If you need immediate Avid help and Yvette/Ryan are not available, please take advantage of the Avid Genius Bar in **SCA B149**. Avid Genius Bar hours are as follows:

Mondays: 1-6pm

Tuesdays: 5-10pm

Thursdays: 1-6pm

Fridays: 11am-1pm

## **RULES FOR USING SCA COMPUTER LABS**

1) No food, drinks (including bottled water), gum, or skateboards in the labs, Edit or Sound Edit Suites. Violation of this rule will result in suspension of Lab or Edit Room privileges. Locker area is available for food and drink storage.

2) You must sign in at Front Desk with your Student ID and use station assigned. Any change must be done through Front Desk.

- 3) If you are having technical problems with your workstation, contact a Tech through the Front Desk or Help Desk.
- 4) Closing time is strictly enforced. Techs will give warnings when to begin saving. Please do not argue with them.
- 5) Lab Hours and Supported Hard Drive documents can be found at the Front Desk, Help Desk, and SCA Community.
- 6) Headphones with 1/4 inch adapters are required at each workstation. SCA does not supply headphones or adapters.
- 7) Users may be bumped after their station has been vacant for a period of 30 minutes.
- 8) For locker checkout, fill out locker form in B144. Lock must be approved before locker is assigned.
- 9) SCA Help Documents are located on each workstation desktop.
- 10) Please handle all equipment and computers professionally.



## WEEKLY COURSE PLAN:

---

The following is a rough outline of how the semester will progress. All material below is subject to change, dependent upon guest speaker and lab time availability. All classes will be held in SCA 356, unless we inform you otherwise. Please check your emails each week for any changes in location.

**\*\*\*Editing assignments will be done in pairs.\*\*\***

### Week 1 (January 14)

#### **Lecture:**

- Take care of registration
- Review the syllabus
- Discussion about the course/introductions

#### **Practice:**

- Formatting and setting up hard drives – folders, root level, etc.
- Watch “The Cutting Edge” – a brief introduction, overview and history of film editing.

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week’s class):**

- Partner up and send us partnerships
- Purchase and format hard drive with your partner, set up/organize root level folders

### Week 2 (January 21)

#### **Lecture:**

- Discuss log lines and scene Analysis, beats, creating change.
- Discuss camera angles (coverage) setups and slating.
- The 180 degree rule
- The Kuleshov effect (example from my work)
- The Lined Script (see printed examples)

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week’s class):**

- Write out a scene analysis for your 500 Days scene (ask SA to email you copy of the script)
- Pick a movie you like, write a log line for it.
- Bring both to class to hand in; be prepared to share with the class in an oral presentation.

### Week 3 (January 28)

#### **Lecture/Practice:**

- Setting up project (Editing Assignment 1: 500 Days)
- Make and label bins (dailies, first cut, etc.)
- Sub clipping and organizing your dailies to prepare for cutting/frame view setup
- Start setting up your Keyboard

#### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week’s class):**

- Editing in the LAB – Organize your project:
- Find your scene for 500 Days on classroom exercises partition.
- Organize it: subclip dailies, copy to the dailies bin, with scene numbers labeled, text view or frame view
- Copy project to hard drive
- Bring to class your organized scene (on your hard drive) and be prepared to share with the class, along with your written scene analysis and log line.

#### Week 4 (February 4)

##### **Lecture:**

- Approaching dailies: how to watch raw footage and understand the thought process of the editor, using the scene analysis
- Cutting a basic scene

##### **Practice:**

- Turn in logline/script analysis (be prepared to share with the class)
- Review project set up assignments
- Study dailies of 500 Days scene
- Basic concepts of making your first cuts.
- Source/Record. Cutting in the timeline. Working with splice, lift vs. extract, and basic trimming.

##### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

##### **-Editing in the LAB:**

- Start cutting your Exercise 1/500 Days scene (First Assembly)
- Bring your cut on your hard drive to class

#### Week 5 (February 11)

##### **Lecture:**

- More editing techniques: trim mode, scrolling, match cut
- Introduction to sound and music editing
- L-cuts, checker boarding, dialogue editing

##### **Practice:**

- Watch refined 500 Days editing assignments and give final notes

##### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Begin adding sound design to 500 Days scene

#### Week 6 (February 18)

- Working with Sound and Music/Creating a sound design
- Watch and discuss examples of sound FX and music in feature films or TV shows

##### **Practice:**

- Review and watch editing assignments with class (500 Days first assembly)
- Time to cut in class/work one on one
- Discuss refining your cuts

##### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Refine your Exercise 1/500 Days cut (Editor's Rough Cut)

#### Week 7 (February 25)

- Possible guest speaker

#### Week 8 (March 3)

##### **Lecture:**

- Cutting genres – Horror and Suspense (view and discuss examples)

##### **Practice:**

- Avid project for Editing Assignment 2 will be inspected for organization, notes given.

##### **ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Complete your cut of Editing Assignment 2 by adding sound design and music. Consider this your final version of 500 Days to present in next week's class.

Week 9 (March 10)

**Lecture:**

- Watch and discuss examples of action cutting in feature films or TV shows
- Discuss action cutting techniques
- Watch dailies of action scenes (Gladiator; Thor; ER), and analyze dailies for action cutting

**Practice:**

- Watch final versions of Editing Assignment 2; additional changes can be made for next week if necessary.

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Prepare AVID project from Editing Assignment 3 (*Gladiator*); Begin assembling first cut of action scene. Make any additional changes to Editing Assignment 2 if necessary.

**Week 10 (March 17 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS)**

Week 11 (March 24)

**Lecture:**

- Working with Style/VFX – part 1
- Watch and discuss examples of feature film or TV shows – stylistic vs. formal.
- Working with Style/VFX – part 2
- How to use the EFX pallet and other stylistic techniques

**Practice:**

- Watch 1<sup>st</sup> versions of Editing assignment 3, give notes, discuss ideas for adding EFX/style/sound and music.

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Address notes given in class; Continue working on your Editing Assignment 3, start adding EFX/style/music/sound design to your cuts to turn it into Editing Assignment 4 – focus more on sound/music for now.

Week 12 (March 31)

**Lecture:**

- Documentaries – watch film in class

**Practice:**

- Watch 1<sup>st</sup> versions of Editing Assignment 4, give notes, discuss more ideas for refining/adding EFX/style.
- Using the AVID effects palette
- Stylistic techniques
- Work on sound and music editing, adding EFX/style in lab

**ASSIGNMENT**

- Address notes given in class; Continue adding EFX/style/music/sound design to your cuts

Week 13 (April 7)

**Lecture:**

- Intercutting
- Promos, Trailers, and Music Videos (view and discuss examples)

**Practice:**

- Watch final versions of Editing Assignment 4

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Start preparing/cutting Editing Assignment 5 – be prepared to present a pitch/idea/subclips/assemblies in next class.

Week 14 (April 14)

**Lecture:**

- Comedy Editing
- Multi-cam editing (sitcoms, reality TV, etc.)/animation editing

**Practice:**

- Basics of grouping, cutting from groups, working with multi-cam footage
- Review current state of Editing Assignment 5; discuss ideas/pitches

**ASSIGNMENT (to complete for next week's class):**

- Address notes/finish cutting your promo or music video/Editing Assignment 5

Week 15 (April 21)

- Possible guest speaker

Week 16 (April 28)

**Lecture/Practice:**

- Review for the final/Last class
- Realities of the editor's job – the challenges, the usual behavioral mistakes first-time editors make and how to avoid them, the psychological aspects of working with the director and other creative people, how to run the room, how to get the job and keep it.

**Practice:**

- View final versions of promo or music video/Editing Assignment 5.

**ASSIGNMENT**

- Study/Prepare for Final.

**Week 17 (May 5):**

**\*\*\*STUDY WEEK – NO CLASS\*\*\***

**Week 18 (May 12)**

**FINAL EXAM – 6pm**

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT: ALL STUDENTS MUST BE PRESENT ON THIS DAY FOR FINAL EXAM\*\*\***

**NO MAKE-UP DATES WILL BE ALLOWED. THIS IS SCA POLICY.**

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR TRAVEL PLANS ACCORDINGLY!**

For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC *Schedule of Classes* at [www.usc.edu/soc](http://www.usc.edu/soc).

## STUDENT SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Major \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

---

*The following is not graded. My intention is to understand everyone's capabilities and interests coming into the semester.*

\* What kind of editing experience have you had at USC or elsewhere? Please be specific.

\* Are you familiar with any editing software? If so, please list which ones.

\* Why did you choose to take this course?

\* Name three things you hope to learn in this course.

\* List your five favorite films... and why (this doesn't have to be about editing).

\* List your five favorite TV shows... and why (this doesn't have to be about editing).