

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

**Semester:** Fall 2022 v3

**Professor:** Bruce A. Block

**SA:** TBA

**2 UNITS**

**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday mornings by appointment

**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, internet streaming, commercials, videos, and digital 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. Demonstrate how these components communicate to an audience.
3. Apply the components to a text/script.
4. Develop a visual structure to use in actual production.
5. Show examples from films.
6. Create examples that demonstrate the course's basic principles.

**REGISTRATION, ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES**

CTPR 506 is a required class for SCA Graduate Production students who have registration priority. Non-SCA Graduate Production students may, under limited circumstances, be Stand-By listed by obtaining permission from the instructor. Wait List and Stand-By listed students are not guaranteed enrollment in the class.

Students should not enroll in 506 if they are simultaneously a key crewmember on a student production.

The class is extremely rigorous. Lectures are complex and require extensive note taking. There are weekly photo assignments plus two final assignments that are due near the end of the semester:

**Final Assignment 1.** Each student, working individually, creates a photographic notebook of 73 original still photos illustrating the concepts discussed in class. Approximately half of these photos are due each week during the semester as works-in-progress.

**Final Assignment 2.** Collaborating in groups of four, students create a short film demonstrating their understanding of the principles of visual structure in relation to a story. Non-SCA Graduate Production

students enrolled in CTPR 506 must work in film groups with at least two SCA Graduate Production Division students.

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 (50%), film grade (40%) and class participation (10%). 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 near the end of the semester and are announced in class. Students who plagiarize or share photos will receive a failing grade.

Attendance at the 506 student film screenings is mandatory. Students are expected to be on time for class and prepared for the rigorous lectures and assignments. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third 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 absence.

### **READING & REFERENCES**

The text for the class is *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block. The book is available at the USC Campus Bookstore, from online vendors and local retailers. The class lectures are divided into topics that coincide with the book's chapters.

### **LECTURES & SCHEDULE**

Class lectures are dense and detailed. Students are required to take notes, which includes drawings and diagrams. Audio & video recording, photography and screen-shots are not allowed during class. The listing below of each lecture's subject is approximate since discussion lengths may vary.

LECTURE 1: Orientation and overview of the basic visual components. Basic class terms are defined. Space is introduced followed by a discussion of the four basic spatial categories.

LECTURE 2: Definition of space continues. Discussion moves to secondary spatial concepts. Examples are screened in class.

LECTURE 3: Discussion of space finishes. The final assignments for the class (individual student photo notebook and group film) are announced and discussed.

LECTURE 4: Visual structure. The relationships between visual and narrative structure, structural analysis and visual economy are discussed.

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

LECTURE 6: Line and shape discussion begins. Perception of line, linear motif, shape motif and the use of line & shape in relation to the story structure are discussed.

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

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

LECTURE 9: Tone & Light. Although tone is an aspect of color, tone also relates to exposure control and the gray scale. Tone is discussed in relation to directorial control, lighting and art direction.

LECTURE 10: Movement. Movement is defined in relation to the object and the camera.

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

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. Photo notebooks are due and submitted online.

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

### Support Systems:

*USC COVID-19 Resource Center*

<https://coronavirus.usc.edu/covid-19-vaccine-information-center/covid-19-vaccine-faq/>

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.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](https://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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

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

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by 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. The university also prohibits sexual assault,

non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776*

[osas.usc.edu](https://osas.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.

*Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)

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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS ARE NOT PERMITTED INDOORS IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS  
COMPLEX DURING COVID