

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
CTPR 406
THE VISUAL STORY
SPRING 2023

PROFESSOR: BRUCE BLOCK

CLASSROOM & TIME: SCA 112; Tuesdays 9:00AM – 11:50AM

SA: TBA

UNITS: 2

OFFICE HOURS: Monday mornings by appointment only; in-person or Zoom.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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 ‘language’ available to all picture makers yet it is often misused or simply ignored. The key to successfully using visual structure is an understanding of the basic visual components of space, line, shape, color, tone, movement, and rhythm. It is through the control of these basic visual components that a picture maker stirs an audience's emotions, communicates moods and ideas and creates a visual style. This class links visual structure and story structure together.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This course introduces students to the basic visual principles of Contrast & Affinity, Visual Structure, and the Seven Basic Visual Components. This prepares students for using these principles in the production of animated productions, digital games, live-action, streaming content or any other type of visual presentation in any media. The course defines each basic visual component, demonstrates how these components communicate to an audience, how the component is controlled technically and aesthetically and presents examples from feature films.

PREREQUISITES:

This class does not have prerequisites. It is open to USC undergraduates who want to understand and harness the relationship between story structure and visual structure.

TESTS, ASSIGNMENTS AND LECTURES:

The mid-term test and the final exam are designed to measure the students’ understanding of the basic visual components as they have been discussed in class.

Each student creates a series of original pictures that are assigned during the semester to demonstrate their understanding of a visual component. Pictures are due seven days after they are assigned. Students are required to re-do these assignments if their submitted examples lack a full realization of the visual component being illustrated. Students must take notes during the lectures which includes drawings and diagrams. Video and/or audio recording including photography of any kind, are not allowed in class.

READING & REFERENCES:

The textbook for the class is *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block (third edition). The lectures are divided into topics that coincide with the book’s chapters.

GRADING:

Final course grade is based on the two tests (70%) and the assignments(30%). The class does not allow make-up tests or extra credit assignments.

ATTENDANCE 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 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. Three late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Listing of material for each class is approximate since discussion lengths will vary.

CLASS 1: Orientation and overview of the visual components. Basic visual terms are defined. Space is introduced and organized into categories.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 3.

CLASS 2: Discussion of Space continues.

CLASS 3: Discussion of Space is completed.

Photo assignment #1: Space.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 9.

CLASS 4: Visual structure. The relationship between visual and story structures is discussed.

CLASS 5: Screening of *Feature Film TBA*. Discussion and review of the film's visual structure.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 4.

CLASS 6: Line & Shape. Linear motif, perception of line, and shape motif are discussed.

Photo assignment #2: Line Orientation.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 6.

CLASS 7: Color. Color structure and systems are discussed to simplify and organize an extremely misunderstood visual component.

CLASS 8: Mid-Term exam and screening of *Feature Film TBA* followed by a review of space, line, shape and color.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 5.

CLASS 9: Discussion of Color completes.

Photo assignment #3: Color.

Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 7.

CLASS 10: Movement. The three types of movement are discussed and defined.

Photo assignment #4: Movement.

CLASS 11: Screening of *Feature Film TBA* followed by a review and discussion.
Reading assignment: *The Visual Story*, Chapter 8.

CLASS 12: Rhythm. Visual rhythm is discussed.
Photo assignment #5: Rhythm.

CLASS 13: Rhythm completes.

CLASS 14: Review of all visual components and story structure.

CLASS 15: Screening of short films demonstrating various principles of visual structure. Final assignments are due and submitted online as a digital pdf.

EXAM WEEK: Final exam in class.

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:

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

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

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, 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

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 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.

Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710

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

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.

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