

CPTR 421 Practicum in Editing

USC School of Cinematic Arts
Section: 18533

Fall 2022

Instructor: Scott Gamzon, ACE
Phone: (323) 363-0666
E-Mail: gamzon@usc.edu
Class Meetings: SCA 214
Monday 7-10 PM
Office Hours by appointment only

S.A.: Cambria Wykoff
Phone: (802) 989-8147
E-Mail: cwyckoff@usc.edu

Course Description:

Editing is Storytelling. From the first reading of the script, to the viewing of dailies, to the assembling of scenes, to the use of music and visual effects an Editor is always asking “how can I best express the text and subtext of the script?” In CPTR 421 students will learn techniques – both technical and aesthetic to best answer these questions. You will learn how to analyze shot footage and put it together to fulfill a vision. The goal of this class is to nurture and train students to not only succeed as editors but in all aspects of film whether it be as a writer, director, cinematographer, sound editor, or composer.

This course will focus on the brain processes that make the difference between picture editing and *great* picture editing. It will cover both the theory and practical techniques of editing. By working with professional dailies from feature films and television series, you will gain experience and acquire the skill sets needed to effectively and artistically bring out the text and subtext of a scene. You will edit or re-edit scenes nearly every week, in the process learning how to listen to and implement notes. The editing exercises are designed to dramatically expand your ability to edit and to give you an overview of the complete process – aesthetic and practical.

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. Projects will be edited using Avid Media Composer. There will be two hands-on scheduled Avid Labs covering basic editing functions. Techniques covered will include edit and trim modes, using visual fx within Avid, audio editing functions, and ultimately you will be learning how to be a visual storyteller who meticulously and creatively structures raw footage into meaningful and engaging scenes.

Class Format:

The weekly class meetings will be divided into two parts. During the first half of class I will lecture about different aspects of the art of editing and we will examine and analyze clips from films and television shows as examples. During the second half I will be demonstrating various editing functions and techniques on Avid Media Composer, answering questions you may have and giving notes on your editing assignments.

You will be assigned to one of two editing groups A or B. Each week students from one of the groups will present their editing exercises to the class for review.

Schedule permitting there will be guest speakers, working professionals in the film and television industry, joining us during one class session to discuss their professions in relation to editing (for example a film composer and a music supervisor).

The class is structured to give you an overview of the entire editing process. Over the course of our time together we will advance from looking at the basic elements (both technical and aesthetic) of editing a scene to more advanced techniques. We will study parallel storytelling, using shot choices to reveal character, using reaction shots to reveal a character’s thoughts and feelings, building performances by combining takes, manipulating performance by slipping dialog, the use of overlapping dialog, pacing, and using music and sound design to enhance storytelling. We will be examining how the editing process varies amongst different genres. You will be exposed to techniques used in editing comedy, drama, thrillers, action, and documentary.

Course Requirements:

You will be assigned an editing exercise roughly every 3 weeks. Depending on which group you are assigned, you will be expected to screen your first cut the following week or the week after, as well as uploading a Quicktime of your scene to an online class drive. Critiques will be given verbally, and you will be expected to take notes. In the case that I do not have enough time to review your cut in class I will give notes via e-mail by the Friday after class. You will then re-edit your cut and upload for review the following week. There will be four editing exercises over the course of the class followed by the final project.

You will be assigned a partition on the Nexus Drive in the Post Lab to use for your class assignments. All assignments must be completed in the Post Lab. You are also welcome to bring your own USC approved SSD drive. Please see the SCA knowledgebase for a list of approved drives.

There will be a mandatory 10 minute midterm review meeting with me to be scheduled during midterms.

A final editing project will also be assigned in lieu of a final exam.

I encourage students to take notes during class and laptops are welcome, but please **turn off all cell phones** before coming to class.

Students are required to attend and participate in all classes. **ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT EVERY CLASS AND EVERY AVID LAB.** Written explanations will be necessary in advance for all absences. **Unexcused absences will be reflected in your course grade.** In addition, students are expected to be at class on time. **Lateness will be reflected in your course grade.** Please make use of my e-mail or phone number if you have an unavoidable problem or serious medical or personal emergency. If you cannot make class or know you will be late please let me know prior to class.

Editors are required to complete their work within an assigned deadline, and you will likewise be responsible for completing each assignment on time and in a professional manner. **A full letter grade will be deducted from late work.**

There are no required textbooks though I highly recommend – AVID EDITING by Sam Kauffman Also highly recommended are THE BLINK OF AN EYE by legendary editor Walter Murch and THE CONVERSATIONS: WALTER MURCH AND THE ART OF EDITING FILM by Michael Ondaatje.

I also strongly recommend you purchase an Avid Keyboard “skin” to be used in the Post Lab. These can be found on Amazon or directly from such manufactures as Logickeyboard. Expect to pay between \$25-\$35.

CLASS BREAKDOWN:

Depending on the needs of the class some of the subject matter covered may change.

Week 1	1/9/23	Editing as visual storytelling	LECTURE – Visual Storytelling Introduction How to read a script like an Editor The lined script The Rule of Three The Lean Forward Moment How to watch Dailies like an editor Complete Survey
Week 2	1/16/23	MLK DAY	NO CLASS
Week 3	1/23/23	Avid Editing Lab Room TBD	1) Creating and working within the Avid Project - Setting up a project - Project settings - User settings - Folder and Bin organization and naming

			<p>Conventions -Using Classroom Exercises</p> <p>2) Editing with Avid Media Composer - adding and deleting tracks - track patching - segment editing: cutting, lifting and extracting shots -Trim mode</p> <p>3) Lift/Overwrite & Lift/insert 4) Basic Audio Volume adjustment 5)Outputs - Exporting Quicktime files for viewing cuts</p>
Week 4	1/30/23	Assembling the scene	<p>LECTURE When to cut vs when not to cut Pace and Rhythm The meaning behind changing camera angles and shot size The J/L cut vs. the straight cut “Cutting to” as oppose to “cutting away” Parallel editing</p> <p>PRACTICUM Customizing your keyboard and interface settings Review of basic editing functions and Trim mode Track assignments on the timeline</p>
Week 5	2/06/23	Editing for Performance / Editing is re-editing	<p>LECTURE Walter Murch’s Rule of 6 The Editor as Psychologist Shaping a performance with dialog, intonation and vocal emphasis Shaping a performance with reaction shots Ad-libs How to view a rough cut. Using the rule of 3 to reevaluate a scene.</p> <p>PRACTICUM Timeline functions Smart Tools Lift/Overwrite Lift/Insert Right Clicks</p>
Week 6	2/13/23	LAB: Sound Design ROOM TBD	<p>LECTURE Using Sound to tell the story Spotting sound & the final mix</p> <p>PRACTICUM Using Audio EQ and AudioSuite Using the audio mixer Using keyframes in the timeline to control audio</p>

Week 7	2/20/23	Presidents Day	NO CLASS
Week 8	2/27/23	Music	Using music to tell the story Spotting music Score vs. Source vs. Needledrop Working with a composer/music supervisor
Week 9	03/06/23	LAB: VISUAL FX ROOM TBD MID TERM REVIEWS VIA ZOOM DURING THE WEEK	LECTURE How VFX affect storytelling Blue/Green Screen VFX Workflow – working with a VFX team The role of the VFX Editor The DI PRACTICUM FX Palette Sapphire and other plug ins. Multicam Motion FX
Week 10	3/13/23	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
Week 11	3/20/23	The Action Sequence and the Suspense sequence	The “ballet” of the action sequence Screen direction and breaking the 180 degree rule Using “Sign Posts” in the action sequence Pace in the action sequence How to create excitement by disorienting and reorienting the audience The importance of sound in action Sequences Pacing for a suspense sequence The “Jump Scare” The importance of sound (and absence of sound) in the suspense/horror sequence
Week 12	3/27/23	Comedy	LECTURE Editing for comic timing Creating and working with group clips Multi cam vs. Single cam comedy in Television
Week 13	4/3/23	NO CLASS	
Week 14	4/10/23	LAB Room TBD	Your Avid Questions answered plus additional time to work on you Editing Exercises!
Week 15	4/17/23	Documentary	Storytelling with documentary footage The documentary “script” Narration vs. Interview Narrative techniques for Verité documentaries Reality television and the manipulation of the audience.
Week 16	4/24/23	How do we get from dailies to Air	LECTURE A walk through an episode of television and what went into getting to the final product. Scene #4 –Cut 2 Screening and Notes.

			Combined Gladiator Scenes 56-B59 due 11/16
Week 17	5/1/23	Working in the professional world	Going from Editor's cut to Director's Cut to Producer's Cut to Locked picture What happens after Picture Lock - Finishing a film / episode The Politics of the editing room - working with Directors and Producers Getting your first job The role of the Assistant editor Networking
	5/8/23	FINAL PROJECTS DUE	

GRADES:

The primary component of your grade will be your weekly editing assignments and the final. This involves your ability to complete these assignments every week, whether they be first cuts or re-edits. Your grade will also reflect your progress and growth as an editor during the semester. Your participation in class discussions will also be a factor in your grade.

You will also be judged on your ability to accept criticism and implement changes in your work based on that criticism.

Your grade will be broken down in the following manner:

Out of 100 pts total

Attendance 10 points (10%)

4 Editing projects 15 points each (15% each total of 60%)

Final Editing project 30 points (30%)

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

There will be no incompletes granted except in the case of a severe medical or personal emergency.

It is your responsibility to be aware of USC's add/drop and withdraw deadlines.

PRESENTATION OF EDITED MATERIALS:

Just like professional editors, all material must be properly prepared for screening. It will be your responsibility to make sure that outputs are complete with sound and in viewable conditions. You should check your materials before leaving the editing station. It never hurts to test your materials by playing back on another editing station. After we discuss proper slating that will also be a required part of your cuts.

OFFICE HOURS AND OUT OF CLASS CONSULTATION:

Office hours are by appointment only in the courtyard of SCA or in the Adjunct Professor Office. You can schedule a meeting with me via e-mail

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 an

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

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 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 for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

eeotix.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.

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 for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

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

osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and 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, Equity and Inclusion - (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.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu

chan.usc.edu/otfp

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX d university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).