

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
CTPR 506 - VISUAL EXPRESSION
SYLLABUS

Semester: Fall 2023 v7

Professor: Bruce Block

Professor's email: BAB@usc.edu

SA: TBD

2 UNITS

OFFICE HOURS: Monday mornings by appointment. in person or on Zoom

PREREQUISITES: CTPR 508 OR CTAN 547 OR CTIN 534

Auditing CTPR 506 is not permitted. This course does not use pass/no pass grading.

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 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.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able use the principles discussed in this class to create and control pictures for any format including theatrical motion pictures, television/streaming shows, commercials, internet sites, and digital games, using live-action, traditional or CG animation. This class relates all of the visual concepts to practical production so students can bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The Structure of the Class:

1. Define each basic visual component.
2. Show how to recognize these components.
3. Demonstrate how these components communicate to an audience.
4. Apply the components to a text/script.
5. Discuss how the component is used technically and aesthetically in production.
6. Present and discuss examples from films.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

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 50 original still photos illustrating the concepts discussed in class. Many of these photos are due during the semester as works-in-progress. Incorrect photos must be redone.

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-Production students enrolled in CTPR 506 must work in film groups with at least two SCA 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 & group collaboration (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 announced in class and posted on Blackboard. Photos and films may not be created or manipulated using AI or any software programs. Students who plagiarize, share or exchange photos for their assignments will receive a failing grade.

ATTENDANCE

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

Timely attendance at all classes and screenings, including the student film screenings, is mandatory. Students are expected to be on time for class, prepared for each class and remain in class until the class ends. One absence may result in a student's final grade being lowered by one notch (IE: A becomes A-). Two absences will result in a final grade being lowered by two notches (IE: A becomes B+). A third absence will result in a final grade being lowered a full letter (IE: B+ becomes C+). Grades will be lowered by one full letter for every additional absence. Failure to remain in class until the class ends may affect a student's grade.

A student is deemed tardy (late) if they arrive 15 minutes after the class is scheduled to start. One late arrival may not affect a grade. Two late arrivals equate to one absence and the student's grade will be lowered one notch (IE: A becomes A-). Three late arrivals will result in a grade being lowered by two notches (IE: A- becomes B). Four late arrivals will result in a grade being lowered three notches (one full letter: B becomes C). Tardiness of more than 45 minutes will count as an absence.

- Exemptions will be allowed on a case-by-case basis, and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).
- Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are not required to provide an option for students to Zoom into class.
- Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class.

READING & REFERENCES

The text for the class is *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block (third edition). The book is available at the USC Student bookstore, from online vendors and at local bookstores.

LECTURES & SCHEDULE

Class lectures are extremely dense and rigorous. Students are required to take notes, which includes drawings and diagrams. Recording and photography are not permitted during class. The listing below of specific material for each lecture is approximate since discussion lengths will vary.

LECTURE 1: Orientation and overview of the basic visual components. Basic class terms are defined. Space is introduced with an overview followed by the organization of space into four basic categories.

LECTURE 2: Definition of space continues. Discussion moves to secondary spatial concepts.

LECTURE 3: Discussion of space finishes. The final assignments for the class (individual student 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 discussed.

LECTURE 6: Line and shape discussion begins. Linear motif, basic shapes, perception of line, and methods of creating shapes are discussed.

LECTURE 7: Color. Color structure and systems are discussed to clear up and simplify an extremely misunderstood visual component.

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

LECTURE 9: Tone & Light. Although tone is an aspect of color, tone also relates to directorial emphasis and exposure control. Tone and light are related to the gray scale.

LECTURE 10: Movement. Movement is defined in relation to the screen, the camera, a single object and an object & background.

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

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. Photographic notebooks are due at the end of the semester. Specific dates will be announced in class.

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

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy:

Since creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, the photo assignments must be created by the student working individually; the film assignment must be created by the film groups of four students. Students may not have another person or entity complete any portion of the assignments. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare students for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Please ask the instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation is prohibited. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express written permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

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

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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 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) 740-0411

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

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

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
Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

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) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

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 SPACE IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX