

## **CTPR 335 MOTION PICTURE EDITING**

Spring 2025

USC School of Cinematic Arts

**Section:** 18497R 001

**Instructor:** Professor Duwayne Dunham

**Phone:** 310-709-7321

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**Office Hours:** By appointment, Monday - Tuesday 4-7 pm: SCA 414

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**Phone:** 1-213.549-8998

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**Class Meetings:** Mondays 7-10pm

**Room:** SCA 356

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This is a hands-on course combined with lectures and demonstrations relating to aesthetic and technical issues of film editing. You will be editing a variety of scenes from popular films and television shows. This will require you to use your storytelling, problem solving and technical skills to solve the many challenges that confront the editor.

Editors are storytellers. We use images, sounds and music to convey information and emotion. Editing is about fulfilling an overall vision, creating a captivating flow of sound and images, and revealing the story's text and subtext. Emotion, pace and rhythm are important components of a well edited film. 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. We will explore *Why* I should cut at this frame as opposed to this one? *Why* is it more important to use on-camera dialog as opposed to playing dialog off-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 "how's" (using the AVID, editing techniques, the grammar and language of editing), and the "whys" (editing aesthetics, basic theory and concepts behind film editing.)

We will examine how an editor approach's a scene and what goes into an editor's thought process, from shot, to scene, to sequence, to acts, and finally the overall story.

### **CLASS FORMAT:**

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 keen 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 make basic picture and sound edits. Editing is an art. So please, do not let concerns over pushing the buttons on your editing machine keep you from a rewarding and fun experience!

### **COURSE NOTES:**

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. Editing is writing! Writing is re-writing. So, editing is re-editing! In the end, we strive for what I call "Flawless Editing."

**By the end of the semester, you will be able to think like an editor and consequently, you will become better visual storytellers.** In a sense, you will become media literate. 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 edit your own stories based upon the skills you have learned in this class.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Projects will be edited using the state-of-the-art nonlinear digital editing system used in features and television today -- the Avid Media Composer. You will also be given a background in some assistant editor techniques. You will learn supplemental techniques that good editors and assistant editors need to know about the editing process and be able to ask questions that arise during the editing of your own scenes.

### **HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

You will need to bring **Headphones** (a 1/4-inch phone jack adapter is needed to work in the labs) with you to each edit session.

\*\*\*Remember, the Avid Genius Bar and Avid Media Composer Guide are available and are vital resources for quick help!

### **DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS:**

You will edit and or re-edit a scene each week, sometimes on your own, sometimes with a partner. 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 feedback, then hand in revisions based on your notes. Part of this process will also be learning the technical skills necessary to work with Avid Media Composer more creatively and efficiently. There will also be a written scene analysis assignment and various oral presentations throughout the semester.

### **PRESENTATION OF EDITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

All your editing assignments are to be copied to your hard drive, or Nexus and shared in class: Your SA and lab assistants can help with this process. Every assignment should have a Title Card at the beginning with all the necessary information and be presented in this format:

- 2 seconds of black,
- 5 seconds of Title Card that contains the following information:
  - Your name (s)
  - Project Name (i.e.: Law&Order: SVU sc.18)
  - Version (i.e.: "First Cut," "Second Cut,")
- 2 more seconds of black
- the editing assignment
- then finishing with 1 sec of black

\*\*\*On edit project due dates, make sure your hard drive is present so you can show work during class time. Or, have your work downloaded on the Nexus platform.

**ATTENDANCE AND PROTOCOL:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and be punctual. Class starts promptly at 7:00 pm. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade 50 pts. Each unexcused tardiness is minus 5 points (tardiness is arriving after 7:15). There will be no use of any cell phone functions in class. Laptops may remain open only if they are used to take notes.

**PARTICIPATION:**

I would like everyone to be an active participant each and every week. Your contribution to the work of others is crucial to the learning process.

**GRADING:**

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	75	points
Editing Assignment # 2	75	points
Editing Assignment # 3	100	points
Mid-Term Quiz	50	points
Scene Analysis/oral class presentation	100	points
Class participation	100	points
Final exam	100	points
<b>Total of</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>points</b>

**WEEKLY COURSE BREAKDOWN:**

This breakdown may change several times during the semester, depending on feedback.

1	1/13/25	<p>Class introduction.</p> <p>Registration.</p> <p>Review syllabus.</p> <p>Discussion about this course.</p> <p>Intro to the Editing Thought Process. What is editing?</p> <p>What is the Scene About? Who's Scene is it? And What is the Most Important Moment in the Scene.</p>	<p><b>Homework:</b> bring to class an example of what you consider interesting editing and be prepared to explain why. This can be from any form of media.</p>
2	<p>1/20/25</p> <p>*****</p> <p>MLK Holiday</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS - MLK HOLIDAY</b></p>

3	1/27/25	<p>The opening scene. Thinking like an editor. Focusing the story. The emblematic image. The first shot we see. The first character we see. Translation from script to screen.</p> <p>Examining the Scene. Viewing Dailies. Director's Dailies Notes.</p> <p>Lined scripts. Script analysis. Storyboards and animatics. Shot sizes and their use. 6K (and beyond) frame extraction. How scenes can be constructed. How to organize an editing project. Academy leaders and slates.</p>	Screen selected film clips that demonstrate different types of film editing.
4	2/3/25	<p>Examining The Sequence.</p> <p>Dialogue editing. Text and subtext. Examining the individual cut.</p>	AVID workshop?
5	2/10/25	<p>Transitions – straight cuts, dissolves, wipes, fades, shot size, sound. How shots can be restructured. When to cut. When not to cut. The L-cut.</p>	

6	2/17/25 ***** Presidents Day Holiday	<b>NO CLASS - PRESIDENT'S DAY</b>	Pace and Rhythm.  The editor's purview. Metric and rhythmic montage. Slo-mo, undercrank, freeze. Film Doctoring.
7	2/24/25	Genre.  The Action Sequence.  The Genre Landscape. Creating an action sequence. The Guidepost Shot. Geography and temporality. Plasticity of the medium. The jump cut. Film Time exercise. Genre iconography and the insert shot.	Star Wars - Trench Run, Gun Turret
8	3/3/25	Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi and the Western.  Midterm evaluation Traditional opticals, CGI. Greenscreen and how to use it. Motion control. Motion capture. The effects editor. Interfacing with visual effect teams.	AVID Workshop - Visual Effects  ROJ Speeder bike Chase

9	3/10/25	<p>Genre: The Thriller vs. Mystery.</p> <p>What the audience knows.  What the protagonist knows.  Creating suspense.  Shot length.</p>	<p>Hitchcock  Jaws Theme</p>
10	3/17/25 ***** Spring Recess	<p>Genre: Editing Comedy.</p> <p>Structure in comedy editing.  The Banana Peel Effect.  Sight gags.  Rule of Three as it applies to comedy.  Comic timing.</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK</b></p>
11	3/24/25	<p>Documentaries.</p> <p>Telling a story with real footage.  Style in documentaries.  The Auteur Editor.  Reality TV.  Voiceover and montage.</p>	<p>Medium Cool  Buck</p>

12	3/31/25	<p>Music Design.</p> <p>Using music to tell a story. Spotting music. What music can do to accentuate your scene. Source and score. Moving towards a final mix. Musical style.</p>	GUEST SPEAKER: COMPOSER
13	4/7/25	<p>Sound Design. Postproduction (Finishing).</p> <p>Spotting Sound. Outputting for sound. Pre-dubs, final mixing.</p>	
14	4/14/25	Review the three-act structure.	Billy Wilder
15	4/21/25	The Importance of Openings and Endings.	<p><b>FINAL EXAM</b> <b>Per the university, you MUST be present on this date to take your exam... ***Please make your travel plans accordingly!!!***</b></p> <p>American Graffiti, Raiders, 2001 Fatal Attraction - both endings. Final?</p>
16	4/28/25 ***** classes end May 2	STUDY WEEK	NO CLASS
17	5/5/25	FINAL EXAM WEEK	NO CLASS

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

Walter Murch, *In The Blink Of An Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2001.  
Edward Dmytryk, *On Film Editing*. Focal Press, 1984.  
Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*. Mariner Books, 2014 (reissued).



Kauffman, Sam, Avid Editing: Guide for Beginning & Intermediate Users. Focal Press, 2012.

**RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:**

Avid Technology Podcast Interviews with filmmakers and software designers.

Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz ~ Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post-production and production.

Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.

**AVID GENIUS BAR:**

The Genius Bar is primarily an online service. It is in-person on Tuesdays in room B139.

Contact: Toi Juan Shannon

TSHANNON@USC.EDU

**Monday 12 - 5pm**

**Tuesday 2pm - 9pm**

**Thursday 12 - 3pm**

**Friday 12 - 2pm**

**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.

**COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. Please take the time to submit this when the university sends you the questionnaire.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on our exams, or submitting

any work that you or your partner have not done. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or doubts about these policies, consult "Scampus" and/or confer with your SA or me.

#### Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems:

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:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://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](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 Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://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](https://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

#### Covid Safety Compliance Understanding

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 in California and around the world, USC and the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) have taken a strong stance regarding the need for safe and mindful behaviors among all members of the SCA community. Medical authorities agree that even the young and healthy are capable, if infected, of becoming ill, or of being non-symptomatic, unconscious vectors of the disease's spread. The health and wellbeing of all community members must be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating. We understand that attentiveness to the concerns of all SCA community members – students, staff and faculty, including those with underlying health conditions -- is simply an extension of the key principle of creative collaboration that has guided our school for decades.

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