

## **CTPR 421 PRACTICUM IN EDITING**

SPRING - 2025

USC School of Cinematic Arts

**Section:** 18532

**Instructor:** Professor Duwayne Dunham

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

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**Class Meetings:** TUESDAYS 7 - 9:50pm

**Room:** SCA 209

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of this course is to explore how editing shapes storytelling, using content from a variety of media and in various styles. It will deepen your knowledge of modern non-linear editing equipment, primarily the **AVID Media Composer**, and techniques.

This is a hands-on course combined with lectures and demonstrations relating to aesthetic and technical issues of 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 in the editing room.

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. 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.

You will be given professionally shot dailies from major motion pictures and TV to edit in various genres. These will be critiqued by your colleagues in class. Afterwards you will have an opportunity to re-cut your projects based on these notes.

Some of these scenes will be re-edited to alter the genre, for instance a comedy may become a thriller. You will discover how each genre has its own demands and creates particular expectations.

We will also discuss the organization and politics of the editing room, from working with directors and producers, to interactions with the studios and the preview process, as well as the rising influence of artificial intelligence. We will also have some excellent guest speakers who have worked on films you may have seen.

**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.

### **CLASS FORMAT:**

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of editing. Each week we will discuss various aesthetic and technical aspects of editing. A portion of the class will be devoted to editing/re-editing and/or critiquing edited scenes. I encourage you to ask questions and give comments. Your participation is a significant part of this course.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

You will edit and/or re-edit a scene each week, sometimes on your own, sometimes with a partner. You will have the opportunity, on a rotating basis, to present your cuts in class, and accept criticism from your classmates and me so you can re-edit the scenes for further in-class review.

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.

**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.

**PRESENTATION OF Editing Assignments**

Your editing assignments should be copied to your hard drive and will be 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 of 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
  - Version ("First Cut," "Second Cut", etc.)
- 2 more seconds of black
- the editing assignment
- then finishing with 1 sec of black

**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 course of the semester, depending on feedback.

1	1/14/25	<p>Class introduction.</p> <p>Review Syllabus</p> <p>Intro to the Editing Thought Process.</p> <p>What is the Scene About? Who's Scene is it? And What is the Most Important Moment in the Scene.</p>	<p>Screen: THE CUTTING EDGE</p> <p>HOMEWORK: bring in an example of interesting editing</p>
2	1/21/25	<p>Review of Basic Principles.</p> <p>Select partners.</p> <p>-----</p> <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>	

3	1/28/25	<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>	
4	2/4/25	<p>Examining The Sequence.</p> <p>Dialogue editing.  Text and subtext.  Examining the individual cut.</p>	AVID workshop
5	2/11/25	<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	2/18/25	<p>Pace and Rhythm.</p> <p>The editor's purview.  Metric and rhythmic montage.  Slo-mo, undercrank, freeze.  Film Doctoring.</p>	

7	2/25/25	<p>Genre.</p> <p>The Action Sequence.</p> <p>The Genre Landscape.</p> <p>Creating an action sequence.</p> <p>The Guidepost Shot.</p> <p>Geography and temporality.</p> <p>Plasticity of the medium.</p> <p>The jump cut.</p> <p>Film Time exercise.</p> <p>Genre iconography and the insert shot.</p>	
8	3/4/25	<p>Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi and the Western.</p> <p>Midterm evaluation</p> <p>Traditional opticals, CGI.</p> <p>Greenscreen and how to use it.</p> <p>Motion control.</p> <p>Motion capture.</p> <p>The effects editor.</p> <p>Interfacing with visual effect teams.</p>	AVID Workshop - Visual Effects
9	3/11/25	<p>Genre: The Thriller vs. Mystery.</p> <p>What the audience knows.</p> <p>What the protagonist knows.</p> <p>Creating suspense.</p> <p>Shot length.</p>	
10	3/18/25	<p>Genre: Editing Comedy.</p> <p>Structure in comedy editing.</p> <p>The Banana Peel Effect.</p> <p>Sight gags.</p> <p>Rule of Three as it applies to comedy.</p> <p>Comic timing.</p>	NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

11	3/25/25	Documentaries.  Telling a story with real footage. Style in documentaries. The Auteur Editor. Reality TV. Voiceover and montage.	
12	4/1/25	Music Design.  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.	
13	4/8/25	Sound Design. Post Production (Finishing).  Spotting Sound. Outputting for sound. Pre-dubs, final mixing.	
14	4/15/25	Review the three act structure.	
15	4/22/25	The Importance of Endings.	<b>FINAL</b> <b>Per the university, you MUST be present on this date to take your exam... ***Please make your travel plans accordingly!!!***</b>
16	4/29/25	STUDY WEEK	<b>NO CLASS</b>

**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).  
Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film Editing*. Focal Press, 2006.  
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

#### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT:**

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

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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 has to be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating together. 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.