

CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING

USC School of Cinematic Arts

Spring 2025

Section: 18636

Instructor: Professor John Rosenberg

Phone:

E-Mail:

Office Hours: By appointment

SA: Nasr Abuljadayel

Phone:

Email:

Class Meetings: Tuesdays 4-6:50pm

Room:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The goal of this workshop 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 in post production. 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 myriad of challenges that confront the editor in the editing room.

Editing is not merely sticking the pieces together so they fit. It's 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. These are the purview of the editor. We will explore how these aspects at times supercede the time honored tradition of story and plot. We will look at examples of well edited scenes as well as short films that you and your professor will screen and discuss.

This class will also include an examination of genre as it relates to story and structure. When your audiences consider which film they want to see, the choice of genre has a significant influence on their decision. Genre holds precedence in the world of film because it speaks to the audience's emotional engagement and response. You will be given professionally shot dailies from major motion pictures and TV to edit in various genres. These will be critiqued by your professor and 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 in the audience which the editor must address. Along the way 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. These and other topics will be reinforced by short reading assignments from your textbook, **THE HEALTHY EDIT: Creative Editing Techniques for Perfecting Your Movie** (2nd edition). We will also have some excellent guest speakers, accomplished editors who have worked on films you may have seen.

This class will prepare you – both aesthetically and technically – to assume a role as editor on a **CTPR 546 and 547**, as well as in your post-school careers, on films edited either by you or others. We are going concentrate primarily on the aesthetic aspect of editing. 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.

CLASS FORMAT:

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of editing and post production which are becoming more and more prominent in the filmmaking process. Along the way, therefore, you will get a sense of the entire flow of film editing – including its thought processes, technical needs, scheduling, and politics. Each week we will discuss various aesthetic and technical aspects of editing. A portion of the class will be devoted to editing and/or critiquing edited scenes. I encourage you to ask questions and give comments. Your participation is a significant part of this course. If you don't understand something, ask. If you disagree with a concept or idea, say so. We all need to be challenged.

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>Intro to the Editing Thought Process.</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>	<p>Reading: <i>THE HEALTHY EDIT</i>, Chapter 1, pp. 1-8 (Introduction)</p> <p>Chapter 2, pp. 9-14 (The Edit)</p>
2	1/21/25	<p>Review of Basic Principles. Select partners.</p> <p>The Editing Triangle. Rules of Editing.</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 2, pp. 15-20 (Principles)</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.</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 7, pp 100-103 (Montage) Chapter 5, 66-75 (Organization)</p>
4	2/4/25	<p>Examining The Sequence.</p> <p>Dialogue editing. Text and subtext. Examining the individual cut.</p>	<p>AVID workshop – Visual Effects</p> <p>Reading: Chapter 12, pp. 177-186 (Dialogue)</p>
5	2/11/25	<p>Transitions</p> <p>Straight cuts, dissolves, wipes, fades, shot size, sound. How shots can be restructured. When to cut. When not to cut. The L-cut.</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 16, pp. 229-245 (Transitions)</p>
6	2/18/25	<p>Pace and Rhythm.</p> <p>The Editor's Purview. Metric and Rhythmic montage. Slo-mo, undercrank, freeze. "The Film Doctor is In"</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 15, pp. 209-228</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 (in courtyard).</p> <p>Genre Iconography, the Object and the Insert Shot.</p>	<p>Reading: Chapter 8, pp. 115-119 (Genre)</p> <p>Chapter 9, pp. 139-147 (Action)</p>
8	3/4/25	<p>Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi and the Western.</p> <p>Midterm evaluation</p> <p>Traditional opticals, CGI.</p> <p>Artificial Intelligence (AI)</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>	<p>AVID Workshop - Sound</p> <p>Reading: Chapter 8, pp. 120-130 (Sci-fi, VFX)</p>
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>	<p>Reading: Chapter 10, pp. 149-154 (Horror/Thriller)</p>

10	3/18/25	Genre: Editing Comedy. Structure in comedy editing. The Banana Peel Effect. Sight gags. Rule of Three as it applies to comedy. Comic timing.	Reading: Chapter 9, pp. 131-136 (Comedy)
11	3/25/25	Documentaries. Telling a story with real footage. Style in documentaries. The Auteur Editor. Reality TV. Voiceover and montage.	Reading: Chapter 10, pp. 155-161 (Documentary)
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.	Reading: Chapter 18, pp. 253-271 (Music Editing, Sound)
13	4/8/25	Avid workshop.	AVID Workshop – Multicam Editing Guest Speaker (based on availability)

14	4/15/25	Sound Design. Post Production (Finishing). Spotting Sound. Outputting for sound. Pre-dubs, final mixing.	Reading: Chapter 19, pp. 272-284 (Editing as a profession)
15	4/22/25	Wrapping Up. Freelance life. The Studio System. Unions, agents and negotiation. Artificial Intelligence. Style. How to look at longer formats. The End. Looking Ahead. The Importance of Endings.	Chapter 21, pp. 306-308 (Wrap up)
16	4/29/25	STUDY WEEK	NO CLASS
17	5/13/25	FINALS	Final projects due Tuesday 5/13/25 before 6:30pm.

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 to turn in at the end of the course. My comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

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.

REQUIRED READING:

Rosenberg, John. **THE HEALTHY EDIT**: Creative Techniques for Perfecting Your Movie, 2nd Edition. Focal Press, 2018

RECOMMENDED READING:

Dancyger, Ken, *The Technique of Film Editing*. Focal Press, 2006.
Dmytryk, Edward, *On Film Editing*. Focal Press, 1984.
Eisenstein, Sergei, *Film Form*. Mariner Books, 2014 (reissued).
Kauffman, Sam, *Avid Editing: Guide for Beginning & Intermediate Users*. Focal Press, 2012.
Hurbis-Cherrier, Mick, *Voice and Vision*. Focal Press, 2011.
Reisz, Karel and Millar, Gavin, *Technique of Film Editing*. Focal Press, 2009.
Rosenberg, John, *The Final Rewrite*. Focal Press, 2023.

RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:

American Cinema Editors. Interviews, podcasts and the roster. <https://americancinemaeditors.org/>
Avid Technology Podcast Interviews with filmmakers and software designers such as Jabez Olssen, editor of King Kong, and Phil Avanzatto, lead animator at PURE.
CineMontage.org The magazine of the Motion Picture Editors Guild.
Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz ~ Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production.
Creative Screenwriting Magazine. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the final rewrite).
Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.
Invisible Art/Visible Artists. Panel discussions with Oscar-nominated editors.
KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business. Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.
Motion Picture Editors Guild. Local 700.

GRADING:

Grades will be calculated based on a multiple choice exam based on the reading (20%), participation, completion of projects and preparedness for class (60%) and the final project (20%) at the end of the semester where you will assemble a few consecutive scenes from a film that you will be editing into one long sequence with music and sound effects. Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. Attendance will be taken at every class. Written explanations will be necessary *in advance* for all excused absences. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the course grade. In addition, students will be expected to be at class on time; *lateness will also be reflected in your grade*. Please make use of my or the SA's e-mail above if you have an unavoidable problem. If you cannot make the class or will be late, let me know by the evening before the class. Cellphone use is not permitted in class.

Since film editors are judged on their ability to complete their work in a timely manner, you will likewise be responsible for completing each stage of every project on time and in a professional manner.

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are by appointment. I will also return emails. The best way to reach me is my USC SCA email address.

AVID GENIUS BAR:

Throughout the semester we also have an AVID Genius Bar to help with any technical editing questions. The AVID Genius Bar will be on Zoom, except on Tuesdays when it will be in-person, with Toi Juan Shannon (tshannon@usc.edu).

Mondays 10am-5pm
Tuesdays 5:30pm-9pm in B139 (walk-in)
Thursdays 1:00-5:30pm
Fridays 1:00pm-3:00pm

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. 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:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

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

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

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, 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

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

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

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.

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. 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.