

Introduction to Digital Media Production
COMM 2050.03/Fall 2008/4 credits
Lectures: Tuesday 1:35 – 4:55
Tenny Hall Room 4-5

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Course Description

Through readings, lectures, demonstrations and hands-on exercises students will explore the production of electronic sound and image. The course has an emphasis on video field production and digital nonlinear editing, but will include a study of framing, composition and light. Students will be encouraged to articulate the stories they wish to tell and to develop the skills to communicate their messages. Videos will be output for DVD distribution. Students will develop a critical awareness of their own work and be able to place it in a broader context. Students in this course are expected to be respectful of one another and the instructor, open to new ideas, and to work very hard towards creating distinct, compelling stories.

No prerequisites.

Course/Learning Objectives

After the successful completion of this course the student should:

1. Demonstrate a strong foundation of visual and aural aesthetics for the process of media production
2. Be able to explain the process of pre-production, production and post-production
3. Be able to demonstrate/explain the different approaches to and uses for the medium of video
4. Demonstrate basic skills in lighting, shooting and editing video
5. Be able to demonstrate/explain the underlying technical concepts of the video process
6. Demonstrate the use of proper media production terminology
7. Be able to work collaboratively within a creative process, taking on traditional production “roles”
8. Be able to speak about what he/she has created and place the work in a broader context

Required Text

Video Basics 5, Herbert Zettl, Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Recommended books in addition to Zettl are on reserve in the library:

The Visual Story, Bruce Block, Focal Press, ISBN 0240804678

Setting Up Your Shots, Jeremy Vineyard, Michael Weise Productions, ISBN 0941188736

The Five C's of Cinematography, Joseph Mascelli, Silman-James Press, ISBN 187950541x

The Filmmaker's Handbook, Steven Ascher & Edward Pincus, Plume, ISBN 0452279577

Equipment

It is essential that you return equipment on time and in working condition. *The second time you return equipment late your grade for the class will drop a full letter grade. The third time it will drop another letter grade, and if you return equipment late four times you will be dropped from the class.*

Materials

- A binder or folder to keep materials together for Production Books
- An external drive (Firewire/USB2; 7200rpm or more; at least 8 MB cache). This drive should have a storage capacity of 160gb or more. All student work is to be saved on this drive. These drives may be purchased at the bookstore or online.
- Students will be provided with one miniDV tape at the beginning of this course. Students must purchase any additional tapes. They are available at the book store.

Project Grading

Project grades are based on:

1. The technical and aesthetic merit of your shooting and editing
2. Creativity and content
3. Your understanding of the context of the piece
4. Your production book

Production Books

The requirements vary from one project to the next. However, standard production books for projects look like this:

1. A proposal, including objective, audience, and treatment.
2. 2-Column Script or Script outline and/or Storyboard.
3. A production schedule.
4. Logging sheets.
5. An Edit Decision List (paper edit)
6. Talent release forms.
7. Location releases.
8. Self Evaluation (1 from each partner)

Production books comprise a significant portion of your grade each of the projects. Also, you are required to hand these books in stages. Consult the syllabus and the schedule for details on when items are due.

Group Work

The assignments for this class require you to work in groups. In the self-critique you pass in with your final cut I expect you to evaluate the group dynamic. If I determine from these comments that one person has done much more work than his or her partner I reserve the right to redistribute the grades accordingly. Only in extreme circumstances will it be possible within a group for the participants to hand in different cuts, which I will grade separately. This must be discussed with me in advance. Remember, video production is a field where you will be required to work with others daily. It is expected that you can do so without major difficulty in this class.

1st/2nd cuts

We will be spending significant time discussing works in progress in this class. There are special designated times for this denoted on the syllabus. These **are not** final cuts but works in progress. A 1st cut is an assembly cut that orders the shots you want to use into a rough but comprehensive whole. A 2nd cut is a finer revision of the first cut. For these sessions in class you are expected to make a dub of your work in progress onto a miniDV tape or DVD, which you will bring with you, on time, to class. 1st cuts and 2nd cuts are not graded. You can lose points however for not having a 1st or 2nd cut in on time.

In-Class Exercise Grading

Exercise grades are based on:

1. Whether or not you successfully solved the problem.
2. How you worked together as a group.
3. How well you are able to complete your solution during the allocated time.

Workshops

You will be required to attend 4 workshops outside of class time. Missing a workshop will cause your class grade to drop a full letter grade.

Attendance/Class Participation Grading

Attendance is mandatory. If you miss more than **3 classes** you will get a **F in Participation** for the course. If you miss more than **5 classes you will fail the course.** This class meets 14 times (not counting the final). I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. The three allowed absences are to cover any sicknesses, family emergencies, sports events, or religious observances that might arise during the semester. After four absences you lose the participation portion of the grade, so you should be extra cautious before you decide to miss a class. **No exceptions will be made** to these rules. Absence is not an excuse for coming to the next class unprepared. You must contact a classmate or the Professor to find out what you missed. Habitual lateness will also reduce your grade.

This is a class where students are expected to show both complete and trial cuts of their own work to the class. Thoughtful feedback is essential to improving your work and the work of your fellow classmates. I will be grading your participation based on how helpful I think your comments or questions are to addressing relevant concerns of the work at hand. I will be taking notes on this throughout the semester. Failure to participate in discussions and critiques will affect your semester grade.

Tests

There will be 3 tests, which will cover material discussed in class and/or from the readings that you are assigned to complete.

Course Grades

Course grades reflect your growth, assignment completion, contributions to class discussions and critiques, and attendance. A “C” is successful completion of the work – an average grade. **You will need to turn in above average/superior work in order to get an “A” or a “B”**

A = Outstanding; pushing the limits of both the student's creativity and the assignment.

B = Thorough, thoughtful, and creative approach to the assignment.

C = AVERAGE; minimum project requirements met.

D = Poor; does not meet minimum requirements.

F = Fail; failure to complete the assignment.

Grading Breakdown

Attendance/Participation:	25%
Exercises	30%
Tests	20%
First Project	10%
Second Project	15%

Late Work

Late work will be marked down. **For every class meeting the project is late you will lose a full grade.**

Disability Statement

If you believe that you have a disability that may warrant accommodations in this class, I urge you to notify me immediately so that together we can work to develop methods of addressing needed accommodations in this class. You also must contact the Academic Dean's office.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct either directly or indirectly through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed through the regular instructional procedures as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an F or a zero in the course.

Class Rules

1. All cell phones, beepers, text messaging and the like must be turned **OFF**.
2. Students are required to complete readings to prepare for the next class.
3. No disrespect of any kind, toward any one will be tolerated.
4. Oral participation and hands-on project participation in class is mandatory and counts toward your attendance/participation grade and project grades.
5. No food, drinking, or smoking in the facilities.
6. Do not touch equipment without permission.
7. All equipment must be returned to its proper place and computers shut down before you leave the facilities.
8. You are required to follow safety procedures when handling equipment.

Exercises

Exercise #1: Storyboarding exercise:

"In short, I apply special care when depicting storyboards so as to tell my crew: "Here, this is how it is going to be." In my drawings, I show them what the houses are supposed to look like, where things are supposed to go, what I want for the characters' costumes. I believe that such a technique can prove to be very efficient in the making of a film." – Akira Kurosawa

I will be giving you a scene on the first day of class to read for today. We will then begin class with a lecture on storyboarding, in which you will learn about several different storyboarding styles. After class today you will draw a storyboard that you think could be used to create the scene in video. You don't have to be Kurosawa, and this isn't a test of drawing skill. Rather, attempt to visually describe the scene, taking special care with shot types and camera angles. Remember, the ideal storyboard is thorough and descriptive enough that you can hand it over to a crew and they will be able to shoot the scene as you have envisioned it. When you are finished turn in the storyboard, making sure to staple all pages together and clearly writing your name on the first page.

Exercise #2: DV Camera Exercise In Class:

Get together in groups of 3 and develop a simple storyboard to visually describe a series of 30 shots. It is not important that the shots tell a cohesive story, rather I am interested in seeing you successfully create “a smooth pan” or “a rack focus”. Using the miniDV camera, shoot the sequence of images from your storyboard. Include as many of the following as you can, repeating shot types on the list (but not exactly the same shot, use different scenarios) so that you can take turns being the cameraman:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Establishing shot | 11. Pan |
| 2. Close-ups | 12. Tilt |
| 3. Extreme close-up | 13. Zoom |
| 4. 2-shots | 14. Selective focus/Rack focus |
| 5. Z-axis | 15. Appropriate headroom or lead room |
| 6. Diagonal lines | 16. Shot with the white balanced on something other than white |
| 7. Framing | 17. Shot where you play with the shutter speed of the camera |
| 8. Leading lines | |
| 9. Unique camera angle | |
| 10. Creative lighting element | |

Each group will produce one short camera exercise and submit the project on MiniDV tape. Also submit your storyboard. No editing other than in-camera is allowed. Projects will be graded on creativity and technical execution. I recommend the use of a tripod for most of the shots. Make sure to label the tape and storyboard clearly with the names of all team members.

Exercise #3: Lighting Exercise In Class:

As a class we will create a lighting diagram for using 3-point lighting to successfully light a medium shot of a subject wearing glasses. As a group we will then set up the lights according to the diagram, and achieve the shot. If the diagram we created is not working we will move those lights around until we achieve success. Beware of shadows created by the glasses (raccoon eyes) as well as reflections off of the glass.

Exercise #4: Sound Recording Exercise In Class:

In groups of 3 come up with storyboards for scenarios where it would be most appropriate to use a:

1. Boom microphone – 3 different situations
2. Handheld microphone – 3 different situations
3. Lavalier microphone – 3 different situations

After storyboarding the situations, check out the necessary equipment and go shoot these shots getting both video and clean audio! Turn in the miniDV tape and your storyboard, and make sure that all names are on each.

Exercise #5: Editing Exercise In Class:

Using 14 minutes of video footage that I provide, use Final Cut Pro to edit a 30 second piece. Although I will be providing the video, you may use any audio that you like, and you may create any sort of piece that you like. The finished piece may be a serious commercial spot, a music video, an experimental film, a corporate video...be creative! The only restrictions are that you use this particular video footage and that the final product be exactly 30 seconds. Be careful with continuity. Export the finished piece as a QuickTime file and burn it onto a CD-R that you turn in, clearly labeled, before you leave class.

Projects

There are two projects in this class. Here is a basic run down:

Project #1: Linear Narrative

This is a three-person project, and you will create a cohesive video consisting of 10 different shots.

Storyboard an interesting linear story, keeping in mind lighting and composition. Shoot the story (at least 40 different takes) and then narrow down your choices to 10 shots that tell the story and capture the correct mood. The goal is to compose shots that depict each of the following elements of composition:

1. Closure – continuance beyond the frame
2. Asymmetrical balance
3. High camera angle
4. Low camera angle
5. Z-axis
6. Framing
7. Leading lines
8. Diagonal lines
9. Curves
10. Leadroom or lookspace

Grading will consider both how individual shots demonstrate each compositional element and the way each shot fits together with a cohesive series concept.

Project #2: Documentary or Linear Fiction (3 person collaboration)

This is a 5 - 8 minute project and should be turned in on a DVD.

Come up with the content yourselves – be creative!

Elements that your project **MUST** include:

- A Production Book. (see syllabus)
- An audio source in addition to the sync sound
- At least one created lighting effect
- Use of external microphones

Your proposal should include the following:

- A Treatment, which is a narrative description of your piece – what it’s about, what happens?
- Who is your “client”? What is the message they need articulated? Who is the intended audience? What methods will you use to target this particular audience?
- Description of the genre and approach or style of your piece, the tone or mood you’re trying to establish, the pace, the editing style, how sound will be used.

On days when your proposal is due you must “pitch” your idea to the class. Specifically describe what you plan to do, what you hope to accomplish and justify why the piece is worth making. Your pitch should last 10-12 minutes, including time for questions and response from the class.

Grading:

Effective and creative storytelling and communication of content

Camerawork – exposure, use of movement, composition

Editing style – appropriate structure and pacing

Editing technique – color bars, audio levels

Lighting technique

Audio Recording

Sound Design

Course Schedule (may be revised, with warning, throughout semester)

Tuesday August 26 – class 1

Introduction to class and to one another

Discuss: Writing Proposals, Target Audience, etc.

Introduce Project #1

Video Screening and discussion – “Space” (Deep, Flat, Limited, Ambiguous)

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 1 & Chapter 2

Read “Richard” scene and begin writing proposal for your interpretation of it

Tuesday September 2 – class 2

Discuss: Composition and Design and Storyboarding

Demo: Digital Video Camera & Tripods

Exercise #2 – Video Camera exercise

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 3 & Chapter 4

Exercise #1: Finish your Richard Proposal and draw your storyboards for the scene.

Write a proposal for your 1st Project and draw storyboards.

Tuesday September 9 – class 3

Turn in Richard proposal and storyboards

Turn in Project #1 Proposal and Storyboards

Demo: Lighting

Exercise #3 - Lighting

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 5 & Chapter 6

Get feedback from Professor on Project #1 Proposal and Storyboards and begin shooting project.

Tuesday September 16 – class 4

Presentation of raw footage of Project #1 and Critique

Introduction to Final Cut Pro

Introduce Project #2 and Examples of Project #2 – form teams

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 7 & Chapter 8

Edit Project #1 down to 10 shots

Come up with project ideas for Project #2 to discuss in class

Tuesday September 23 – class 5

Demo: Microphones and sound equipment

Exercise #4 - Microphones

Discuss: Project ideas

Discuss: Production Book

Discuss Readings

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 9 & Chapter 11

Write Proposal and Production Schedule for Project #2

Tuesday September 30 – class 6

Test #1

Presentations of Project Proposals and feedback

Discuss: Continuity

Video Screening and discussion- “Tone” (contrast, affinity, tonal control due to reflectance or incidence)

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 12 & Chapter 13

Write Script/Draw Storyboards for Project

Tuesday October 7 – class 7

Demo: Final Cut Pro

Exercise #5 - Editing

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 14 & Chapter 15

Begin Production on Project #2

Finish Editing Exercise

Tuesday October 14

No Class – Manhattanville Monday

Tuesday October 21 – class 8

Watch Editing Exercises and Critique

Video screening and discussion – “Color” (Saturated hue, Complimentary colors, Warm/Cool, Warm, Limited)

Video Screening and discussion – “Movement” (continuum of movement, camera movement, object movement)

Watch student footage for Project #2

For Next Class:

Read Chapter 16 & Chapter 17

Continue Production

Tuesday October 28 – class 9

Critique of raw footage

Video screening and discussion – “Rhythm” (rhythmic control, continuous and fragmented event)

For Next Class:

Continue Production

Log Footage

Tuesday November 4 – class 10

Capturing Footage into FCP

Demo: Advanced Editing Techniques

For Next Class:

Finish capturing footage

Make a list of materials you are missing

Reshoot any necessary shots

Tuesday November 11 – class 11

Test #2

Demo: Graphics/Titles

For Next Class:

Collect audio for your project (music, voiceovers, room tone)

Create Graphics and Titles for your project

Be ready to show rough cut next class

Tuesday November 18 – class 12

Preview rough cuts of Final Project

For Next Class:

Continue working on project

Tuesday November 25– class 13

Demo iDVD

For Next Class:

Continue working on project

Design iDVD interface for your project

Tuesday December 2 – class 14

Preview rough cuts of Final Project

Editing in class/troubleshooting and individual group meetings with professor

For Next Class:

Continue working on project

Tuesday December 9 - Final

Final project due by 1:35 pm– no exceptions and don't forget your production books!

Final Exam @ 1:35 pm