

# digital filmmaking

**Course #:** MEDIA 20  
**Instructor:** Adam Wadenius  
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**Website:** [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com)

**Office Hours:** By email or appointment  
**Semester:** Spring 2012  
**Day & Time:** M & W, 10:30am – 1:30pm  
**Building:** PC #246

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## course description

This course is designed to introduce you to the creative process of digital filmmaking. We will study all aspects of production from the conceptualization of ideas and scripting, to the basic production equipment and their functions, and finally the production and post-production processes. Assignments will emphasize visualization, shooting style, and production organization. Presentation of ideas in both the written word and visual media are integral to the production of creative media, and the coursework for the class is designed to help you develop the basic skills to ultimately work on set as a member of a production crew.

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## student learning outcomes

- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental aspects of digital filmmaking as a performing and visual art form.
- ~ Identify and explain the various elements of the production process.
- ~ Articulate the core concepts of narrative storytelling and character development for film writing.
- ~ Think critically about the significance of film as a reflection of popular culture.

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## course requirements

**Lectures & Screenings:** You are responsible for attending the class lecture every week. Each week is structured to introduce you to a particular theme or concept, which will elucidate a key formal and stylistic component of filmmaking as an art form. There is no talking/discussion during the films or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the film screenings. If at any time you decide that you do not wish to continue with the course, it is your responsibility to drop, as I do not take it upon myself to drop anyone from the roster at any time.

I encourage you to use your personal computer, iPad, or other learning tool during class time if you are using it appropriately (viewing class slides, taking notes), however, be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on those and any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity. Copies of all the lectures are available on the course website for download and review.

**Readings:** It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each Monday & Wednesday having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. We will be spending as much time discussing the readings as the films, and a firm understanding of them will benefit your overall understanding of the technical aspects of digital filmmaking that we will be exploring. All readings are located in the course textbook, or on the course website for download and review.

**Discussion:** You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to the success of this course. My goal is to aid in the development of your analytical/critical skills, and I expect everyone to maintain an open mind, and take a creative approach to the material. Be respectful of your fellow classmates when addressing and critiquing conflicting viewpoints.

**Assignments:** You will be required to complete eleven assignments to demonstrate your comprehension of the core aspects of digital filmmaking. The details of each assignment are posted on the course website.

**Final Video Project:** The final project for the course will be to direct a short video project (no longer than 5 mins.) for a narrative or documentary film. See the course website for a detailed description.

**Essay Guidelines:** You will be required to write three 2-3 page essays this semester. All papers are due on the designated due dates without exception, and no late papers will be accepted. I do not accept emailed papers, so please print all of your assignments. All emergency situations leading to late papers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Each of the essay questions, as well as an example of an *A* paper are located on the course website.

**\*\* NOTE \*\* ~ Plagiarism and other issues concerning academic integrity will not be tolerated, and are grounds for an automatic failure in the course. Acknowledge all reading and research sources with appropriate footnotes and bibliography.** Keep all copies of your essays, exams, and notes until you have received a final grade for this class. ~

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assessments

2-3 Page Response Papers (3)	20%
Production Assignments (11)	50%
Final Video Project	30%

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texts & materials

**Required**

1. Course Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus, The Filmmaker's Handbook. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.
2. Selected essays available on the course website.
3. All films are considered required texts as well.

*Please remember that if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or any of the course materials that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, the course website, or by placing a note for me in my box in FA 141.*

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schedule

*~ Images, Narrative & the Pre-Production Process ~*

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**Week #1 ~ (Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>) ~ The Art of Filmmaking**

**Wednesday**

Lecture: Intro to Course/Expectations/Questions

Screening: *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, Fax Bahr with George Hickenlooper; documentary footage directed by Eleanor Coppola, 1991.

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Hearts of Darkness* (due Monday, Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>)**

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**Week #2 ~ (Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>) ~ Storytelling and the Production Process**

**Monday**

Lecture: Film & Video as a Storytelling Medium

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter One – Intro to Film and Video Systems

Workshop: Discuss/Brainstorm Loglines & Final Project Ideas

### *Wednesday*

Lecture: Telling Stories with Images

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Two – Before You Begin Production

Assignment #1: **On-location image capturing and aesthetics (due in class)**

### **Week #3 ~ (Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> & Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>) ~ Film as a Narrative Art Form**

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#### *Monday*

Lecture: The Principles of Narrative

Reading: “*Ch. 1 – The Nature of Narratives*”, from Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life, by Arthur Asa Berger. SAGE Publications, London: 1997.

Workshop: Analyzing Film Narrative/Assignment #1 Preparation

#### *Wednesday*

Assignment #2: **Developing a cohesive narrative (due in class)**

### **Week #4 ~ (Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>) ~ The Screen Story**

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#### *Monday*

Lecture: Proper Screenplay Formatting

Reading: Screenplay by Syd Field, Chapter One - What is a Screenplay?

Screenplay by Syd field, Chapter Thirteen – Screenplay Form

Workshop: Discuss/Brainstorm Final Project Ideas

Assignment #3: **1-2 page description of your final project idea (due Wednesday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>)**

#### *Wednesday*

Screenplay: *Collateral* by Stuart Beattie

Screening: *Collateral*, dir. Michael Mann (2004)

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Collateral* (due Wednesday, Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

### **Week #5 ~ (Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>) ~ Writing Characters**

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#### *Monday*

Lecture: Creating and Developing Your Characters

Reading: Screenplay by Syd Field, Chapter Three – The Creation of Character

Screenplay by Syd Field, Chapter Four – Building a Character

Workshop: Discuss/Brainstorm Character Ideas

Assignment #4: **1-2 page character bio for a character (due Wednesday, Feb. 29<sup>th</sup>)**

#### *Wednesday*

Assignment #5: **No-dialogue character portraits (due in class)**

~ (Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>) ~

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#### *Monday*

\*\* *Washington's Day Holiday* \*\*

**Week #6 ~ (Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>) ~ Screenplay/Film Screening**

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*Wednesday*

Screenplay: *American Beauty* by Alan Ball

Screening: *American Beauty*, dir. Sam Mendes (1999)

Essay: 2-3 page paper on *American Beauty* (due Wednesday, Mar. 7<sup>th</sup>)

~ *The Production Process* ~

**Week #7 ~ (Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>) ~ Mechanics of the Film/Video Camera**

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*Monday*

Lecture: Film Camera Basics

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Six – The Film Camera

Workshop: In-Class Film Camera Demos

*Wednesday*

Lecture: Video Camera Basics

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Three – The Video Camcorder

Workshop: In-Class Video Camera Demos

Assignment #6: Design a storyboard for a scene (due Monday, Mar. 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Week #8 ~ (Mar. 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>) ~ Cinematography and the Lens**

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*Monday*

Lecture: Lens Perspective & Focus

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Four – The Lens

Workshop: Focus & Zoom Techniques

*Wednesday*

Lecture: Achieving Your Aesthetic Goals

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Nine – The Shoot

Workshop: Camera Operation, Shooting Techniques, Framing, and Coverage

**Week #9 ~ (Mar. 12<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>) ~ Film and Video Aesthetics**

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*Monday*

Lecture: Knowing Your Medium

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Five – The Video Image

*The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Seven – The Film Image

Screening: *Bamboozled*, dir. Spike Lee (2000)

Essay: 2-3 page paper on *Bamboozled* (due Wednesday, Mar. 28<sup>th</sup>)

*Wednesday*

Assignment #7: On location in-camera shoot (due in class)

~ (Mar. 19<sup>th</sup> to Mar. 25<sup>th</sup>) ~

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\*\* *Spring Break* \*\*

## Week #10 ~ (Mar. 26<sup>th</sup>) ~ Manipulating the Image

### *Monday*

Lecture: Color Temperature and Filtering Agents

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Eight – Colors and Filters

Screening: *Trois couleurs: Bleu*, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski (1993)

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Trois couleurs: Bleu* (due Wednesday, Apr. 11<sup>th</sup>)**

## Week #10 ~ (Mar. 28<sup>th</sup>) ~ Manipulating the Image

### *Wednesday*

Assignment #8: **Daylight/Tungsten shoot (due in class)**

## Week #11 ~ (Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>) ~ Lighting for Film Production

### *Monday*

Lecture: Basic Lighting Strategies

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Twelve – Lighting

Workshop: In-Class Lighting Demos

### *Wednesday*

Assignment #9: **Lighting for different scenarios (due in class)**

## Week #12 ~ (Apr. 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>) ~ The Art of Recording Sound

### *Monday*

Lecture: The Importance of Film Sound

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Ten – Sound Recording Systems

*The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Eleven – Sound Recording Techniques

Workshop: In-Class Sound Recording Demos

### *Wednesday*

Assignment #10: **Recording sound for film (due in class)**

~ *The Post-Production Process* ~

## Week #13 ~ (Apr. 16<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>) ~ The Fundamentals of Editing

### *Monday*

Lecture: Editing Basics & Theory

Reading: *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, Chapter Thirteen – Picture & Dialogue Editing

Final Cut Pro Editing Tutorial

Workshop: Montage Assignment Preparation

### *Wednesday*

Assignment #11: **In-camera montage project (due in class)**

## **Week #14 ~ (Apr. 23<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>) ~ Editing Film and Video**

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### ***Monday***

Lecture: Film/Video Editing Systems

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Fourteen – Editing Video  
The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Fifteen – Editing Film

Screening: *Requiem For A Dream*, dir. Darren Aronofsky (2000)

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Requiem For A Dream* (due Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>)**

### ***Wednesday***

Workshop: Nonlinear Editing Demos

## **Week #15 ~ (Apr. 30<sup>th</sup> & May 2<sup>nd</sup>) ~ The Art of Editing Sound**

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### ***Monday***

Lecture: Fundamentals of Sound Editing

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Sixteen – Sound Editing & Mixing

Workshop: In-Class Sound Editing Demos

### ***Wednesday***

Workshop: **Start production on your final project (due week 18)**

## **Week #16 ~ (May 7<sup>th</sup> & May 9<sup>th</sup>) ~ Exposure and Printing**

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### ***Monday***

Lecture: Production & Distribution

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Nineteen – Producing & Distributing the Movie

Workshop: **Continue production on your final project (due week 18)**

### ***Wednesday***

Screening: *The Player*, dir. Robert Altman (1992)

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *The Player* (due Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>)**

## **Week #17 ~ (May 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>) ~ The Business of Film**

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### ***Monday***

Lecture: The Laboratory Process

Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Seventeen – The Film Laboratory  
The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Eighteen – Film & Digital Transfers

Workshop: **Continue production on your final project (due week 18)**

### ***Wednesday***

Workshop: **Continue production on your final project (due week 18)**

## **Week #18 ~ (May 21<sup>st</sup>) ~ Finals Week**

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### ***Monday***

**\*\*Final Film/Video Project Screenings \*\***