

introduction to filmmaking

Course #: COMM 150
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Office Hours: By email or appointment
Semester: Fall 2011
Day & Time: M & W, 10:10am – 1pm
Building: LRC #086

course description

This course is designed to introduce you to the creative process of 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.

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.

course requirements

Class 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. It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each Monday and Wednesday having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. Please email me if you know you cannot make it to section on a given day. 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. Copies of all the lectures and essay questions are available 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 your success in 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. Make sure to turn off your cell phones and all other electronic devices when class is in session.

Readings: It is imperative that you do all of the reading assignments by the date specified. We will be spending a great deal of time discussing the readings, and a firm understanding will benefit your understanding of the technical aspects of filmmaking that we will be exploring.

Essay Guidelines: There will be six film screenings this semester, and you will be required to write three 2-3 page essays on at least three of the films. The essay questions are listed on the course website. All papers are due on the designated due dates without exception. No late papers will be accepted. 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.

Assignments: You will be required to complete seven assignments to demonstrate your comprehension of the core aspects of film/digital filmmaking. The details of each assignment will be discussed in class.

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

**** 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. ~

assessments

2-3 pg. Essays (3)	30%
Production Assignments (7)	40%
Final Video Project	30%

texts & materials

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 films, readings, or any of the course materials, that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, or by placing a note for me in my box in the department office.

schedule

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

week 1 – the art of filmmaking

Monday

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 of week 2).**

Wednesday

Lecture: Film & Video as a Storytelling Medium

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

Workshop: Discuss/brainstorm final project ideas.

week 2 – film as a narrative art form

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

Wednesday

Lecture: Telling Stories with Images

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

Workshop: Image Capturing and Aesthetics

week 3 - the screen story

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: **1-2 page description of your final project idea (due Wednesday of week 4).**

Wednesday

Screenplay: *Chinatown* by Robert Towne

Screening: *Chinatown*, dir. Roman Polanski (1974)

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Chinatown* (due Wednesday of week 4).**

week 4 – writing characters

Monday

**** No Class for Labor Day Holiday ****

Wednesday

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

Assignment: **1-2 page character bio for a character of your creation (due Wed. of week 5).**

~ *The Production Process* ~

week 5 – the mechanics of the film camera

Monday

Lecture: Film Camera Basics

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

Workshop: In-Class Film Camera Demos

Wednesday

Workshop: On Location Group Shoot

Assignment: **Design a storyboard for a scene (due Monday of week 8)**

week 6 - cinematography and the lens

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 7 - the mechanics of the video camera

Monday

Lecture: Video Camera Basics
Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Three – The Video Camcorder
Workshop: In-Class Video Camera Demos

Wednesday

Workshop: On Location Individual/Group Shooting

week 8 – film and video aesthetics

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 Monday of week 9).**

Wednesday

Assignment: **On location in-camera shoot (due by end of class).**

week 9 - manipulating the image

Monday

Lecture: Color Temperature and Filtering Agents
Reading: The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Eight – Colors and Filters
Workshop: Color & Filter Analysis

Wednesday

Screening: *Trois couleurs: Bleu*, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski (1993)
Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Trois couleurs: Bleu* (due Wednesday of week 10).**

week 10 - lighting for film production

Monday

Lecture: Basic Lighting Strategies

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

Workshop: In-Class Lighting Demos

Wednesday

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

week 11 - 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: **Recording sound for film (due in class).**

~ *The Post-Production Process* ~

week 12 – the fundamentals of editing

Monday

Lecture: Editing Basics & Theory

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

Final Cut Pro Editing Tutorial

Assignment: **In-camera montage project (due Monday of week 13).**

Wednesday

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

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *Requiem For A Dream* (due Wednesday of week 13).**

week 13 – editing film and video

Monday

Lecture: Film/Video Editing Systems

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

The Filmmaker's Handbook, Chapter Fifteen – Editing Film

Workshop: Linear & Nonlinear Editing Demos

Wednesday

Workshop: Linear & Nonlinear Editing Demos

week 14 - the art of editing sound

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 17).**

week 15 - exposure and printing

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 17).**

Wednesday

Workshop: **Continue production on your final project (due week 17).**

week 16 – the business of film

Monday

Lecture: Production & Distribution

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

Wednesday

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

Essay: **2-3 page paper on *The Player* (due Wednesday of week 17).**

week 17 – final class session

Monday

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

Wednesday

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