

COM 333 FILM PRODUCTION FALL 2009

(a.k.a. Digital Movie Making)

Mon 5:00 pm - 6:50 pm Helmke Library B52

Wed 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Helmke Library B52

Instructor: Mary J. Daniel
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Email: danielm@ipfw.edu

Office Hours:

Thurs 1:30–2:30 (drop in)

Friday 3:30–4:30 (drop in) 4:30-5:30 (by appointment).

Other times may be available, by appointment.

Catalogue Description:

Basic theory and techniques of motion-picture production. Viewing and evaluation of films illustrating a variety of film techniques. Production experiences in filming, scripting, editing, sound recording, and production planning.

Cr. 3. Hours

Prerequisites: COM 248 or 251, COM 332.

The instructor may modify the material or schedule specified in this outline. Any required changes will be announced both in class and by email.

Purpose

This advanced production course gives students hands-on experience in digital moviemaking. The course focuses on the principles and processes of cinematic storytelling, with an emphasis on dramatic motion picture production. The course consists of a combination of lecture, writing & technical workshops, and creative project work. Through both solo and collaborative exercises and assignments, students advance their skills in screenwriting, cinematography, lighting, editing, and sound design, and learn how to plan and manage a scripted dramatic production. Students also learn to analyze narrative structure and technique through screenings, discussions, journal assignments, and the occasional theoretical reading. All projects are shot on digital video and edited on Final Cut Pro software. The final project is a short movie produced collaboratively by the class. Students are expected to work on production projects outside of regular class times (either on the weekends or evenings), to work on group projects in collaboration with other students in the class, and to present finished work to the class for critique. Students are encouraged to explore alternatives to the traditional Hollywood approach.

Goals

- To advance student's knowledge of the aesthetics, theory and practice of single camera dramatic movie production.
- To increase students proficiency with digital cinematography, lighting, editing, sound recording & design, tools and techniques.
- To introduce students to the craft of screenwriting, and to develop their creative writing and visual communication skills.
- To expand their critical awareness of both classical and alternative approaches to cinematic storytelling.
- To give them first-hand experience with the procedures and processes of dramatic video production.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course you will have acquired knowledge of creative and practical processes involved in the production of scripted, dramatic video production, from concept development through to finished work. You will have also learnt how to work within and with the limitations of low-budget digital cinema production, and will have developed:

- Collaboration skills
- Written, oral, and visual communication skills
- Project planning skills.
- Technical research and troubleshooting skills.
- Conceptual skills.

Requirements

Required Text:

Hurbis-Cherrier, Mick. *Voice & Vision: A Creative Approach to Narrative Film and DV Production*. Focal Press/Elsevier, 2007.

Highly Recommended Texts:

Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*. 2nd Ed. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001.

Additional readings (short articles, technical manuals) will be recommended and occasionally assigned throughout the course of the term.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Required:

- A portable storage device (eg 2-4 gig USB flash drive or 2-3 blank DVDs) for backing-up project files, exchanging exercise media.
- 6 additional blank DVDs, 2 with jewel cases, for screening and submitting finished exercises and projects.
- Five 60-minute mini DV/DVC tapes (no memory chip). Available at Circuit City, Walgreens, and Best Buy, or online (case of 5 for 11.00 + shipping). **Recommended tape:** Sony Mini DV tape, 60 Min. Premium MiniDV Tape available online at:
http://www.tapeandmedia.com/mini_dv_tape_sony_premium.asp

Recommended:

A Fire-wire drive, 40 Gigs (or more).

Additional mini-DV tapes and DVDs (needs will vary, depending on the kind of project).

A set of good quality headphones, with 'mini' jack.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

The assignments for this course include written journal exercises, in-class technical exercises, and 3 creative video projects. Students are expected to present their work to their classmates for discussions and critiques, to offer constructive criticism of their classmates' work, and to respond effectively to feedback they receive. Students are expected to do a considerable amount of assignment work between scheduled classes.

Technical Exercises.

Students will be asked to undertake, at times in collaboration with other students, in-class technical exercises. Two of these will be formally evaluated (each worth 5% of the grade) in terms of the student's ability to meet the stated goals of each exercise, with some credit give to the originality of their responses the problems of the exercise. The student's work on other in-class exercises will not be independently evaluated, but will be taken into consideration when evaluating the student's level of participation in the course. Technical Exercises are designed to be undertaken primarily in class time, but may require additional work outside of class for preparation or completion.

Journal

A number of short (10-20 min) writing and observation exercises will be assigned from time to time throughout the first half of term. Students are expected to complete an assigned journal exercises by the relevant class time, as part of their preparation for class discussions. Failure to do so will be reflected in their participation grade. They are also expected to undertake self-initiated journal writing exercises (suggestions will be provided), and to submit a hard copy of edited excerpts from both their assigned and independently initiated writing, in the form of a journal, for mid-term evaluation. The Journal assignment will be evaluated on the basis of effort, initiative, and originality: writing technique will not be an evaluation criteria.

Creative Production Projects

Students will be assigned one independent, one collaborative, and 1 group production project. These will be evaluated on the basis of the concept (its clarity, originality, and relevance to the problems of the assignment), refinement of the concept (the ability to develop, improve upon ideas, and to resolve their problems), technical skills and abilities (with an emphasis on the appropriateness of techniques, given the concept), and professionalism of presentation (work ethic; ability to meet interim deadlines and follow submission guidelines; ability to communicate the reasons for their choices). Although some class time may be reserved for work and/or feedback on Production Projects, students are expected to undertake most of their work on these outside of class time.

More detailed descriptions of the nature, goals and evaluation criteria of each assignment will be provided as it is assigned.

Weight:

Technical Exercises (2) :	10 %
Journal Assignment:	10 %
Project 1:	10 %
Project 2:	20 %
Project 3:	20%
Proj. 3 proposal, script & production package:	10%
Class Participation:	20%

Grading System

A+	95-100%	exceptional work
A	90- 95 %	excellent work
A-	85-89 %	excellent work, for the most part
B+	80-85 %	very good work
B	75-79 %	good work
B-	70-74 %	good work, for the most part
C+	65-69 %	competent work
C	60-64 %	fairly competent work
D+	55-59 %	passing
D	50-54 %	marginally passing
F	below 50%	failing

Project work will be evaluated following class-time presentations. A critique of the work will be given verbally at the time of the class screening, and a grade assigned and communicated in writing to the student within 2 weeks. With the exception for the Journal Assignment, written evaluations or comments will be provided only on request.

Course Communication

You must use your IPFW email account in this class, and have access to Blackboard (IPFW's online course software). If you have not yet activated your school account, do so immediately. Go to Information Technology Services Help Desk in Kettler Hall, room 206 (phone: 481-6030) for directions on setting up your account.

I regularly send emails to students regarding assignments, course updates, schedule changes, and other announcements. You are required to check and read your class email on a regular basis, and to respond appropriately. I may be posting course information and readings on Blackboard as the course progresses.

Contacting Me

If you would like to meet and/or consult with me outside of class time, please see me in my office (Neff 230M) during drop-in office hours, or send me an email to schedule an appointment.

Before sending me an email, always make sure to write COM 333 (followed by the subject of the email) in the subject line, so that I know to pay attention to it.

I am more likely to pick up your email messages in a timely manner than I am voice-mail messages. I advise you to use voice-mail as a back-up only to an email.

I will check class email on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and will make every effort to reply within 48 hours.

Please reserve email correspondence for administrative issues (notifying of lateness or absence, clarification of assignment guidelines, technical problems), or for scheduling appointments. For more involved discussions about your particular assignments or your progress in the course, I prefer to meet in person.

Course Policies

CONDUCT, PARTICIPATION

This class is a shared learning environment that relies on each student's contribution to the learning process at hand. Respectful and considerate conduct is expected during class times. Students are expected to be in class on time, to remain in attendance for the whole of every class, and to contribute—through their participation in the course—to the learning of other students. While the class exercises, discussions and critiques are obvious access points for evaluating participation, participation also takes a subtler form of one's conduct in and contribution to the group as a whole.

When evaluating participation the following may be taken into consideration:

- Consistency and punctuality of student's attendance.
- Preparedness for class, including initiative and effort taken to complete assigned exercises or readings.
- Quality and frequency of participation in discussions, exercises (whether evaluated or not), and other course activities.
- Willingness to engage with information, ideas, and work presented by instructors and students.
- Respect for other students, including (but not limited to) proper care of shared equipment and facilities.
- Willingness to share ideas, knowledge, opinions and learning with others in the class.
- Willingness to collaborate.
- Individual contribution (effort, initiative, leadership) to group projects.

As a general rule, please turn off cell phones and pagers and do not use text messaging or the Internet unless directly related to the course.

Please wear comfortable, warm, clothing for classes in the studio. Film production often requires physical activity: please wear clothes you can easily move around in, and flat, closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes. As it is very cold in the studio, I recommend bringing a sweatshirt or jacket even on warm days.

I show a range of work in class. You may find some of it unfamiliar, disturbing or challenging in terms of form and content. You will never be 'forced' to watch anything in this class. If a work screened in class shocks or offends you to the point where you feel you need to leave the classroom, please do not hesitate to do so. I will, however, expect you to return to the classroom once the screening is over, and to discuss your reaction either within the context of the group discussion, or with me one-on-one, depending on the situation.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory for this course. As much of the course work involves collaborative exercises and group projects, poor attendance will affect not only your participation grade but also your project grades. Absences must have a valid excuse. Excused absences usually require documentation (ie a note from a medical professional, counselor, or equivalent). Valid excuses for absences include illness, bereavement, family emergency. Absences for reasons of religious observance may be excused, provided the date conflicts are brought to my attention within the first three weeks of class. Absences that occur as a result of work obligations are not, as a rule, excused.

If you miss a class it is your responsibility to take the initiative to do what you need to in order to catch up by, for example, contacting one of your classmates to find out what you missed, borrow notes, find out about exercises, assignments, schedule changes etc. It is not my responsibility to bring you up to date unless you have an excused absence.

SUBMISSIONS, LATENESS.

Students **must** present their video projects at a scheduled class critique prior to submitting the assignment to the instructor for evaluation. Video projects will not be accepted for grading if the student has not attended and presented work in the context of a class critique. Students who miss the initial class critique deadline will receive a 10% deduction for the missed critique deadline, and an additional 10% deduction for each subsequent week (or portion thereof) that it is late.

Video projects should be submitted on the format specified in assignment guidelines, and should be delivered in person to the course instructor for final evaluation by the end of class on the date it is due for critique. However if, following their class critique, a student wants to make revisions to a project, they can take until the start of the next class to revise the work before submitting it to the instructor for final evaluation. Each student will be granted one—and one only—opportunity to do so without penalty, and this only provided they have screened the work for class on the critique due date. Once the student has taken advantage of this opportunity, any subsequent video projects the student does not submit to the instructor directly following their scheduled critique will receive a 5% deduction for lateness if submitted by the following class, and a 10% deduction for each subsequent week (or portion thereof) that it is late.

Requests for exceptions to these policies should be discussed with me in advance, and will generally only be granted in the event of documented illness or family emergency.

It is imperative that students manage their time wisely. They should not let themselves fall behind schedule, or they may find it extremely difficult to catch up by the time a deadline arrives. If students find that they cannot finish an assignment or keep up with the workload, they must speak to the instructor immediately, to discuss practical ways to make the course manageable.

SPECIAL NEEDS.

“IPFW is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. If you have a disability or acquire one, contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Walb Student Union Rm. 113, 260-481-665 <http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/text-version/academics.shtml> “.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It is plagiarism to present someone else's words, work or ideas as one's own. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may result in failure on an assignment, of the course, and, if repeated, dismissal from the University. You are responsible for being attentive to or observant of campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University's Student Conduct Code.

(http://www.ipfw.edu/senate/STU_CODE.HTM)

Civility /Ground rules for discussion

Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to that relationship. It is my responsibility, as the instructor, to maintain an appropriate academic atmosphere in the classroom, and the responsibility of the student to cooperate in that endeavor.

I believe that the open exchange of ideas is central to learning. I hope to create an environment where students feel safe to venture differing opinions, to disagree, and to debate. To create that kind of environment it is imperative that students show each other consideration and respect, even while disagreeing. I expect students to not only express their ideas, but to genuinely listen, with an open mind, to the ideas of others.

Learning to critique or assess works is a vital part of a creative practitioner's growth and learning, as is learning to respond to critiques and assessments of your own work. For critiques to remain productive and constructive, certain ground rules will be established, that I will expect students to adhere to when commenting on each other's work.

Diversity and nondiscrimination

“IPFW is committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the university seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The university believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. IPFW prohibits discrimination against any member of the university community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a disabled or Vietnam-era veteran.” (from the IPFW Student Handbook).

Disabilities Statement

If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (Walb Union, Room 113, telephone number 481-6658) as soon as possible to work out the details. Once the Director has provided you with a letter attesting to your needs for modification, bring the letter to me. For more information, please visit the web site for SSD at <http://www.ipfw.edu/ssd/> .

Other services for students

- **Center for Academic Support & Advancement (CASA)** KT G23 481-6817 www.ipfw.edu/casa study skills development, tutoring, STEPS short courses, supplemental instruction, ESL can help with all phases of the writing process
- **Career Services** KT 109 481-0689 <http://www.ipfw.edu/career/> assistance with on and off-campus job placement and internships
- **Information Technology Services Help Desk** KT 206 481-6030 www.its.ipfw.edu/helpdesk information on all aspects of computing at IPFW; hardware and software support (including Blackboard Vista 4); student e-mail accounts
- **Center for Women and Returning Adults** Walb 120 481-6029 www.ipfw.edu/cwra/ workshops, support groups, counseling, and other programs
- **Multicultural Services** Walb 118 481-6921 <http://www.ipfw.edu/odma/> skills workshops, support groups, diversity training, counseling, mentoring, cultural heritage programs; ASAP program
- **International Student Services** KT 104 481-6034 or 6923 <http://www.ipfw.edu/iss/> visa and INS issues; help with housing, counseling
- **Mastodon Advising Center (MAC)** KT 109 481-6595 <http://www.ipfw.edu/mac/> appointments with professional academic advisors; help with guiding students in deciding on their major and ultimately their career; help for exploring students, deciding students, and readmitted students; and various student resources.
- **Helmke Library Service Desk** 481-6505 www.lib.ipfw.edu reference librarian help, books, journals, reference, interlibrary loan reserve readings for courses: Reserves Express (REX): www.lib.ipfw.edu/rex/
- **Dean of Students office** Walb 111 481-6601 www.ipfw.edu/dos/ student health insurance, mentoring, grade appeals; free short-term personal counseling and support

Tips for success

Come to class.

Do the readings.

Exercise independent thinking and initiative.

Try to get as much as you can out of the process of completing exercises and assignments: focus on the process, rather than the results.

Take advantage of my office hours.

Let me know if you are having problems keeping up with the assigned work - for whatever reason - either by email or through an office-hour appointment. Ideally in advance of deadlines.

Take advantage of the University's advising, counseling, tutoring and support services: you've paid for them, may as well use them.

Be open and willing to learn, especially from others.

Be open and willing to contribute to the learning of others.

Be open and willing to engage with new ideas, to try new things, to risk getting things wrong, and to learn all you can in the process.

Students called for military duty

"If you are a student in the military with the potential of being called to military service and /or training during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact your advisor immediately."

Tentative Course Schedule:

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Students will be notified both in class and by email of any changes. Additional readings, technical handouts, and take-home exercises may be suggested or assigned as the term progresses.

		Date	Topic	Due next class.
Wk 1	LECT	Aug 24	Introductions, course syllabus, intake survey. 10 fascinations. Two Hummingbirds. Alien.	Reading: V & V Chapt 1. 3-8
	LAB	Aug 26	Writing from experience, visual writing. Exercises: 3 moments; loneliest guy in the universe. Production models.	Reading: Handout on Cinematographic Space. Screenwriting: '3 moments' revisited.
Wk 2	LECT	Aug 31	Take up '3 moments' revisited. Intro to cinematographic storytelling: time, the imagination. The role of the frame, the editing. The power of sound.	Journal: Listening Exercises Reading: V & V on recording technique. Metz, The Aural Object. Bresson, Notes on Sound.
	LAB	Sep 2	Take up listening exercises & reading. Working with microphones. Record sounds for Proj 1.	Reading: handouts on audio recording technique.
Wk 3	LEC	Sep 7	No class: Labor day recess.	Finish Proj 1: Three Sounds. Journal: Proj 2 first ideas.
	LAB	Sep 9	PROJECT 1 DUE. Screen & Crit. Discuss Proj 2 first ideas.	Readings: V & V on lighting. 237-242; 248-250. 271-275. 281-284.
Wk 4	LECT	Sep 14	The characteristics of light.	Reading: V & V on lighting gear. 261-270 Journal: describe the light.
	LAB	Sep 16	Lighting workshop.	Reading: on composition (xyz axis et al). 35-53 Complete Project 2 Proposal.
Wk 5	LECT	Sep 21	PROJECT 2 PROPOSAL DUE. Cinematography: beyond the basics. (focal length, z axis, latitude et al).	
	LAB	Sep 23	Camera workshop.	Shoot Proj 2.
Wk 6	LECT	Sep 28	PROJECT 2 RUSHES DUE. Review & discuss. Intro to DVD Studio Pro	Proj 2 sound edit.
	LAB	Sep 30	PROJECT 2 DUE. SCREEN & CRITIQUE Classical continuity editing & shooting. Montage.	Finish Proj 2 to DVD. Readings on continuity, coverage et al. Journal: Watch TV with the sound turned off.

Wk 7	LECT	Oct 5	JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT DUE. Alternative approaches to storytelling. Discuss Proj 3 1 st ideas.	Readings V&V on screenwriting. 15-31 Screenwriting: Proj 3 – first ideas.
	LAB	Oct 7	Screenwriting workshop.	
Wk 8	LECT	Oct 12	Fall Recess. No class.	Screenwriting: Proj 3 – first draft.
	LAB	Oct 14	Proj 3: 1st Draft Due. Dramatic continuity edit exercise.	Finish edit exercise Reading: V & V on prod management, crews. 105-135
Wk 9	LECT	Oct 19	Review & discuss continuity edit exercise. Introduction to production management: budgets, schedules, locations, casting. Script breakdown. . Alternative production models.	Proj 3 – Proposal & final draft
	LAB	Oct 21	TBA	Reading: V & V Chapt 5: previsualization, 85-100
Wk 10	LECT	Oct 26	Project 3 PROPOSAL & SHOOTING SCRIPT DUE. Pre-visualization tools: shot lists, storyboards.	Proj 3 production package: proposal, budget, schedule, script breakdown. Readings: V & V Chapt on crews, set protocol. 119-135; 329-342.
	LAB	Oct 28	Set protocol & procedures. Blocking & shooting a scene.	Readings: Handouts on art direction.
Wk 11	LECT	Nov 2	The art of art direction (aka production design).	Reading: TBA.
	LAB	Nov 4	Working with actors.	Shoot, digitize & assemble Proj 3 footage.
Wk 12	LECT	Nov 9	PROJ 3 RUSHES DUE: screen & discuss. Sound/Image dynamics: anatomy of a soundtrack.	Readings TBA on sound editing and mixing.
	LAB	Nov 11	Sound edit exercise.	Finish sound edit exercise. edit proj 3
Wk 13	LECT	Nov 16	Review & discuss sound edit exercise. Word/ image dynamics.	proj 3 cont'd rough cut
	LAB	Nov 18	PROJ 3 ROUGH CUT DUE Screen for feedback	Edit proj 3 cont'd.
Wk 14	LECT	Nov 23	Finishing to different platforms.	Edit proj 3 cont'd.
	LAB		TBA	edit proj 3 cont'd.
Wk 15	LECT	Nov 30	PROJ 3 FINE CUT DUE. Discuss sound ideas. Intro to color correction tools.	
	LAB		Proj 3 sound cut feedback.	Proj 3, sound edit, fine cut.
Wk 16	LECT	Dec 7	Titles, credits.	Finish project 2 to DVD..
	LAB	Dec 9	Proj 3 SCREENING & CRIT	
Exam week		Date TBA	PROJECT 3 FINAL DVD DUE	

Important dates

Aug. 24	Classes Begin
Aug. 24-28	Late Registration and Drop/Add
Aug. 28	Final Payment Deadline (late registrants)
Aug. 30	Last Day for Full Refund (for full-term classes)
Sept.4-7	Labor Day Holiday Recess Begins at 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 8	Classes Resume
Oct. 12-13	Fall Recess
Oct. 14	Classes Resume
Oct. 30	Credit-to-Audit Deadline
Oct. 30	Last Day to Withdraw from Classes without receiving a grade.
Nov. 24	Thanksgiving Recess Begins after Last Class
Nov. 30	Classes Resume
Dec. 14-20	Last Week of Classes and Final Exams
Dec. 20	Classes and Final Exams End