Syllabus

Course Description: This is a studio course in which students learn how to make short films by making short films, much as students learn how to write papers by writing papers in English composition courses. Emphasis will be placed on the practice and theory of cinematography and editing.

Course Objectives: To develop strategies for conveying ideas audio-visually and to gain technical skills required to make digital films. In this course students learn the practice of film production. A student’s mastery of the course’s practical objectives is best demonstrated through studio projects (i.e., short films).

Course Structure: Class time is devoted entirely to screenings, demonstrations, and discussions. All production work is to be done outside of class time.

Equipment: DV cameras and an editing lab will be provided. You’ll need to buy videotape.


Grades: Will be determined (mainly) by two films, weighted as follows:

- Quiz: 5%
- Film #1: Point of view
  - Technical Proficiency: 5%
  - Content: 10%
- Film #2: Group project
  - Insert shots
    - Technical Proficiency: 5%
    - Content: 10%
  - Rough cut
    - Technical Proficiency: 10%
    - Content: 10%
  - Final edit
    - Technical Proficiency: 10%
    - Content: 10%
- Editing Lessons: 5%
- Participation: 10%
Critiques 10%

**Quiz:** Consists of short questions covering technical information related to digital cinematography. There are no unannounced quizzes in this course.

**Filmmaking Assignments:** These assignments are the central feature of this course. They play the role in this course that writing assignments play in a writing course: just as the best way to learn to write is to write (and not, say, to make films about writing) so the best way to learn to make films is to make films (and not, say, to write papers about filmmaking). The assignments are specifically designed to give you a chance to work with the ideas we are discussing in class. They are graded by evaluating two elements of equal importance: technical proficiency and content. Technical proficiency is usually easy to evaluate, but students should note that a project of exceptional proficiency is only halfway to being considered an “A.” The content of the work is, on the other hand, more difficult to evaluate, but is the most interesting part of the project. Critiques of work will always address these two areas. All films are due on a specific date to enable the class to screen and discuss work. *Sorry, but late work will not be accepted.* Below is a summary of each assignment:

**Film #1:** Single character’s point of view. Students will make a 3 – 4 minute SILENT movie shot from a single character’s point of view. The conceptual focus is on using a variety shots to bring the viewer into the world of the character. Each scene will need to be broken down into a series of shots, which show the viewer what the character thinks and feels. The technical focus is on the various elements of cinematography: light, movement, composition, etc. Each shot must create/evoke a visual mood. Careful consideration will need to be given to composition, camera angles, and camera/subject movement. There will be no editing, so students will need to plan out the shots they’d like to use in advance (using the storyboard form) and shoot them in the order in which they’d like them to be seen. Students should compose for the “rule of thirds,” and use a variety of camera to subject distances: close up, medium shot, long shot, extreme long shot. Students should use the following techniques in their assignment: variety of camera angles (low angle, high angle, dutch angle), pan, tilt, handheld, dolly (tracking shot). Very important: a student cannot be in her own film—she must shoot all of her own assignment.

**Film #2:** Monologue/dialogue form. Working in small groups, students will make a 4 – 5 minute SOUND film based on the interview form. The conceptual focus is on understanding how insert shots can be used to either reinforce or undermine an actor’s monologue or interview. Students will write a short interview script, which they will then light and shoot. The technical focus during the shoot will be on lighting, namely the way light can be used in combination with shot selection to evoke a mood. Next students will edit their footage in the computer. The technical focus is on four editing techniques: the straight cut, the L-cut, the reverse L-cut, and the jump cut. Students will also explore the way the length of shots changes a scene’s rhythm and the overall pacing of the film. Very important: each group is responsible for shooting and editing their own film.

**Editing lessons:** Students will learn the professional software “Final Cut Pro.” In order to demonstrate their mastery of various editing techniques they will need to successfully complete five tutorial lessons by a given date (see course schedule).

**Participation:** Participation points will be determined by a) general class participation (over and above participation in critiques), and b) the degree of your participation in your group project (everyone in the group will be given the same grade for the group project).
Critiques: It is essential that you participate in critiques of the work of your fellow students. Absences can be excused only in case of illness, death in the family, etc. If you have to miss a critique day, it will need to be excused in advance.

Email: If you email me, assuming favorable conditions, I’ll reply to your email in a timely fashion.

Attendance: You are allowed one unexcused absence; thereafter you will lose two percentage points per unexcused absence. Absences may be excused in case of illness, death in the family, religious holidays, etc. If possible, you should provide me, beforehand, with written documentation of your reason for missing class. You are also allowed to arrive late one time without penalty; thereafter you will lose one point per late arrival.

Academic Honesty: Students will be reported to the Academic Honesty Committee if caught cheating. Each student must shoot all of her own footage for the first film. Having someone else shoot your film will be considered cheating. Editing the first film in the computer will be considered cheating. Each group must shoot and edit their own group film. Having someone outside the group shoot or edit the group film will be considered cheating.

ADA Procedure: Students needing accommodations should arrange a meeting the first week of class. Come during office hours or email for an alternate time. Bring the Accommodation Memo and Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. Discuss items needed in this class. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need special accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT) or email: haynemd@auburn.edu

Course withdrawal: The last day to withdraw from this course without a W on your transcript is _____. The last day to withdraw from this course with a W on your transcript is_____. NOTE: A grade of incomplete will be given only under rare and extreme circumstances.

Diversity Statement: The Department of Communication and Journalism recognizes the importance of both reflecting and teaching diversity. Our policy is intended to be inclusive of all underrepresented and minority groups whatever their race, religion, national origin, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation.

RTVF 3420: Introduction to Filmmaking
Course Schedule
Week 1  
Short film format  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 1 (V&V, 3-8)  
Chapter 3 (V&V, 35-48)

Week 2  
Cinematography: the shot: proxemics, angles, movement  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 3 (V&V, 48-53)  
Chapter 4 (V&V, 63-75)

Week 3  
Composition and Storyboards  
DV Cameras and Tripods  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 9 (V&V, 178-191)  
Chapter 10 (V&V, 203-209)

Week 4  
Quiz  
Lighting  
Group shoot preproduction  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 13 (V&V, 238-240, 250-255)

Week 5  
Critiques of Film #1

Week 6  
Critiques continued  
Group shoot preproduction

Week 7  
Group shoot

Week 8  
Group shoot  
Final Cut Pro introduction  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 20 (V&V, 367-382)

Week 9  
Due: Editing Lessons #1 - 3  
Editing theory and practice  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 20 (V&V, 382-390)

Week 10  
Due: Editing Lessons #4-5  
Editing theory and practice  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 21 (V&V, 393-412)

Week 11  
Due: Insert shots  
Edit group film: Log and Capture  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 22 (V&V, 415-429)

Week 12  
Edit group film  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 23 (V&V, 433-444)

Week 13  
Critiques of Film #2: Rough cut

Week 14  
Sound and Image  
Edit group film  
Hurbis-Cherrier: Chapter 23 (V&V, 444-456)

Week 15  
Critiques of Film #2: Final cut