

VCA 295, Foundations of Digital Video Production, Art History and Visual Culture, Summer 2021 Session 2

I. COURSE INFORMATION (INDEPENDENT STUDY)

Instructor: Marco G. Ferrari

Instructor's Email: mferrari@fus.edu

Office Hours: by appointment via teams or zoom

Class location: remote, zoom link

<https://fus.zoom.us/j/84015591897?pwd=bHpicUc5YlFraJPSGJLNERUcU9UUT09>

Class meeting times: MTWTH, 11:30 AM – 13:00 PM

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the technical, conceptual, and aesthetic skills involved in video production through the single camera mode of production. Still the most dominant mode of film and video production, the single camera mode places an emphasis on using the camera to fullest capacity of artistic expression. In addition to the multiple skills and concepts involved with the camera, the course also introduces students to the principles and technologies of lighting, audio recording and mixing, and non-linear digital video editing. Special focus is given to producing content for successful web distribution.

III. RATIONALE

This course will answer some of the most pressing questions repeatedly asked by first-time and amateur filmmakers: How do you effectively and efficiently transform an idea first into a story, then into a screenplay, next into a production schedule, and finally into moving images and sound that emotionally transport an audience? How do you operate a camera, record clean audio, and generally make your actors look like they're in a Hollywood film? What can I do with Adobe Premier that I can't do with iMovie? This course will provide you with an intensive overview of the entire filmmaking process, from soup to nuts, as you work with a production unit to produce a short narrative or documentary film for web distribution.

IV. COURSE GOALS

By the end of this class, you will understand how a film is made from conception through distribution, and you will know how to develop a story for maximum audio-visual impact. You will gain hands-on experience of all stages of film production and all the skills necessary to begin producing professional-level work for the media industry as well as a polished piece of work for your demo reel.

V. SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To see the value and the interconnectedness between one's personal story and the environment in which they are living, and to ultimately express these insights through moving images.
- To explore the foundations of the video making process by being introduced to fundamental techniques in pre-production, production and post-production using digital video.
- To be an attentive spectator and cultivate the skill of critiquing, reflecting sincerely and meaningfully on readings, discussions, screenings, and in peer review contexts.
- To cultivate the ability to see the world cinematographically and find creative solutions to “capture” or “interpret” that vision.

VI. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

All required readings, technical guides and in-class material will be posted on Moodle along with extra readings and points of reference that can help further understanding. The extra readings will generally be on technical aspects of production or to expand on theoretical topics discussed in class. Additional material may be uploaded onto the course home page. Viewings are key aspects of the weekly course lessons and are to be viewed in relation to the weekly readings and assignments. Links associated with these viewings will be listed within each week's section.

VII. ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The success of this course depends on the commitment of the students to engage creatively with theoretical and technical course matter. The student's openness and sensitivity towards their fellow classmates' expression will allow for greater growth and exploration in the class. Evaluation of all student work will take into consideration the student's availability to experiment intellectually and creatively in a way that demonstrates a thoughtful consideration and creative interpretation of the themes and technical matter raised through course readings, screenings and class discussions. Depending on the general level of engagement of the class, quizzes may be given with proper notice. Written feedback will be given for each project and an individual meeting midway through the course will take place to go over the student's current status. *Late assignments will affect your grade.

- 1) General Class Preparation, Attendance, and Peer Critiques 30%
- 2) Reading Insights 10%
- 3) Three Audiovisual Projects each accompanied by a “Response Text” 60%

VIII. ASSESSMENT DETAILS

- **Attendance, Participation and Peer Critiques:** This is a studio-based course and it requires an extraordinary amount of creative and research work to be completed during the week. It is important that you set time aside for capturing and editing material on your own along with keeping up with readings/viewings of online materials. (30%)

- **Forum Insights** (on moodle): for every reading you are to provide two questions or points you found interesting and post those within the forum discussion on moodle. This not only documents your activity staying connected with course material but can then allow you to pose questions for that day's discussion. (10%)

- **Project 1: Sculpting Space**, 2 min, solo project, with *response text (20%)

- **Project 2: Cinematography**, 2-3 min, solo project, with *response text (20%)

- **Project 3: Taking Place, Non-Fiction–Documentary**: solo project, 3-5 min, with *response text (20%)

*Response Texts are individual written responses on your creative project. This isn't merely an afterthought but a way for you to expand upon formal and conceptual techniques learned up to date. It will be handed in at the conclusion of each project. The text will reference readings and screenings assigned in class while explaining the student's personal vision and technical challenges encountered while creating the work.

IX. GRADING POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Written feedback and grades are given throughout the course following each assignment. Any concern over grades will be indicated by mid-course. Criteria for final grades:

A = Outstanding participation and attendance, asks questions and embraces the process, substantial growth is evident by the end of the course.

B = Above average participation and attendance, palpable growth is evident by the end of the course.

C = Average execution of assignments, participation and attendance, little or no growth is evident by the end of the course.

D = Well below average of the above.

F = Unsatisfactory work, participation, and attendance.

X. HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE (POLICIES / REQUIREMENTS)

Attendance: This course is only a mere four weeks long, yet is very collaborative and very hands on. Regular attendance is required. Two absences in class will result in a full letter drop in the final grade. In the case of excused absences due to documented illness or family emergencies, please present a dean's note as soon as possible. In the event of absence, the student is responsible for all new assignments and information given during class time.

Equipment: It is essential for you to have your own digital recording device. Ideally this will be a video camera or DSLR but using your phone will do. The student must also have access to a computer and have the ability/resources to download the editing software, Adobe Premier Pro, and to purchase this application for a one-month/one-time subscription cost of \$19.99. <https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/buy/students.html>. It is recommended that students have their own external USB hard drive (100-500GB) to store and archive captured material and your video project assignments.

Class Etiquette: The following is to help you cultivate professional demeanor in your life and to develop a respectful relationship with your classmates and professor. Not following these guidelines can impact your participation and attendance grade.

General: Read the syllabus and visit the class website. 99.9% of your questions will be answered there.

In-class: Arrive on time and remain in class during the duration of class. If you must leave, do not leave right at the start of class (when important announcements are being made), during student presentations and during screenings. Chronic tardiness will impact your grade.

Class discussion: Lessons are built around class discussion, so be prepared to discuss the assigned material during class. Please come with informed ideas and opinions.

Missing class: If you miss class, you do not need to email the professor to ask what you missed or what you need to cover. All that information is on the class syllabus and it is not necessary for the professor to type up and email you the lecture when you can get the information from the course readings and your classmates. You can also meet with the professor before the following class to ask questions.

Email: Professors maintain regular working hours and have office hours. Please do not email on the weekend or the night before class and expect an immediate response. When emailing, please include something in the email text. Do not just send an email with a subject line and attachment.

Phones and computers: Phones are strictly forbidden in class unless being used specifically for an assignment. If you use one, you will be counted as absent (after one warning). Computers and tablets are allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please ask for permission before using computers in class. All computers must be closed during screenings of media.

Reviewing assignment drafts: In some special cases and given adequate warning, students concerned about their grades can discuss drafts of their projects during office hours.

Assignment approval: Most assignments require topic approval. Make sure you understand the assignment requirements and submit your proposal in a timely manner. Assignments that need topic approval that are not formally approved will not receive credit.

Assignment extensions: Under special circumstances extensions are given, but you must first ask for permission. If you submit an assignment late without first asking for an extension, your grade will be affected by the normal penalty.

Grades: Do not argue about your grade. Grades are not a form of punishment or reward, and are not a reflection of who you are as a human being. Rather, grades serve as a signpost of where you are at in terms of skills, abilities and quality of work in relation to the assignment. It is there to help you understand the areas where you need to improve your work.

XI. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STATEMENT ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

A student whose actions are deemed by the University to be out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives or the spirit of good conduct as fostered by the University and Swiss community, may be placed on Disciplinary Probation or become subject to dismissal from

the University. Cheating is a dishonest action out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives and spirit of the University. Furthermore, cheating reflects negatively on one's personal integrity and is unjust to those students who have studied.

See the Academic Catalog for full statement:
<https://www.fus.edu/academics/academic-catalog>

XII. RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Please see Moodle for a list of available resources

XIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

WEEK 1

Monday June 28

In-class:

- Introductions, course overview and lecture/viewings

Assignments due 6/29:

- Reading: Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." pp. 63-70
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 1-5

Tuesday June 29

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Introduction to Project 1

Assignments due 6/30:

- Reading: Altman, Rick. 1992. Sound Theory, Sound Practice. Afi Film Readers. New York: Routledge, pp. 15-31
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 6-10

Wednesday June 30

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: sound

Assignments due 7/1:

- Proposal for Project 1
- Reading: Astruc, Alexandre. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo". L'Écran française. (1948). pp. 1-4
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 11-15

Thursday July 1

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Review of Proposals for Project 1: Sculpting Sound

Assignments due 7/5:

- Recorded Material for Project 1 create Adobe Premier Pro Account
- Reading: “Chapter 10: Documentary, Experimental, Animated Films” in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. Film Art: An Introduction. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill. pp. 338-370
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 16-20

WEEK 2

Monday July 5

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro overview focus on sound & Project 1–editing

Assignments due 7/6:

- Reading: “Chapter 5: The Shot-Cinematography” in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. Film Art: An Introduction. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill. pp. 162-217
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 21-25
- Continue Project 1–editing

Tuesday July 6

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro & Project 1–editing

Assignments due 7/7:

- Reading: Bazin, André. “Ontology of the Image”. pp. 9-16
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 26-30
- Continue Project 1–editing

Wednesday July 7

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro & Project 1–finalizing and exporting

Assignments due 7/8:

- Reading: Espinosa, For an Imperfect Cinema, 1969. pp. 1-8
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 31-35
- Complete Project 1 with Response Text

Thursday July 8

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Introduction to Project 2: Cinematography

- *Critiques–Student Presentation of Project 1 with Response Text*

Assignments due 7/12:

- Record Material for Project 2
- Reading: Nichols, Documentary Modes of Representation, Representing Reality, 1991. pp. 32-74
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 36-40

WEEK 3

Monday July 12

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro overview focus on image & Project 2–editing
- Introduction to Project 3

Assignments due 7/13:

- Reading: Bresland, John. "On the Origin of the Video Essay" Blackbird. 9. 1 (2010). pp. 1-3
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 41-45
- Continue Project 2–editing
- Proposal for Project 3

Tuesday July 13

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro overview focus on image & Project 2–editing and exporting

Assignments due 7/14:

- Reading: Rabiger, Directing the Documentary, Chap 05. pp. 79-90
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 46-50
- Complete Project 2 with Response Text

Wednesday July 14

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- *Critiques–Student Presentation of Project 2 with Response Text*

Assignments due 7/15:

- Dorsky, Nathaniel. "Devotional Cinema–Film as Practice." (2004)
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 51-55
- Treatment for Project 3

Thursday July 15

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Review Treatments

Assignments due 7/19:

- Record Material for Project 3
- Reading: Bordwell, Film Art, Chapter 2, The Significance of Film Form. pp. 54-73
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 56-60

Monday July 19

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro & Project 3–editing

Assignments due 7/20:

- Reading: Chapter excerpts from Murch, Walter. 2001. In the blink of an eye: a perspective on film editing. Los Angeles, California: Silman-James Press. pp. 17-22; 32-42
- Reading: Sterling, Vernacular Video, Beyond the Beyond blog, 2007. pp. 1-5
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 61-65

Tuesday July 20

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro & Project 3 editing

Assignments due 7/21:

- Reading: "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" in Eisenstein, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. Film Form; Essays in Film Theory. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949. pp. 28-44
- Reading: Steyerl, Hito-In Defense of the Poor Image, Eflux Journal, 2009. pp. 1-9
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. Notes on the Cinematograph. pp. 65-72

Wednesday July 21

In-class:

- Reading review, lecture, viewings, discussion
- Studio work: Adobe Premier Pro & Project 3 editing

Assignments due 7/21:

- Completion of Project 3 for Presentation with Response Text

Thursday July 22

- *Critiques--Student Presentation of Project 3 with Response Text*

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