

## **John Cabot University**

COM 230-3, Foundations of Digital Video Production, Fall 2018

Period: Wednesday 12:30–15:15pm

Room: Digital Media Lab-Guarini Campus, Kushlan Wing, Ground Floor, Room 2

Instructor: Marco G. Ferrari, [mferrari@johncabot.edu](mailto:mferrari@johncabot.edu)

Office hours: by appointment

## **SYLLABUS**

### **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.

### **Summary of Course Content**

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 Final Cut Studio or 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.

### **Learning Outcomes**

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.

### **Class Structure**

- Discussions based off of assigned readings and viewings and in-class film screenings.
- Conceptual and technical demonstrations.
- Studio time (planning and production).
- Presentation of works (critiques).

### **Course Home Page**

<http://moodle.johncabot.edu/>

Course Enrollment Key: **COM230-3Fall18** (case sensitive, with no spaces)

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 distributed in class and uploaded onto the course home page. Since **Moodle** is not integrated with the school database, and with the class roster, you will have to create your own account, if you do not have already one. Once you have an account, you will have to enroll in this course by using the enrollment key (noted above).

Each class will have a time where we will view screenings of works. A Viewing List (with links when possible) will be available on Moodle and updated on a weekly basis.

**Course Reserves at Frohring Library:** \*A pdf copy will be available on Moodle.

- \*Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. Translated by Jonathan Griffin. Nyrb Classics. New York: New York Review Books, 2016.
- Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Murch, Walter. 2001. *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*. 2Nd ed. Los Angeles, California: Silman-James Press.
- Nichols, Bill. 2010. *Introduction to Documentary*. Second edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nichols, Bill. 1991. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- \*Rabiger, Michael. 2008. *Directing : Film Techniques and Aesthetics*. 4Th ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier/Focal Press (ebook).

**Attendance Requirements**

This course requires an extraordinary amount of work to be completed outside of class hours. Students who expect to travel frequently during weekends are strongly advised against registering for this course.

Three late arrivals (more than 10 minutes) are counted as one unexcused absence. Two unexcused absences will result in a full letter drop in the final grade and three unexcused absences will result in failure. Due to the once a week meeting schedule for the course, missing one class can mean missing out on a major technical or conceptual lesson plan, which can affect the quality of your projects. In the case of excused absences due to documented illness or family emergencies, please present a dean's note as soon as possible.

**Assignment Guidelines Weight**

- **Project 1:** Documentary/Non-Narrative—Video Essay, 5 min: personal-project (25)
- **Project 2:** Narrative—Collaboration, 5–7 min: students will be required to work in small groups to produce a 5-7 minute narrative film based on their own scripts. (25)
- **Response Texts:** Individual written “Response Texts” will follow each project. The texts will reference readings, screenings and site visits assigned in class while explaining the student’s personal vision and technical challenges encountered while creating the work. (10)
- **Attendance, Participation, \*Discussion Leads:** Participation is not simply a question of attendance and raising your hand in class. In order to receive your 20 points, you must attend class, ask questions, participate in the in-class exercises and contribute significantly to group members' productions. \*Discussion Leads: For each class one student will lead discussions with two questions/observations based off the assigned readings for that class. These questions will be typed and handed in at the beginning of the class.\*\*If needed, there may be short quizzes given at the beginning of some classes. These will be assigned at least one week before. (20)
- **Final Screenings/Peer Critiques:** Written and in-class critiques during the screening of works, attendance will be mandatory. (10)
- **Class Notes/Journal:** Hand-written notes must be taken for each class, noting key elements that were covered during class—including but not limited to screenings, lectures, labs and discussions. The journal will be handed in on the last day of class, or a pdf copy of your physical journal can be emailed. Purchase a journal/notebook dedicated for this. (10)

**Equipment**

Different digital recording equipment will be used for you projects and these will be available from the **Digital Media Lab**. You all have access to the digital equipment JCU has on reserve

for the course. You can check out gear from Thursday afternoon with gear needing to be returned Monday morning. You will be reserving and checking out the equipment from **Professor Brian Thomson, [brthomson@johncabot.edu](mailto:brthomson@johncabot.edu), Coordinator of the Digital Media Lab**. When contacting him CC me and in the subject field please write: Student Equipment Reservation, Your Name-Course Name

\*Please allow him adequate response time to respond to your inquiries and please let me know ASAP if you have any issues with checking out equipment or something occurs while in production.

### **Out of Pocket Materials**

Students enrolled in this course should provide their own external **USB hard drive (250-500GB)** to store and archive captured material and video projects. These drives must be Mac formatted.

### **Office Hours**

I am available to discuss any concerns or questions outside of class time. Please do not hesitate to email me to schedule a meeting.

### **Academic Honesty**

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

### **Students with Learning or Other Disabilities**

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

### **Assessment Criteria**

A: work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B: This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C: This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D: This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F: This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the assignment.

### **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. 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.

## **SCHEDULE**

*Please note that this schedule is subject to change.*

### **Non-Narrative–Documentary Film Project**

#### **Week 1, September 5: Introduction to Non-Narrative Film Forms**

- Introductions, course overview
- Non-narrative film forms lecture
- Project 1: Documentary Assignment given

Due 9/12

- Individual Proposals/Ideas due 9am via email
- 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: Nichols, Documentary Modes of Representation, Representing Reality, 1991.
- Reading: Astruc, Alexandre. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Style" *L'Écran française*. (1948).
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 1-5

#### **Week 2, September 12: Pre-Production and Treatment**

- Reading review
- Pre-production/Treatment lecture
- Project 1: Proposal selections; Treatment and Pre-Production research

Due 9/19

- Project 1: Treatment
- Reading: “Chapter 5: The Shot-Cinematography” in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Reading: Altman, Rick. 1992. *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*. Afi Film Readers. New York: Routledge, pp.15–31
- Reading: Bresland, John. "On the Origin of the Video Essay" *Blackbird*. 9. 1 (2010).
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 6-10
- Extra Reading: Lopate, In Search of the Centaur, The Essay Film, 1992

#### **Week 3, September 19: Shooting, Sound and Lighting**

- Reading review
- Shooting, sound and lighting lecture and lab
- Project 1: Treatment review and Production development

Due 9/26

- Project 1: Recorded Material
- Reading: “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram” in Eisenstein, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949
- Reading: Rabiger, Directing the Documentary, Chap 05
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 11-15

#### **Week 4, September 26: Media Management and Editing**

- Media Management and Editing lecture and lab/string-outs
- Project 1: Editing, Production and Planning

Due 10/3

- Project 1: Continue Shooting/capturing recorded material and Video footage string-outs
- Reading: Rascaroli, Journal of Cinema and Media, The Essay Film, 2008
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 16-20

### **Week 5, October 3: Editing**

- Project 1: Video footage string-out reviews; Build Rough-cuts

Due 10/10

- Project 1: Rough-cut
- Reading: Steyerl, Hito-In Defense of the Poor Image, *Eflux Journal*, 2009
- Reading: Sterling, *Vernacular Video*, Beyond the Beyond blog, 2007
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 21-25

### **Week 6, October 10: Editing and Color Correction (rough edit due)**

- In-depth editing techniques, color correction and exporting lecture and lab
- Project 1: Rough-cut reviews, Editing continued, color correction and exporting

Due 10/17

- Project 1: Projects exported for screening and Individual Response Texts (due 9am)
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 26-30

### **\*Week 7, October 17: Final Non-Narrative Film Screenings \***

- Project 1: Screening of Project 1, critique participation mandatory
- Individual Response Texts (due 9am)

Due 10/24

- Reading: Bordwell, Film Art, Chapter 2, The Significance of Film Form
- Reading: "Chapter 3: Narrative as Formal System" in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 31-35

### **Narrative—Fiction Film Project**

#### **Week 8, October 24: Introduction to Narrative**

- Narrative film forms lecture
- Story lab
- Project 2: Narrative Assignment given and group selections

Due 10/31

- Project 2: Synopsis'
- Reading: Deren, Maya. "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality." *Daedalus* 89, no. 1 (1960): 150-67.
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 36-40

#### **Week 9, October 31: Creative Writing & Script Development**

- Creative writing and script development lecture and lab
- Project 2: Roles, story selection, and script development

Due 11/7

- Project 2: Script
- Reading: "Chapter 4: The Shot: Mis-en-Scene" in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 41-45

**Week 10, November 7: Composition and Lighting**

- Composition and lighting lecture and lab
- Project 2: Script review and pre-production work

Due 11/14

- Project 2: Script revisions; Pre-visualization and Shot Breakdown
- Reading: Daren, Maya. "Tempo and Tension." *The Movies as Medium*. By Lewis Jacobs. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970. N. pag. Print.
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 46-50

**Week 11, November 14: Directing and Mise-en-scène**

- Directing and Mise-en-scène lecture and lab
- Project 2: Scene development

Due 11/21

- Project 2: Recorded Material
- Reading: Chapter excerpts from Murch, Walter. 2001. *In the blink of an eye: a perspective on film editing*. Los Angeles, California: Silman-James Press.
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 51-55

**Week 12, November 21: Editing and Sound Design**

- Editing and sound design lecture and lab
- Project 2: Creation of String-outs and continue editing

Due 11/28

- Project 2: Final shots if needed; Editing continued and Rough-cut 1
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 56-60
- Reading: Espinosa, For an Imperfect Cinema, 1969

**Week 13, November 28: Editing and Graphics/Effects**

- Editing and graphics/effects lecture and lab
- Project 2 Groups: Rough-cut 1 review

Due 12/5

- Project 2: Rough-cut 2
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 61-65
- Reading: Brakhage, Metaphors on Vision

**Week 14, 12/5: Final Edits**

- In-class Rough-cut 2 reviews; continue editing

Due 12/12

- Project 2: Final Video
- Individual Response Text, send via email by 9am
- Reading: Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematograph*. pp. 66-72

**\*Week 15, December 12: Final Narrative Film Screenings\***

- Project 2: Screening of Project 2, critique participation mandatory
- Individual Response Texts (due 9am)

~FINE~