Stephen F. Austin State University
School of Art
ARTS 4352.001
Spring 2024

Course Time: Tuesday / Thursday: 8:00am - 10:40am
Course Location: Micky Elliot College of Fine Arts - Room 122
Professor: Derek Johnson
Email: Derek.Johnson@sfasu.edu
Office Phone: 936.468.1509
Office: Room 141
Office Hours: by appointment

ADVANCED FILM PRODUCTION

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this class is to teach professional filmmaking processes and techniques through lecture, demonstration, and completed class projects, i.e., a completed short film. Students will learn the skills necessary to work on a professional feature length film, commercial, documentary, or other video productions.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This course is for students interested in pursuing a career in the film industry, whether independent film, studio productions, etc. The main emphasis will be on feature films and documentaries from a writing, producing, directing and editing standpoint. Topics to be covered will range from a variety of aspects such as the following examples: developing a unique, marketable story idea; framing a shot; working with actors; film distribution, and so on. Many more topics will be covered in a comprehensive structure to better help the student understand the protocols, pitfalls, benefits, and highs and lows of a career in the motion picture industry.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES / GOALS / OBJECTIVES:

Program learning outcomes
1. Students are expected to learn proficiency in filming techniques and terms.
2. Students are expected to work in a professional manner.
3. Students working in groups are expected to learn to work in a collaborative manner.

Student learning outcomes
4. Students will show their proficiency in filmmaking through completion of projects.
5. Students will learn writing, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution techniques from a writing, producing, directing and editing standpoint.
6. Students will learn professional collaboration practices by working with fellow students.
7. Students will learn professional film set standards and practices.

Course objectives
8. Understand the art and business of filmmaking.
9. Writing, producing, directing, and editing a short film.
10. Meeting deadlines.
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Each student will write, produce, direct, and edit their own short film; not to exceed 5 minutes in length with no more than 3 actors in the cast. Groups will not be assigned by the professor, but rather, students may pick their own groups. **Students are not allowed to make their film solely by themselves and must work with a group.** Students are encouraged to help others on their project and vice versa. All course assignments will address specific topics associated with the pre-production, production, and post-production of short films. All students in the course will complete assigned projects to develop the necessary skills, craftsmanship, creative input and output, and technical knowledge to create professional level short films. Industry standard vocabulary, set etiquette and protocol, crew hierarchy, software, camera, audio, and lighting equipment will be used in the production of all short films.

GRADING:

Scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 59 and below

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In order to be successful in this course, students will exhibit mastery of short film production through in-class and at-home exercises and preparation, planning, execution, and post-production of assigned projects. Project grades will be calculated based on the quality of writing, creativity, directing, production, technical execution, editing, meeting deadlines, and class participation.

All footage is to be shot before the mid-semester rough cut turn in date. (See Calendar below for turn in dates)

A Quiz will be given towards the latter part of the semester.

Students are encouraged to take notes to count towards class participation.

Students MUST meet deadlines for project due dates. If a project is not turned in by the deadline, you will receive an automatic F on the project.

All projects will be submitted via Dropbox in D2L. If you have trouble uploading to D2L, a private YouTube link (or any other acceptable form of submission) will suffice.

In-class critiques of projects are crucial. You MUST attend critique day or you will receive an automatic F on your project.
Students are encouraged to give feedback on their classmates’ projects on critique day in a respectful and constructive manner. All students will receive respectful and constructive criticism/feedback from their peers and the professor.

Having a good attitude and being respectful towards your peers and towards the professor is required. Disrupting the professor while they are giving lectures, demonstrations, critiques, etc will result in a lowering of your class participation grade. Examples of disruption are talking, laughing, listening to music, playing on the internet, playing on your phone, working on an outside project, sleeping, etc.

Attendance to scheduled class meetings is required and will affect your grade.

REQUIRED HARDWARE:

Portable hard drive for saving editing projects. (On critique day you will exhibit your project from your portable hard drive.)

DATA LOSS:

Students are responsible for the frequent and methodical back-up of their work over the course of the semester. Data loss from a lost, corrupted, and/or stolen hard drive CANNOT be used as an excuse for late or missing work. Students are responsible for the re-creation of any required files that go lost or missing. (NOTE*** It is commonplace within the industry to have a backup hard drive for all editing projects, in case of data loss. A second hard drive is not required for this course, but recommended.)

Basic film set focused tool kit:

Leather work gloves for hot lights
Screwdrivers (Phillips-head and flathead)
Utility knife with retractable blade
Crescent wrench
Metric and Imperial Hex wrenches
Lint free lens cleaning cloth
Flashlight
Markers (permanent and dry-erase)

FILMS TO BE SCREENED IN CLASS:

Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse (1991) – Dir. Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, Eleanor Coppola

A Simple Plan (1998) – Dir. Sam Raimi

RECOMMENDED FILMS (Will be discussed in class via lecture and/or specific scene and/or shot breakdowns. These films are NOT required, only recommended to be able to be familiar with them when discussed in class):

City Lights (1931) – Dir. Charlie Chaplin (SPOILER ALERT)

Casablanca (1942) – Dir. Michael Curtiz

The Third Man (1949) – Dir. Carol Reed

Roman Holiday (1953) – Dir. William Wyler (SPOILER ALERT)

The Barefoot Contessa (1954) – Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz
The French Connection (1971) – Dir. William Friedkin
Dog Day Afternoon (1975) – Dir. Sidney Lumet
Rocky (1976) – Dir. John G. Avildsen
Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) – Dir. Steven Spielberg
To Live and Die in L.A. (1985) – Dir. William Friedkin
The Color of Money (1986) – Dir. Martin Scorsese
Ghost (1990) – Dir. Jerry Zucker
Se7en (1995) – Dir. David Fincher
The Dark Knight (2008) – Dir. Christopher Nolan

RECOMMENDED READINGS (NOT required, but are informative books on filmmaking):

Film Directing Shot by Shot – Steven D. Katz
Film Production Management 101 – Deborah Patz
The Camera Assistant’s Manual – David Elkins
Set Lighting Technician’s Handbook – Harry C. Box
The Grip Book – Michael Uva
Running the Show: Guide to being a First AD – Liz Gill
Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting – Syd Fields
Save the Cat – Blake Snyder
Story – Robert McKee
How Not to Write a Screenplay – Denny Martin Flynn
Production Design for Screen – Jane Barnwell
The Art Direction Handbook for Film & Television – Michael Rizzo
In the Blink of an Eye – Walter Murch
Cartoon Animation – Preston Blair
Behind the Sound Cart – Patrushka Mierzwa
The Location Sound Bible – Ric Viers
Dialogue Editing for Motion Pictures – John Purcell
**COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

Near the conclusion of each semester, students in the School of Art electronically evaluate courses taken within the College of Fine Arts (COFA). As you evaluate this course, please be thoughtful, thorough, and accurate in completing the evaluation. Please know that the COFA faculty is committed to excellence in teaching and continued improvement. Therefore, your response is critical!

In the School of Art, the course evaluation process has been simplified and is completed electronically through MySFA. Although the instructor will be able to view the names of students who complete the survey, all ratings and comments are confidential and anonymous, and will not be available to the instructor until after final grades are posted.

**STUDENT ETHICS AND OTHER POLICY INFORMATION:**

**Attendance**

*School of Art Policy:* Class absences are not to exceed 6 contact hours in a studio class without consequence. A student will not receive credit for any studio class when missing 18 contact hours or more (this includes excused and unexcused absences).

*Course Policy:* Class attendance is mandatory; punctuality is expected. Attendance is taken in the first five minutes of class. If you are not present, you are marked tardy. If you do not arrive after another ten minutes, you are absent. Two tardies/early departures equal one unexcused absence.

Each unexcused absence beyond two unexcused absences will lower the student’s final grade by one letter. For Example: If a student has an A but has three unexcused absences, the student will receive a B. If four unexcused absences, the student will receive a C.

*Students with more than four absences will fail the course.* For Example: If the student has one excused absence and four unexcused absences, an F will be given. Or, if the student has three excused absences and two unexcused absences, an F will be given, and so on, and so on.

Students must provide acceptable documentation to the professor at the next class meeting for an absence to be excused. Excused/unexcused absences will be determined by the professor in accordance with university policy.

Absence during a critique day or failure to turn in an assignment will result in an automatic F for that assignment.

Students are responsible for making up missed work.

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/ inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**Health and Safety**
Filmmaking is a profession where people have been injured and killed in situations that could have been prevented. Filmmakers must always be aware of the dangers of the equipment being used, and the inherent dangers of certain locations. **NO SHOT IS WORTH INJURY OR DEATH FOR ANY CREW MEMBER, ACTOR, OR BYSTANDER.** Safety on set is everyone’s responsibility. Don’t let anyone pressure you into doing something that you feel is unsafe.

The use of real firearms, explosives, and electrical tie-ins is strictly prohibited and will result in a failing grade and removal from the SFA film program. The use of toy/prop/airsoft guns are allowed, but they must be stored and used off-campus. When using toy/prop/airsoft guns the people at the location must be informed. If filming in public, local authorities must be informed.

Firearm safety and protocols MUST be practiced on set, even with toy/prop/airsoft guns.

All stunts, including those using vehicles, must be presented to the professor for approval prior to filming.

**Academic Integrity**

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and
will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**Student Wellness and Well-Being**

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
ARTS 4352 Advanced Film Production

CALENDAR

*Subject to change

**January**

1/18 – Syllabus Intro;
   Framing / Staging (exercise);
   Pick a Screenshot
1/23 – Show Screenshots and Discuss;
   Facilities and Equipment Tour / Rules / Procedures (w/ handout sheet);
   Pitching a Film (lecture)
1/25 – **Pitch Day**
1/30 – Screenwriting (lecture)

**February**

2/1 – *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse* (screening)
2/6 – **Script Due**;
   Lighting (demo / exercise / sound stage)
2/8 – Directing Actors (lecture)
2/13 – Making Choices (demo / exercise / sound stage)
2/15 – Introducing a Character (screening / discussion)
2/20 – Visual Storytelling (lecture)
2/22 – Announce Quiz Date;
   Editing (lecture / demo)
2/27 – Producing your Film Part 1 (lecture)
2/29 – Producing your Film Part 2 (lecture)

**March**

3/5 – Producing your Film Part 3 (lecture)
3/7 – **Rough Cut Due**;
   Producing your Film Part 4 (lecture)
3/19 – Rough Cut Critique Part 1 (screening / discussion)
3/21 – Rough Cut Critique Part 2 (screening / discussion)
3/26 – Quiz;
      Music / Composer (lecture)

April
4/2 – Evoking Emotion (screening / discussion)
4/4 – Video Lockdown Due;
      Color Correction (demo)
4/9 – A Simple Plan (screening)
4/11 – Color Correction Due;
      Audio Mix (demo)
4/16 – TBD
4/18 – Audio Mix Due;
      TBD
4/23 – Distribution (lecture)
4/25 – Deliverables (lecture)
4/30 – Final Project Due;
      Class Discussion

May
5/2 – The Art of the Chase Scene (screening / discussion)
5/7 – Final Project Critique (screening / discussion)