

DC 205
FOUNDATIONS OF CINEMA
Online

INSTRUCTOR: Gary Novak
Office: CDM 405
Office Hours: Thu. 1:30 - 3:00 PM
Phone: 312-362-7200
E-mail: gnovak@cim.depaul.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course deals with the craft, technology, and aesthetic principles of media production. Drawing heavily on a wide array of historical examples, the course will examine the many expressive strategies potentially usable in the creation of moving image art forms: image construction and manipulation, editing, composition, sound, narrative, and performance. An emphasis will be placed on story and storytelling. In addition to analyzing the works of others, students will also produce their own projects – putting theory into practice.

The following topics will be covered:

- The importance of story and controlling ideas
- Storytelling with images
- The basics of composition and editing theory
- The basics of lighting and sound design
- A comparison of narratives, documentaries, the avante garde

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to analyze cinematic texts in terms of structure, the framed image, sound, and image sequence.

Students should also be able to:

- Identify and describe specific forms or genres in different disciplines.
- Explain what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
- Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
- Assess the formal aspects of their subject using specialized vocabulary.
- Consider the original audience of a work of art and how their expectations differ from our own.
- Explain how aesthetic elements comprise a particular style in the arts.

LEARNING DOMAIN:

This course has Arts & Literature Liberal Studies Credit. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts while developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity, come to better understand the original audience that witnessed a work of art and how its meaning and significance changes over time. These courses focus on works of art or literature, however the process of analysis may include social, cultural, and historical issues. Genres covered in this domain include literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music, and theater.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Easy Riders, Raging Bulls by Peter Biskind
Understanding Movies by Louis Giannetti

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS:

Blank DVD's or a flash drive
Access to a still camera

COURSE POLICIES:

-Attendance:

Each week's class consists of lectures and screenings; attendance is mandatory. For the purposes of this class an absence is defined as not showing up for class or showing up 15 minutes, or more, late for a class. All absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

-Assignments & Exercises:

Assignments and production exercises must be completed by the date to which they are assigned in the syllabus. Reasonable deadlines are given for completion for each assignment/exercise. Consequently late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

-Examinations:

Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be administered by the College according to its make-up exam schedule.

-Plagiarism:

Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you are in doubt about the definitions of plagiarism, consult your student handbook.

-Course Lectures/Reading Assignments:

Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lecture presentations. The instructor will use both the classroom and the readings. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

-Vandalism:

This one is extremely important. Handle all equipment with care. Do not abuse or vandalize any equipment in or out of class. Vandalism includes any intentional or unreasonable damage to the equipment or facilities available for the course. If you consistently or recklessly mishandle equipment or keep equipment overdue, you will receive a failing grade for the class and will be responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule.

-Content Changes:

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

-Sexual Harassment:

The policy as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this class.

GRADING:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Production Exercise #1 or Analysis Assignment #1	5%
Production Exercise #2 or Analysis Assignment #2	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Written Assignments	25%
Final Project or Final Exam	30%

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE AND REQUIREMENTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORY/IDEAS

- Early film history
- Societal impact of early cinema
- Emergence of story

Read: Biskind - Introduction, Ch. 1

WEEK TWO

STORYTELLING WITH IMAGES

- The silent era
- Cinematic language

COMPOSITION

- Mise en scene
- The images within the frame
- Rules v. guidelines
- How the eye navigates the frame

Production Exercise #1: Composition – Outside of class, students will shoot a series of still photos adhering to the rules of composition.

-or-

Analysis Assignment #1: Composition – Critique and analyze the still images posted on D2L according to the rules of composition.

Read: Biskind - Ch. 2, 3
Giannetti - Ch. 2

WEEK THREE

LIGHTING

- Lighting Basics
- Traditional Hollywood Style
- Expressionism & Film Noir
- Visions of Light

EDITING

- The search for meaning
- Traditional Hollywood style
- The Soviets & Montage
- Breaking the rules

Written Assignment #1: Write a detailed analytical critique of a scene from a selected motion picture. Focus on the compositional, lighting, and editing choices the filmmakers made. (3 to 4 pages)

Read: Biskind - Ch. 4, 5
Giannetti - Ch. 1, 3, 4

WEEK FOUR

EXPERIMENTAL & THE AVANTE GARDE

- History and tradition
- Filmmaker as “Artist”
- Surrealism & Dada
- Freudian dream logic
- Altered states of consciousness

Read: Biskind - Ch. 6, 7
Giannetti - Ch 5

WEEK FIVE

DOCUMENTARIES

- What is a documentary?
- Non-fiction v. documentary
- History of documentaries
- Direct Cinema
- Cinema Verite

Production Exercise #2: City Symphony (Music Video) - Your video will be a city symphony or music video. Pick a theme for your symphony/video – for example: commerce, people, transportation, architecture, poverty, or lakefront. Your video should have at least 20 shots and be set to a piece of music of your choosing. All shots must be tripod, locked down, no camera movement. So, every composition should be well planned and thought out. Burn your video to DVD or post your video on Vimeo (online students). Due Week 7.

-or-

Analysis Assignment #2: The Documentary - Critique and analyze a documentary film using the criteria provided. (3 to 4 pages)

Read: Biskind - Ch. 8, 9

WEEK SIX

MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK SEVEN

NARRATIVES

- Basic structure
- Production logistics
- Shooting styles
- Editing
- Fantasy meets reality

ASSIGN FINAL PROJECT

Final Project: Narrative Short – Students will shoot a short dramatic sequence. Everyone will work in teams with each person taking a specific role: Producer, Director, DP, Editor, Production Designer, and Talent.

-or-

Portrait Film – Create a short, visual and audio portrait of a friend, loved one, or parent. Try to capture some aspect of that person that you find interesting – their humor, energy, craziness, sincerity, whatever.

Written Assignment #2: Write a detailed treatment explaining your ideas for the final project. Include the reasons for your stylistic choices. Also, include a suggested production schedule. (1 to 2 pages)

Read: Biskind - Ch. 10, 11
Giannetti - Ch. 6

WEEK EIGHT

SCREEN CITY SYMPHONIES

Read: Biskind - Ch. 12, 13
Giannetti - Ch. 7, 8, 9

Written Assignment #3: Shooting scripts & Storyboards – For the scene assigned in class, develop a shooting script and storyboards. On the shooting script, designate specific shots. Visualize the scene. How do you plan on covering the action? For the storyboards, be as detailed as possible. During the actual shoot, you can deviate from both the storyboards and the shooting script; however, you must be able to justify your changes. (3 to 4 pages for script)

WEEK NINE

THE STORYTELLER

- The filmmaker
- The director
- Independent voices

Read: Biskind - Ch. 14
Giannetti - Ch. 10, 11, 12

Final Essay: Motion Pictures are a collaborative art form; however, many of the best films can be considered personal films. This essay will focus on this issue. The details of the assignment will be discussed in class. (5 to 7 pages)

WEEK TEN

TELEVISION

- Early television
- Influence of technology
- The seventies & eighties
- Contemporary trends

TELEVISION VERSUS MOVIES

- Contrasting styles
- Contrasting approaches
- Sitcoms
- Dramas

WEEK ELEVEN

FINAL PROJECTS & FINAL EXAM

- If you chose the Final Project option, your project must be in my hand or posted on Vimeo by the start of the scheduled Final Exam time.
- If you opted for the Final Exam, this is when you would take the exam.
- NO EXCEPTIONS unless arranged ahead of time.

FINAL ESSAYS DUE

SCREEN PROJECTS