



School of Cinematic Arts
Winter Quarter
DC 470 – EXPERIMENTAL FILMMAKING

INSTRUCTOR:	Brian Zahm	SECTION: 502
OFFICE HOURS:	TUE 1:30-4:30pm	CLASS #: 27371
OFFICE LOCATION:	CDM 455	CLASS TIMES: TH 2:00-5:15pm
E-MAIL:	bzahm@cdm.depaul.edu	CLASS LOCATION: Cinespace Stg 15

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to *Experimental Filmmaking*, what hopefully will be a pivotal course in your cinematic evolution. Experimental film is often described as cinematic poetry, sometimes as a fever dream, but is always an experience outside “traditional” narrative filmmaking boundaries. Make no mistake, experimental filmmaking techniques have informed and pushed the full scope of motion picture media evolution, from traditional Hollywood narrative film to commercials, documentary and music video (and even cat-videos!>) In this production-based class, through lectures and screenings, you will be exposed to groundbreaking filmmakers and their work. Ultimately, you will be pushed to break free of traditional cinematic boundaries and play with the film form (except we’re using digital video:) through non-traditional means—*sculpt light and sound and redefine time in an attempt to discover something new about film and yourself as a creator*. Experimental filmmaking comes with a lot of freedom, but know it can be much more challenging than traditional narrative filmmaking that is centered on standard form and tropes. *Bottom line, I sincerely hope you’re excited to be here and to get at least a wee-bit “out there.”*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- » Understand the language of experimental cinema as it relates to the sculpting of light and sound to express a theme or portray a time-oriented energy.
- » Analyze experimental film’s history and connections to the evolution of all forms of motion-picture media.
- » Evaluate work through contextual-based critique.
- » Apply experimental techniques to film exercises and projects.
- » Create original experimental material for demo reels and film festivals.

PREREQUISITES

DC 210 – Digital Cinema Production 1***

***Or Graduate Course Equivalent

REQUIRED TEXT

- » **DESIRE2LEARN** (D2L): Some additional readings and weblinks will be posted on D2L.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- » **EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE:** You will need some form of memory drive to store the work you create for class. And please note, you are responsible for backing up all of your work!

CLASS EQUIPMENT ACCESS***

Students are allowed to use the following equipment for this class: JVC Camera, Canon XF100, Canon DSLR, Canon C100, wired and wireless lavs, standard and specialty shotguns, handheld mics, handheld recorders, Sound Devices mixers and recorders, all tripods, Filmlux LED Kits and Arri Kits. All of this can be accessed through "The Cage."

****If you wish to use any other equipment, you are required to fill out a "Special Request" Form at The Cage. If you take this step, do this as far in advance as you can and please be nice to those hardworking folks.*

PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- » **FreePlayMusic.com** is a great place to obtain ROYALTY FREE MUSIC for student work. Simply put your selected music in the shopping cart and select STUDENT or YOUTUBE project and it's FREE!
- » **SCA's ACTOR DATABASE** is a great casting resource. Simply go here:
[http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current Students/Pages/Production-Resources.aspx](http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Production-Resources.aspx) - under CASTING & CREW.
- » **BreakdownExpress.com** is an interactive on-line casting tool that enables you to send out a casting notice to regional Chicagoland actors and set-up/manage audition appointments on-line. See the production office staff for help setting this up.
- » **LYNDA.com** is a useful collection of video tutorials specially for learning various software programs. All DePaul students have free access to Lynda.

ASSIGNMENTS / GRADING (Totals 1000pts)

- » **ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:** 15% (Individual)
You must attend class for your benefit, and that of your peers. This class is driven by the interaction of classmates during critique and to inspire and inform creativity.
- » **FILM + GUEST ARTIST JOURNAL:** 15% (Individual)
This is a journal of reactions to films screened in class and guest artists' work. You are required to write about 50% of the class screenings and ALL guest artists and their work. GRADUATES will be required to write at least 5-10 sentences (no more than half a page) about each film.
- » **"ALTERED IMAGE" FILM:** 15% (Individual)
This is a short film that should feature images altered during production.
- » **"CINEMATIC SUBVERSION" FILM:** 15% (Individual)
This is a short film that should feature subverted content meaning through design and assembly, dissonance, juxtaposition and/or formalized "submission" technique.
- » **"FESTIVAL" FILM PITCH:** 5% (Individual or Group)
This is a pitch for your final film project—the "Festival" Film. Your pitch should be a brief abstract of your film's form and intent, as well as audio and visual examples that inspire your creative vision.
- » **"FESTIVAL" FILM:** 35% (Individual or Group)
The cornerstone of this class will be the creation of a final short experimental film of your choosing that is intended for film festival entry and distribution (a Vimeo Site should also be established to promote your cinematic work).

A = 100-93, A- = 92.9-90, B+ = 89.9-87, B = 86.9-83, B- = 82.9-80, C+ = 79.9-77, C = 76.9-73,
C- = 72.9-70, D+ = 69.9-67, D = 66.9-63, D- = 62.9-60, F = 59.9+Below.

"A" indicates Excellence, "B" indicates Very Good, "C" indicates Satisfactory,
"D" indicates Poor, "F" indicates the student has NOT accomplished the objectives of the course.

GRADING POLICY

Professional filmmakers must adhere to strict deadlines. Students are expected to turn in all assignments by the established deadlines (submit early is my best advice). **LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. I will not accept the excuse of technological failure or absent-mindedness (you all have phones...set alarms for due dates). *Back up your work and do not leave your work until the last second!* This is your warning. All grades will be kept current on D2L.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be on time, and if you plan on missing or being late to a class are expected to e-mail the instructor **BEFORE** that particular class. The instructor reserves the right to determine whether an absence or tardy is "excused." **Unexcused absences or tardiness will negatively affect your grade.** Please see ***Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office*** at the end of the syllabus to see how your grade will be affected. Attendance will be kept current on D2L. If you want to question a recorded absence or tardiness, it must be done within a week of the recorded occurrence.

COMPUTER/CELLPHONE/I-PAD ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

If you are using any personal or school electronic equipment during class for anything other than class-related work, *you will be asked to leave and will be counted as absent for that class.*

E-MAIL POLICY

You are expected to read all e-mails from the class instructor because you are responsible to know the information they contain. *So, you should check your e-mail at least once every 24 hours!*

Type **EXPERIMENTAL** in the subject of all e-mails to the instructor about this class. Please **DO NOT JUST REPLY** to my all-class e-mails because your response might get lost in the shuffle—*Send me an individual e-mail. I will do my best to get back to you in short order, but please allow up to 24hrs for the instructor to respond.*

PROJECT FILE LABELING + FORMAT POLICY

Label all Files as Such (ex. Student is CHICK STRAND and she is submitting the "ALTERED IMAGE" FILM): **STRAND_ALTERED IMAGE**

*All Projects should be submitted in **H.264** format (due to file size constraints on D2L)! **Projects NOT labeled properly or submitted in the proper format WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. This is your warning!!!***

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

All work submitted for this class should be original work made specifically for this class. If you are found to be submitting work you have made for another class you will receive zero credit for that particular assignment.

I will grade the first project file that is submitted. Check and double-check the work you are submitting. Do not submit the wrong file, an incomplete file, a corrupted file, etc. Submit the correct project file by each deadline. Most work will be submitted through D2L Dropbox. Do not leave this until the last second—upload several hours before the deadline to be safe! Using Mozilla Firefox (Safari and Chrome have trouble many times) to upload work, along with a faster internet connection should make uploading a breeze. *Again, no late work is accepted! AND you should always double-check that your file has been successfully uploaded to D2L!*

SAFETY DURING PRODUCTION

- » Any filmed footage, which reveals an action, or stunt that puts actors and/or crew and bystanders in physical danger will result in the student's automatic failure of the assignment. The instructor will determine those actions that are defined as unsafe.
- » THE USE OF GUNS AND WEAPONS IS FORBIDDEN in this class and results in the student's automatic failure of the assignment. Any realistic depiction of a gun, whether or not the gun is real or a replica, whether the gun fires real bullets, blanks, is disabled, or even if it is a toy, is forbidden for any production related to this course.
- » Using moving vehicles of any kind involving actors or stunt in any shot is not allowed and will result in the student's automatic failure of the assignment.

WORK WITH CAUTION & RESPECT THE SCHOOL'S EQUIPMENT & POLICIES

Film/video production areas in general can be hazardous. First and foremost, make sure you work safely. Have spotters holding ladders, always making sure you have someone to help you out in rigging situations. And remember, the lights get extremely hot so wear gloves when working with them. And all lighting runs off of electricity (AMPS=Watts/Volts), so you must always look out for potentially hazardous situations. On set, make sure all cables are kept orderly and run along walls, under furniture, and are properly secured to ensure no harm comes to yourselves or the school's equipment. And never leave the equipment in a car. One it can get stolen, but two temperature extremes are very hard on equipment. *Remember, if you lose or damage the school's equipment, you will need to pay for its replacement (See-Check Out Policy).* And don't forget to turn in all equipment on time or you will be subject to fines! And please respect the school's property and your shooting locations. Mounting, rigging, taping etc. can all cause damage to property, so work with the utmost caution and care. And finally, there is a lot of heavy lifting in production, so lift with your knees and get some help—there's no need to be a hero. The bottom line is THINK BEFORE YOU ACT. Don't hesitate to ask me if you aren't sure about something, in or out of class. AND please treat all the equipment room employees with respect!

FILM + VIDEO CONTENT "TRIGGER" WARNING

A full spectrum of award-winning motion-picture content will be shown in class with the hope that it will inform, enlighten and inspire you. If you are highly sensitive to any particular kind of cinematic content (including "strobe" type cinematic delivery), please inform the instructor via email ASAP and you will be excused from watching said content.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

All assigned readings are to be completed by the following class. All assignments have strict **DUE** deadlines noted in the schedule. **Late work is NOT accepted!**

CLASS 01_January 5th

LECTURE: Syllabus Review + Intro to Experimental
SCREENING: Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film
ASSIGN: "Altered Image" Film

CLASS 02_January 12th

LECTURE + DEMO: Creating Altered Images
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Short Films (featuring Altered Images)

CLASS 03_January 19th

LECTURE: Introduction to The American Avante-Garde
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: American Avante-Garde Films

DUE: January 24th by 3pm via D2L > DROPBOX > [ALTERED IMAGE_FILM + GRADESHEET](#)

CLASS 04_January 26th

SCREENING + CRITIQUE: "Altered Image" Films
LECTURE: Subversion of the Cinematic Form
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Short Films (Montages, Mash-Ups + Mockeries)
ASSIGN: "Cinematic Subversion" Film

CLASS 05_February 2nd

GUEST SPEAKER: Lectures on their Area of Experimental Film Expertise
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Guest Speaker Selects
NOTE: This class is subject to change if we've run behind due to higher class enrollment!

DUE: February 8th by 3pm via D2L > DROPBOX > [CINEMATIC SUBVERSION + GRADESHEET](#)

CLASS 06_February 9th

SCREENING + CRITIQUE: "Cinematic Subversion" Film
LECTURE: Modern Alternative Cinema
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Short Alternative Films
ASSIGN: "Festival" Film

CLASS 07_February 16th

PITCH: Pitch "Festival" Film
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Potpourri of Shorts

CLASS 08_February 23rd

GUEST SPEAKER: Lectures on their Area of Experimental Film Expertise
SCREENING + DISCUSSION: Guest Speaker Selects

CLASS 09_March 2nd

DUE: Film + Guest Artist Journals
SCREENING + CRITIQUE: Table Screenings of Dailies

CLASS 10_March 9th

DUE: Rough Cuts of "Festival" Film
SCREENING + CRITIQUE: "Festival" Film Rough Cuts

DUE: March 14th by 1pm via D2L>DROPBOX>[FESTIVAL_FILM + GRADESHEETS \(w/ Vimeo Link to Collected Work\)](#)

FINAL EXAM PERIOD_March 16th 2:30-4:45pm

SCREENING + CRITIQUE: "Festival" Film

Note On Requirements (and the Syllabus in General)

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, and posted on D2L. AS A MEMBER OF THIS CLASS, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO KNOW AND FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES SET FORTH ON THE TOTALITY OF THIS SYLLABUS. These guidelines are established to ensure all students know what is expected of them, and so all students are treated equally by being held to the same standards.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296

Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration.

Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student.

The overall grade for Attendance & Participation drops one-third after any absence (50pts). Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers.

Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion. Attitude: A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

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Civil Discourse: DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be **Socially Responsible Leaders**. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Cell Phones/On Call: If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.