

Course: DC 310

Instructor: John Psathas

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DC 310: Production II

Course Description

This course expands on topics covered in DC 210: Production I. Students will refine their skills in the areas of line-producing, pre-production, cinematography, lighting, sound recording, and post production work flow.

Course Goals:

- Develop essential pre-production materials to support a project
- Ability to produce and complete several short films that demonstrate an understanding of story and genre conventions, technical proficiency, creative ambition and an increasing understanding of camera, editing, lighting and sound aesthetics
- Knowledge of resources and industry infrastructure within Chicago needed to create a professional film
- Knowledge of industry standard budgeting and scheduling software needed to effectively and accurately budget a short film, from pre-pro through post

The goal of this course is to help students develop their own individual style and voices as filmmakers through constant practice of the craft on a variety of projects. Students will collaborate and produce several short (5-10 minute) films in a manner that mimics industry expectations with highly accelerated time tables. These short film assignments are designed to push students in terms of creativity and project management. Students will engage in repeated and swift pre-production processes, including but not limited to: script workshopping, script breakdowns, budgeting, storyboarding, assembling a crew, location scouting, etc. Every student will be required to serve in a capacity integral to the creation of a film (if not directing, then producing, acting and lighting/shooting). In a workshop environment, students will also be expected to constructively critique the projects of their classmates and the work of their fellow team members. A highly challenging and rigorous course, this class will require solid time management, teamwork, communication, organization and problem solving skills.

Prerequisites*

DC 210: Digital Cinema Production I

DC 220: Editing I

DC 275: Cinematography

DC 215: Introduction to Sound Design

**If you have not fulfilled the prerequisites, you will find this class very challenging. You may not understand what is being asked of you and it will diminish your educational experience. I strongly encourage you to take this class when all prerequisites have been fulfilled.*

Textbooks and Printed Resources

Handouts provided by the Instructor.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

How Not to Make a Short Film: Secrets From A Sundance Programmer, First Edition

Author: Roberta Marie Munroe

Publisher: Hachette Books

ISBN: 978-140130954

An interesting book in terms of discussing what film festival programmers see year in and year out- with some insight on how to tell a story that will stand out from the crowd. The majority of the book is devoted to some pretty standard filmmaking advice (i.e. hire the best crew and have a lot of money) but seeing the film through a festival's eyes is immensely helpful.

Inside Track for Independent Filmmakers, First Edition

Author: Adam Leipzig

Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin's

ISBN: 978-1319013189

Written by a former producer, studio executive and financier, this is a great book for an understanding of the "business" of filmmaking. It has a clear but comprehensive description of the process that investors, financiers, studios and distributors go through when weighing projects as well as step-by-step instructions on how to make your project as appealing as possible, starting at the very beginning. When you find yourself at the initial stages of developing a project that you'd like sell or distribute down the road, this book is a must.

Filmmaking in Action: Your Guide to the Skills and Craft, First Edition

Authors: Adam Leipzig, Barry S. Weiss & Michael Goldman

Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin's

ISBN: 978-0312616991

A fantastic, up-to-date and comprehensive "bible" of film and video production for the beginning filmmaker, this is an indispensable guide to making movies. It's a clear and comprehensive handbook and is a reliable and current reference for all aspects of filmmaking. It will be a tremendous supplement to the in-class lectures/demos and will help with time tested approaches to your projects (now and into the future).

The Filmmaker's Eye: Learning (and Breaking) the Rules of Cinematic Composition

Author: Gustavo Mercado

Publisher: Focal Press

ISBN: 978-0240812175

This is a very special book, ideal for anyone involved with the creation and assembly of moving images. It shows how nothing in a motion picture frame should be taken for granted.

Supplies

REQUIRED:

1 External Hard drive (500 GB minimum)

1 USB flashdrive for project backups and submissions (8 GB)

Grip Gloves

SUGGESTED:

Audio- Closed Back Headphones (no earbuds)

G&E- Multi-tool, Flashlight, Gaff Tape, Black Wrap, Gels, Diffusion

Camera- Lens Tissue, Lens Fluid, Lens Cloth, Lens Blower Bulb, Allen Wrench tool, Paper Tape, Sharpie, MEMORY CARDS

Additional Costs

Producing digital content is rarely a cheap endeavor. Such costs will potentially include items for art direction (costumes, make-up, set decoration), production (gaff tape, black wrap, camera media), post-production (primary external hard drives and a back-up) and general necessities (transportation costs and craft services). As a general guideline, all project budgets should include a 10% contingency fee that will help account for cost overruns.

Software

This course will use discuss EP's Budget and Scheduling as part of it's lectures. These industry standard programs are available in several of the CDM Mac classrooms and labs. They are explored in depth in DC 323: Pre-Production.

Course Management System

D2L

<https://d2l.depaul.edu>

Additional Website Content

Netflix

www.netflix.com

Hulu

www.hulu.com

Vimeo

www.vimeo.com

Short of the Week

www.shortoftheweek.com

Grading

Assignment 1	15%
Assignment 2	15%
Assignment 3	15%
Assignment 4	15%
Assignment 5	20%
Class attendance and participation	20%

LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Grading Scale:

93-100: A	90-92: A-		A indicates excellence
87-89: B+	83-86: B	80- 82: B-	B indicates good work
77-79: C +	73-76: C	70-72: C -	C indicates satisfactory work
67-69: D +	60-66: D		D work is unsatisfactory in some respect
65-0: F			F is substantially unsatisfactory work

Assignments

Assignments 1 - 5: In groups, students will write, produce and edit 5 POLISHED short films every two weeks. Each assignment will have specific restrictions in terms of genre, style and technique that must be adhered to. Aside from Assignment 1, students will choose their own groups for each assignment and are encouraged to work in new groups for each film. The roles will be up to the group members' discretion but students should rotate positions between projects. As an advanced course, grading of these films will be rigorous and based on story, style, aesthetics, technique and execution. Students should consider these films as prime candidates for their demo reels (directing, editing, cinematography, production design, sound design) and their final cuts should reflect that goal.

Schedule

**All assigned readings are to be completed by the following class.*

Week 1	(1/6) Introduction and Course Expectations. <i>The Five Obstructions</i> - how restrictions can feed creativity. Genre and Conventions, speaking the language of film. Mastery - Why are Shorts important? Groups assigned, Project 1. ASSIGNMENT: Assignment 1 READ: <i>How Not to Make a Short – Pg. 24 - 44</i> <i>Filmmaking in Action – Pg. 19 - 31</i>
Week 2	(1/13) Pre-Production and initial steps, Pre-Visualization, and Attainable Goals. THE BRACKET AND TOURNAMENT. Group meetings.
Week 3	(1/20) Screening and discussion of Assignment 1. Directing, Writing. What makes something comedy? Juxtaposition and Contrast. Visual comedy. Scripted vs. Improv DUE: Assignment 1 ASSIGNMENT: Assignment 2 READ: <i>How Not to Make a Short – Pg. 1 - 23, 120 - 131</i> <i>Filmmaking in Action – Pg. 43 - 67, 97-118</i>
Week 4	(1/27) EP Budget and Scheduling, Budgeting Resources, Production Insurance and What/Who you need to know about filming in Chicago. Group Meetings. SCREEN: The Competition
Week 5	(2/3) Screening and discussion of Assignment 2. Story, Tone. What makes something Suspenseful? Avoiding cliché and engaging your audience. Plot driven films, holding interest and withholding information. Misdirection. DUE: Assignment 2 ASSIGNMENT: Assignment 3 READ: <i>Filmmaking in Action – Pg. 199 - 247</i>

- Week 6** (2/10)
Taste- why do we like something? Critical thinking about film and filmmakers, reflections in our own work. Unintentional vs. Intentional messages. Film school analysis (intellectual elitism) vs. storytelling (i.e. it's ok to like movies). Filmmaking as a journey. Group Meetings.
- SCREEN:** The Competition
- Week 7** (2/17)
Screening of Assignment 3. Having a look that defines your film. Production Design. What makes something Sci-Fi? How to achieve a genre's look with no money.
- DUE:** *Assignment 3*
ASSIGNMENT: *Assignment 4*
READ: *Filmmaking in Action – Pg. 69 - 96*
- Week 8** (2/24)
Characters and Representation. Do they mean anything? How do they define them? Visual introduction of character and definition through action. Audience perspective and the audience as author. Group Meetings.
- SCREEN:** The Competition
- Week 9** (3/2)
Screening of Assignment 4. Mythology and Message - what is the message of a film? Following the North Star. Subtlety and Storytelling - when do we stop mimicking and start telling?
- DUE:** *Assignment 4*
ASSIGNMENT: *Assignment 5*
READ: *How Not to Make a Short – Pg. 173-198*
- Week 10** (3/9)
Is having a good film enough? Festivals strategies and the market, digital distribution. Producing today - being a filmmaker and the professional environment. Group Meetings.
- DUE:** Rough Cuts screened in class (Vimeo link uploaded to D2L)
SCREEN: The Competition
- Week 11** **FINALS WEEK**
Exam date and time: **WEDNESDAY, MAY 16th 2:00pm - 5:00 p.m.**
- DUE:** *Assignment 5*
- Attendance at the scheduled final is mandatory- no exceptions.**

Course Policies

Student responsibilities and the Syllabus:

Each student is responsible for their time management and for meeting the all expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines listed on the syllabus. In the event of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor regarding the absence and remain up-to-date regarding the topics covered in class. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus, students are still responsible for completing the assignment on time. I will not accept excuses for ignoring class or project obligations.

Attendance:

Each weeks class consists of lectures and screenings; attendance is mandatory. All absences will result in a reduction of the participation grade. Students are allowed one (1) unexcused absence. Each additional absence will result in a full letter grade deduction from your final grade. Excessive tardiness (more than 10 minutes late) will also be penalized. Excused absences are handled through the Dean of Students Office after completing an Absence Notification Form [here](#).

Group Evaluations:

All of the assignments in this class will require you to work in a team. After each assignment, each group member is required to turn in a written evaluation of their team members. If all evaluations are uniformly positive, all group members will share the grades; if evaluations are negative, the grades of the group member's in question will be docked. These evaluations will be **HEAVILY** factored into your grade for each assignment.

Deadlines:

Video production requires strict adherence to deadlines, therefore late assignments will not be accepted for grading without prior consent of the Instructor. To be clear, this prior consent is not only rare, it is only given days in advance of the due date, not hours. You will not be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

Phones, Texting, Facebook, Email, Chatting:

NO. Do not surf the web during class. You will be asked to leave and considered absent. If you must use a cell phone or electronic device for any reason, leave the classroom.

Food Policy:

No food or beverages are allowed on the Stage- please leave it outside.

Email Policy:

Please type **DC 310 PRODUCTION II** in the subject of all e-mails to the instructor about this class to ensure that they are responded to in a timely fashion.

Assignment & Project Labeling/Format Policy:

Please label all assignments as NAME_ASSIGNMENT (ex. PSATHAS_ASSIGNMENT_1.mov).

Assignment Submission Policy:

All films should be submitted with a **working Vimeo link** that enables the **video to be downloaded**. Projects not submitted in the proper format or properly labeled **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. Do not submit the wrong file, an incomplete file, a corrupted file, etc. Submit the correct project file through D2L by each deadline. **Do not leave this until the last second**. You should upload several hours before the deadline to be safe. No late work will be accepted.

Cinespace Campus:

Please make sure you arrive on time for the transportation bus from the Loop Campus. The bus leaves 30 minutes before class starts. When on the Cinespace Chicago Film Studios Campus, make sure you have your DePaul ID. When on the Cinespace campus, please respect the production facility as well as those working around and within. Guidelines for travel to and from Cinespace, reserving equipment, shooting on the stage and contact info can be found on the Production Resources Website [here](#).

Equipment Checkout Policies:

Students are expected to follow all equipment policies when checking out gear from the Cage, Stage or Cinespace. All of these policies can be found under "[Equipment](#)" on the Production Resources Website.

REQUIRED Cinespace Orientation and Set Safety Training:

Students who have not shot at Cinespace before MUST complete a Cinespace Orientation and Set Safety Workshop prior to being allowed to do so. An email to students with more information is forthcoming. If you have any questions, or need to schedule a workshop, please contact cinespace@cdm.depaul.edu.

Use of Prop Firearms:

Rules and regulations MUST be followed when using prop firearms. The instructor must approve the appearance of a prop gun in any student film. An approved/signed Prop Firearm Request Form must be submitted to the Production Office prior to filming. It can be found under "[Equipment](#)" on the Production Resources Website.

ABC - Always Be Careful:

Film and video production shoots can be hazardous. Above all, work safely in all situations and always think before you act. Please don't hesitate to ask me if you're unsure about anything regarding your shoot, in or out of class.

Original Work:

All work submitted for this class should be original and 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.

Academic Integrity Violations:

Plagiarism or cheating on assignments or 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 or cheating, consult your student handbook and the University's Academic Integrity Policy. All students will be held to the Code of Student Responsibility.

Content Changes:

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require alteration or rescheduling. You will be notified of all changes. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L, and/or sent via email. As the quarter progresses, some items may change at the instructors discretion, but the overall workload will not. Make sure you pace yourself accordingly.

Classroom Decorum and the Student Handbook:

All policies as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this class. Please be respectful of your fellow students and their work.

University Policies

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: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

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.

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