



School of Cinematic Arts  
Fall Quarter  
**DC 376 – VISUAL DESIGN**

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<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b>	Brian Zahm	<b>SECTION:</b>	401
<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b>	W 5:00-8:00pm	<b>CLASS #:</b>	12462
<b>OFFICE LOCATION:</b>	CDM 455	<b>CLASS TIMES:</b>	TH 1:15-4:30 PM
<b>E-MAIL:</b>	bzahm@cdm.depaul.edu	<b>CLASS LOCATION:</b>	PST16 Cinespace

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to DC 376: Visual Design. In this class you will learn how to structure your visuals as carefully as a writer structures a story or a composer structures music. Understanding visual design allows you to communicate moods and emotions, and most importantly, reveals the critical relationship between story structure and visual structure. This class relies on both experiential and theoretical study. The experiential side will be explored through photo and film assignments. The theoretical side will be explored through the analysis of a feature film's visual design. This class will be very challenging, but hopefully rewarding as it accelerates your cinematic/artistic evolution.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- » UNDERSTAND the elements of visual design employed in film (as cinematic language).
- » ANALYZE visual design components used in contemporary film.
- » IDENTIFY and graph film's visual structure as it corresponds to dramatic structure.
- » APPLY visual design elements to the creation of a short film.
- » CREATE cinematic work for demo reels and portfolios.

### PREREQUISITES\*

DC 220: Editing 1

\*If you have not fulfilled the prerequisites, you may 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.

### REQUIRED TEXT

- » [THE VISUAL STORY: CREATING THE VISUAL STRUCTURE OF FILM, TV AND DIGITAL MEDIA \(SECOND EDITION\)](#) by Bruce Block (ISBN: 9780240807799)

This book is an indispensable reference/learning guide (and hopefully rife with inspiration). You must read this book!!! It's awesome, important, essential—all the things! This book will heavily supplement the class lectures and demos and contains essential knowledge for you to have success in this course and in your careers.

- » **DESIRE2LEARN (D2L):** Some additional readings will be posted on D2L under CONTENT in folders that correspond to the class number. These mandatory readings are meant to supplement the textbooks and lectures. *This will also be used as a course management system.*

### 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!* You will need some form of external drive to store your project files on.

## SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

» You might need gloves to handle lighting equipment. And I would highly recommend (but this is not required) having on set, a MULTI-TOOL, FLASHLIGHT, GAFF TAPE, BLACK WRAP, COLOR-CORRECTION GELS/DIFFUSION (you can check out gels from The Cage) for general lighting/grip work. On set, for any sort of camera work, I would recommend LENS TISSUE, LENS FLUID, LENS CLOTH, LENS BLOWER BULB, FLASHLIGHT, ALLEN WRENCH, GAFF TAPE, PAPER TAPE, SHARPIE and your own memory cards/devices to record to, especially if you're using an SD or CF cards! For any sort of camera/audio recording, you should make sure the SD card has a "Class 10" Rating.

## 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 on-set food/drinks). All project budgets should include a 10% contingency fee that will help account for cost overruns. With group projects, it is suggested that all costs should be shared equally among group members.

## PRODUCTION RESOURCES

» **SCA's PRODUCTION RESOURCES WEBPAGE** is a very convenient and informative site that points you to information about producing projects (facility hours/ equipment/ casting/location insurance/equipment/room reservations) with DePaul's resources. Simply go here: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Production-Resources.aspx>

» **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!

» **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 if you need help setting this up.

» **Backstage.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 if you need help setting this up.

» **SCA's ACTOR DATABASE** is a great casting resource. Under CASTING & CREW you will find hundreds of actors looking for work in student films who come into the Quarterly Casting Sessions. <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/CurrentStudents/Pages/Production-Resources.aspx>

» **LYNDA.com** is a useful collection of video tutorials specially for learning various software programs. All DePaul students have free access to Lynda. <https://offices.depaul.edu/information-services/services/technology-training/Pages/online-training.aspx>

» **VIMEO.com/YOUTUBE.com** fall down the rabbit hole into the multitude of boundary pushing and award-winning work of filmmakers from across the globe.

» **COLTube** <https://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu/> A DePaul based media site where you can find many (not all) of the films used in the various classes on campus.

» **Final Draft** <https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-10-edu-verified.html/> DePaul Discount Code: **IOX9YW** You can get Final Draft Screenwriting Software for \$99 (after discount). This is industry standard screening writing software (it's not required for this class!)

## ASSIGNMENTS / GRADING (Academic Quarter Total: 1000pts)

» **ATTENDANCE & ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:** 150pts (INDIVIDUAL)

You are required to attend class and participate in the day's activities. This active engagement will ensure you get the most from the class. You will be working in groups most of the time, and cooperation is key.

» **"SCAVENGER" HUNT:** 100pts (INDIVIDUAL)

Your mission is to capture a series of assigned still photographs that focus on space, line and shape. A grade sheet with project deliverables/grading rubric will be given out when this is assigned.

» **"EMOTION" FILM:** 250pts (GROUP)

This is a short film project with an emphasis on *color and tone*, and is one that will further build on skills practiced in the first assignment. This assignment will have two parts: A visual design plan *and* the film itself. Certain visual design restrictions will be assigned to each group in class. 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. A grade sheet with project deliverables/grading rubric will be given out when this is assigned.

» **"MOVEMENT" FILM:** 250pts (GROUP)

This is a short film project with an emphasis on *motion, rhythm and match-cuts*, and is one that will further build on skills practiced in the first two assignments. This assignment will have two parts: A visual design plan *and* the film itself. Certain visual design restrictions will be assigned to each group in class. 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 and their final cuts should reflect that goal. A grade sheet with project deliverables/grading rubric will be given out when this is assigned.

» **"EFP" (EVERY FRAME A PAINTING) PRESENTATION:** 250pts (GROUP)

Inspired by the incredibly informative series, "Every Frame a Painting," and an assignment that contributed greatly to my cinematic evolution, you will make an *educational film* that breaks down the visual design of an assigned feature film. This project will be the total synthesis of your learning from this class. These films are to be presented in class; the collective experience will be resoundingly informative for all. This assignment is very challenging, and should be started early. You will have to watch the same film several times in order to pick up on the visual design elements and how they relate to the story. You will be assigned your movie and assignment details Week 3. A grade sheet with assignment deliverables/grading rubric will be given out when this is assigned.

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 (please see list of excuses) or being late to a class are expected to e-mail the instructor BEFORE that particular class. The second time you “call off” sick to a class, you must go through the Dean of Students Office after completing an Absence Notification Form. 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.

## 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 members in question will be docked. These evaluations will be HEAVILY factored into your grade for each assignment.

## 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 **VISUAL DESIGN** 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 SUBMISSION POLICY

Label all Files as Such (ex. Student is STEVEN SPIELBERG and he is submitting the “EMOTION” Film): **SPIELBERG\_EMOTION** or if it’s for his group project **GROUP03\_EMOTION**

- » All films/videos should be submitted in **H.264** format (.mov or .mp4 only) via **D2L only** (1gb max file size through D2L).
- » All documents (grade sheets, previz, etc) should be submitted in **PDF** format via **D2L only**.

**Projects NOT labeled properly, NOT submitted in the proper format or NOT submitted via D2L 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. 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 or Safari (Chrome has trouble many times) to upload work, along with a fast internet connection, should make uploading a breeze. If you are having trouble uploading, the first thing you should do is try a different browser. **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 tape or 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.
- » 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.

## SCA PRODUCTION HANDBOOK

The *School of Cinematic Arts Production Handbook* is an invaluable resource to all DePaul student filmmakers. The answers to most questions regarding contacts, resources, contracts, rules, and guidelines can be found inside. It is updated annually and linked to the CDM Production Resources page <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Documents/DePaul-SCA-Student-Production-Handbook.pdf>

## EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT POLICIES

Students are expected to follow all equipment policies when checking out gear from The Cage or Cinespace. All of these policies can be found under "Equipment" on the Production Resources Website. <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Production-Resources.aspx>

## CINESPACE ORIENTATION AND SAFETY TRAINING

Students who have not filmed at Cinespace before **MUST** complete a Cinespace Orientation and Set Safety Workshop prior to being allowed to do so. At the beginning of each quarter, several workshops are offered. If you have any questions, or need to schedule a workshop, please email Alan Dembek - [ADembek@depaul.edu](mailto:ADembek@depaul.edu) - with any questions

## 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, please inform the instructor via email ASAP and you will be excused from watching said content.

## 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!** They are busy folks trying to help ensure your shoot is a success.

## GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS

Given the background of graphic design students, they will contribute to each of the films with clear, professionally designed title sequences. They will also aid in the production of the group's films from concept to completion. Likewise, Cinema students are expected to aid and collaborate with Graphic Design students in creating the look and design of the title sequences. Graphic Design students are also expected to take the design lead on the Visual Design Graphs and Storyboards. They must provide clear concept drawings of the film's title sequence that will be presented and turned in at the same time as the Visual Design Plan. The design of these titles should feel polished and work in concert with the film's Visual Design.

## 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\_ September 7<sup>th</sup>

IN CLASS >

REVIEW: Syllabus/Course Objectives

LECTURE: The Power of Visual Design

SCREENING: Feature Film "Martha Marcy May Marlene"

BEFORE NEXT CLASS >

» Read: THE VISUAL STORY : Chapter 1 / 2 / 3

### CLASS 02\_ September 14<sup>th</sup>

IN CLASS >

LECTURE: Space, Line and Shape

SCREENING: "MMMM" Scenes + Assorted Clips

ASSIGN: "Scavenger" Hunt

BEFORE NEXT CLASS >

» Read: THE VISUAL STORY : Chapter 4

» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 02 Links

**DUE:** September 19<sup>th</sup> by 1pm via D2L > **SUBMISSIONS** > **SCAVENGER\_HUNT (PDF + Filled Out Grade Sheet)**

### CLASS 03\_ September 21<sup>st</sup>

IN CLASS >

VIEWING + CRITIQUE: Assorted "SCAVENGER" HUNT Exercises

SCREENING: Feature Film "Red Road"

ASSIGN: "EFP" Presentation Films (Start Watching A.S.A.P.!!!)

BEFORE NEXT CLASS >

» Read: THE VISUAL STORY : Chapter 9 / 10

» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 03 Links

### CLASS 04\_ September 28<sup>th</sup>

IN CLASS >

LECTURE: Color and Tone

SCREENING: "RR" Scenes + Assorted Clips

ASSIGN: Groups / "EMOTION" Film

BEFORE NEXT CLASS >

» Read: THE VISUAL STORY : Chapter 5 / 6

» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 04 Links

### CLASS 05\_ October 5<sup>th</sup>

IN CLASS >

**DUE:** "EMOTION" Visual Design Plan

PRESENTATION+CRITIQUE: "EMOTION" Visual Design Plan

SCREENING: Feature Film: "Violet"

BEFORE NEXT CLASS >

» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 05 Links

**DUE:** October 11<sup>th</sup> by 1pm via D2L > **SUBMISSIONS** > **EMOTION\_FILM** (Film + Filled Out Grade Sheet)

**CLASS 06\_ October 12<sup>th</sup>**

*IN CLASS >*

**DUE:** Group Evaluations  
SCREENING + CRITIQUE: "EMOTION" Films  
LECTURE: Motion + Rhythm  
SCREENING: "Violet" Scenes + Assorted Clips  
ASSIGN: "MOVEMENT" Films

*BEFORE NEXT CLASS >*

» Read: THE VISUAL STORY : Chapter 7 / 8  
» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 06 Links

**CLASS 07\_ October 19<sup>th</sup>**

*IN CLASS >*

**DUE:** "MOVEMENT" Visual Design Plan  
PRESENTATION+CRITIQUE: "MOVEMENT" Visual Design Plan  
LECTURE: Narrative Form + Function  
SCREENING: Assorted Scenes from Clips

*BEFORE NEXT CLASS >*

» Watch: Every Frame a Painting: Class 07 Links

**DUE:** October 25<sup>th</sup> by 1pm via D2L> **SUBMISSIONS** > **MOVEMENT\_FILM** (Film+ Filled Out Grade Sheet)

**CLASS 08\_ October 26<sup>th</sup>**

*IN CLASS >*

**DUE:** Group Evaluations  
SCREENING+CRITIQUE: "MOVEMENT" Films  
LECTURE: The Big Picture  
MEETINGS: For "EFP" Presentation

**CLASS 09\_ November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

*IN CLASS >*

"EFP" Presentation Meetings

**DUE:** November 7<sup>th</sup> by 7pm via D2L > **SUBMISSIONS** > **GROUPA\_EFP** (**GROUP A Presentation Films + Filled Out Grade Sheet**)

**CLASS 10\_ November 9<sup>th</sup>**

*IN CLASS >*

SCREENING + CRITIQUE: GROUP A "EFP" FILMS

**DUE:** November 14<sup>th</sup> by 1pm via D2L > **SUBMISSIONS** > **GROUPB\_EFP** (**GROUP B Presentation Films + Filled Out Grade Sheet**)

**FINALS\_ November 16<sup>th</sup>** (Exact Date/Time TBA – University did not post a time for this slot!)

*IN CLASS >*

SCREENING + CRITIQUE: GROUP B "EFP" FILMS

**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](mailto: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 unexcused 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.