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Film Production 1.

Fall Quarter 2006
Rochester Institute of Technology
School of Film and Animation

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"There are six essentials in painting. The first is called spirit; the second, rhythm; the third, thought; the fourth, scenery; the fifth, the brush; and the last is the ink."

Ching Hao, 925 A.D.
"Notes on Brushwork."

Course Objective:

This is the introductory film production course taught to all Film and Animation majors in 16mm. It is to give you a working knowledge of film technique by having you create your own short films. As a beginning to your studies in the moving image many aspects of initial production will be studied and applied: lenses, emulsions, story boarding, lighting, camerawork, movement, editing, splicers, and film projection.

A variety of short films will be screened throughout the course to exemplify and expand on your understanding of the potential of film. The short films for this class will be silent; the impact of sound upon the visual will be discussed but will not be a primary focus of this class. Open interaction and discussions are important, and on-going screenings of students' works-in-progress and finished films will engage students in the creative critical process.

1. To give you the opportunity to practice film techniques and experiment with different styles of filmmaking.
2. To provide you with some technical understanding and essential vocabulary of basic 16mm film production.
3. To develop skills of film criticism and viewing. *
4. To discover your own interests, abilities, and concerns in filmmaking and to assess your own talents in production.

* With your assistance, we can establish an environment in which we can exchange ideas and opinions with mutual respect, candor, and critical attentiveness. In this course you will have the opportunity to respond directly to other students' works. Therefore, it is important that we, both individually and collectively, foster and atmosphere of trust and interest.

Textbooks:

Required: The Filmmaker's Handbook, by Ed Pincus and Steven Asher. 1984.

Recommended:

The World of Film and Video Production, Ken Dancyger.

The Pincus and Asher book will have assigned readings weekly. The other books are suggested as helpful, and they will provide insights into the image-making process. Trips to the extensive photo and film sections of Wallace Memorial Library will prove very interesting and will help you discover ideas and ways of applying them in filmmaking.

For helpful reference material look at Charlie Boyd's website:

<http://www.rit.edu/~crbph/classes/index.html>

Course Materials, Mechanics and Concerns:

Students are responsible for the purchase of film stock, processing, and editing supplies required for this course. You will be responsible for the care and condition of your camera and any other production equipment which you sign out from The Cage (x5-5958). Kevin Lamark will speak about this in class.)

All initial production equipment will be provided except for light meters and certain expendable items like film stock and splicing tape. It is advised that a light meter be purchased from the student store (Sekonic Studio DeLuxe) within the first weeks of the first Quarter of production. FVASA which will assist you in choosing, purchasing, and processing your film; someone will be speaking to you of this in this course or in the M&P course. The estimated course of materials for this class is \$275.

FVASA (the Film/Video/Animation Student Assoc.) and Campus Connections will sell you supplies, such as, but not limited to:

- film cores – used to store film and turn in final edits.
- film reels, daylight spools, as needed.
- china marker – used to mark editing points in film.
- sharpie marker
- white film leader, double-perforation – 100' should last all year.
- black leader, double-perforation – 100' should last all year.
- assembly tape or masking tape.
- editing tape.
- filters: 85B color correction (orange) for color film.
- videotape – to transfer your films at end of quarter.
- gaffer tape – do not use duct tape!
- compressed air to blow dust out of camera.

diffusion – for soft lighting.
color gels – for lighting.

It is important that students attend every class and that they participate in the dynamic of the class. In-class demonstrations and hands-on workshops are a major aspect of the learning process. Film is a collaborative art, and while it is essential that each student develop an individual artistic voice it is also important that each person be able to work with others.

Grading:

10% Project 1
20% Project 2
5% Project 3 pre-production materials.
35% Final film.
15% journal
15% participation, ability to work with others, critique.

You are expected to complete all of the assignments for this course on the dates designated. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade. Remember that **planning** is an **essential** part of this course,

Your final project must be finished and screened at the end of the quarter. You *must* attend this public screening and be prepared to respond to any questions or critique. Failure to do all of this will result in failure of the course. This is school policy. There are no exceptions.

Films will be graded on technique and concept, and ambition. It is important that you be able to communicate ideas in film in addition to being able to focus and move the camera. Repeated absences, lateness, unreliability or inconsiderate behavior can adversely affect the progress of your fellow classmates. Each student is entitled to two absences during the quarter. Only two. Save them for when you may get ill during the quarter. Grading will be reflective of the level of professionalism of the student.

*There will be **no** grades of "Incomplete" in this course.*

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IF THERE ARE ANY PROBLEMS SEE ME RIGHT AWAY.

Due to the nature of filmmaking, to successfully complete this course you will have to spend many hours outside of class shooting and editing film. Make no mistake about it, filmmaking is a time consuming endeavor. However, like all the arts, the results of one's work can be quite rewarding. Mistakes can be minimized if you pay attention and follow procedures.

Organization and motivation are important. The unorganized filmmaker doesn't get work done. Assisting your classmates with filming is allowed (and crewing may be assigned).

It is your duty to your peers as well as to the instructor to be on time and to be prepared. Active preparation, to my mind, equals thoughtful response. Constructive criticism is more than simply advice; it is an articulation (good or bad) of a reaction or an analysis of a work.

I look forward to working with you. We rise and fall together.

The Journal.

The act of writing is like thinking: stimulus becomes concrete and ideas can be developed. The purpose of the film journal is to regularly collect ideas for future projects. These are not necessarily films which are to be produced in this class; rather, ideas that stimulate you.

The film journal is also for charting your progress as a filmmaker.

Journals will be collected regularly during the quarter. Bring them with you each class. Entries will be kept confidential, but should be of a nature that you feel comfortable talking about with your instructor.

Each week you should write at least once about the following areas:

1. Ideas.

Describe at least one idea, or a portion of an idea, that interests you... something that you would be interested in developing (a character, a situation, shot, scene).

2. Review.

Briefly describe the most important things you learned or experienced in the past week in regard to filmmaking.

3. Self review.

What do you need to work on? What questions do you have? What sort of time frame will you need to accomplish what you want to do? Be specific.

4. Movie Response. (To be explained in class.)

You are required to watch on film per week, chosen from the handout. You can either choose a different director for each of the ten weeks and one of his or her films, or you can choose five directors and watch two films each. If you do the latter, you should include a comparison of the films in your response.

This response is **not** a review nor is it a summation of the plot. You are allowed a one or two sentence description of the film. The rest is your honest reaction to the aesthetic quality of the film. What about the film do you like or dislike? What surprised you? Inspired? Repulsed? Why? Each response should be about 200 words.

Label each week's entries clearly on the pages. You'll be graded on content, amount, and sincerity.

Projects (subject to change, adjustment, scheduling, supplies, Acts of God,...):

[or: these project descriptions are short and incomplete. More information to follow.]

Project #1: Event /Space .

Style: photographic, documentary, descriptive, observational.

Due: **Tuesday, October 3.**

1 roll of Plus-X film (b&w), edit in camera.

A “shot log” will be required with the finished film. You need to briefly discuss your idea with me before screening.

Elements: *atmosphere, mood, event, mise-en-scene.*

Project#1 is designed to be a simple exercise so that you can become familiar with film equipment. Each of you is to shoot 100 feet (2 minutes 35 seconds) of film. You will also *work in pairs* on this project.

In this exercise, choose to document a location or “space” that you find visually interesting, with a simple and uncontrolled event taking place. The idea will be to express the mood of a place with creative shooting and capture an event before the camera.

Examples will be shown and discussed in class.

Project #2: Motion/Meaning .

Style: experimental; dynamic/thematic.

Due: **Tuesday, October 17.**

2 rolls of film, *bench edited.*

A shot list will be required, and we will discuss ideas in class.

Elements: *movement, rhythm; thought, attitude.*

Motion pictures. Ah! Now you will take motion further as you concentrate on (more) animate subjects with the occasionally moving camera and dynamic editing.

Prod.1 “Projects”; p.2.

Project #2 takes the next logical step in our progression of projects leading to continuity narrative. The first assignment familiarized you with the camera, photography and exposure, and documenting space. This second assignment introduces you to the simplest montage and its main element and device – *movement and collision*. What is important is your concern and capturing and manipulating the flow of motion in your finished film; BUT you are after *more* than a purely *visceral* audience response.

Thematic or emotionally tied subjects and audience reaction is required. The concept or idea may be abstract or concrete in nature, but must employ several linked images to effectively convey the full theme. “Meaning” will often boost the overall impact of a piece, as it requires the audience to think about what they’ve just seen.

Examples will be shown and discussed in class.

Project #3. Shape/Story.

Style: continuity.

Due: **Tuesday, November 7.**

3 rolls of film (suggested), any type; bench edited.

A proposal, treatment, shot breakdown, and storyboards will be required.

Element: *dramatic motivation.*

As we move on, things aren't getting easier, but they are perhaps more fun. This film assignment involves shooting a short narrative (a story) utilizing and expressing a basic understanding of the continuity terms discussed in the readings and in class. Your story should be of manageable length, visually interesting, and activity motivated (further explanation forthcoming). Important to silent narrative: actions, behavior, gesture, reaction, expression.

For your final assignment, the most successful films will be simple stories with a simple set-up, a little drama, and a short conclusion. You certainly need not tackle a full-blown epic, but you should produce something more than a continuity exercise or a simple sequence done in continuity.

Examples will be shown and discussed in class.

Before shooting commences, there will independent, individual meetings with Battaglia as to your progress thusfar and your intended ideas for this Project #3.