FILM 110A — Film Production I

WEDNESDAY 2 - 4:50 PM
GETZ LAB – GOLDFARB LIBRARY

Instructor: Daniel Mooney – mooneyd@brandeis.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

Revised 9/2/15

This course is an introduction to the principles and techniques of fictional narrative and non-fiction motion picture production. Students will complete 4 assignments during the semester while also developing, writing, shooting, and edit a short film for their final project. The films created for this class will emphasize dramatic development and creative storytelling through image composition, camera movement, editing, and sound. In addition, students will be required to submit weekly written responses to theoretical and historical readings that are representative of a variety of aesthetic approaches to the medium. Students are also asked, as individuals or in groups, to and to viewing material and give a short presentation to the class on a subject of their choosing.

The development of a personal vision as an approach to the practice and craft of filmmaking will be stressed.

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If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

You are expected to be familiar with, and to follow, the University’s policies on academic integrity. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures. All policies related to academic integrity apply to in-class and take home projects, assignments, exams, and quizzes. Students may only collaborate on assignments with permission from the instructor. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university.

This class requires the use of tools that may disclose your coursework and identity to parties outside the class. To protect your privacy you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias rather than your name in submitting such work. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

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GRADING:

This class is collaborative by its very nature, together we will decide on the criteria of grading of the assignments for this class.

ASSIGNMENT 1 - pass/fail

ASSIGNMENT 2 - pass/fail + grading criteria decided upon by the class.

ASSIGNMENT 3 - pass/fail

ASSIGNMENT 4 - pass/fail + grading criteria decided upon by the class.

ASSIGNMENT 5 - pass/fail + grading criteria decided upon by the class.

ASSIGNMENT 6 - pass/fail + grading criteria decided upon by the class.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is mandatory; absences without a proper written excuse beforehand will result in student’s grades being marked down one letter grade.

There will be an expectation of respecting our time together. During class phones and social media will be shelved unless there is some purpose for the use that is directly related to the subject we’re covering in class. For example, students may wish to download application for their phones that calculate DOF (depth of field, or that assist in shot planning) These examples would be an acceptable use of phones during class.

ASSIGNMENTS

Almost all of the work will be done in groups where roles are decided upon by the students and then those roles are rotated from project to project. After the completion of each assignment students will submit reflections on the process of making these films. These reflections can be written but need not be if students wish to be creative in their approach to these reflections (i.e. perhaps students wish to document their process with sounds and images, or bring together all the materials used to plan and create their films.)

Assignment 1
IMAGE AND SOUND PORTRAIT OF PERSON AND/OR PLACE
30-45 seconds in length

Working in your group and using GH4 cameras, a lens kit, audio recorders, and microphones students will collect images and sounds of a person or place in order to create a short film. With this assignment students will explore framing and composition, linking images in sequence through framing and composition
and creating a soundtrack to those images using the sound recorded separately from the collection of images.

- This assignment will occur in two stages, the first stage will be the collection and sequencing of images, the second stage will be the recording and sequencing of sounds. After images have been collected and you’ve either planned the sequencing of these images or you’ve given yourself and shooting ratio (images collected: images used) Groups will decide on an order and sequence of these images.

For this assignment it is suggested that 1 student takes responsibility for understanding the use and care for the lenses and the other camera body. The goal should be collaboration on the understanding of the technical aspects of each, lenses and camera.

You may plan the process out as you see fit, one suggestion would be to have one person operate the camera while the other assists. Then, after the first batch of images have been created, switch roles. You may choose to go out on your own and bring back the results and discuss those with your partner, etc.

As will be the case through the semester, the form and content for this assignment is ultimately up to you. There are examples or paths you may follow choosing the examples from *The Photographer’s Playbook*. These can be found on LATTE.

**ASSIGNMENT 2**
**SCENE BREAKDOWN RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS**
**2-4 pages.**

Find a scene from a film of 1-2 minutes in length that involves a minimum of two characters (It need not be a fiction film.) Using Chapters 1-3 of Film Grammar write up a shot by shot analysis of that scene. This breakdown should describe camera position in relation to the actors, the style and tone of the scene, how lighting choices may have affected the scene.

**ASSIGNMENT 3**
**FILMING A TWO PERSON CONVERSATION**
**1-2 Minutes in length.**

In groups you shoot a recordt sync sound scene or scenes that involve 2 characters. This can be a recreation of a scene from a film, something written by an individual or the group, or something else entirely. You will need to decide on a cameraperson, a sound recordist, a ‘director’ and a script supervisor/editor.

**ASSIGNMENT 4**
**FILMING A PROCESS**
In Groups you will record a process either acted out or captured from an observed event. The goal of this assignment should be to think through how to film a process from multiple angles, with multiple frames.
Think through how the scene is set up, what details may emerge from the process you are filming, how you might accentuate the process in order to create a dramatic event.

ASSIGNMENT 4
LIGHTING AND CAMERA MOVEMENT ASSIGNMENT
40 – 60 seconds in length.

Using what we’ve gone over in class as individuals or groups you will create and light a still life or tableaux with objects or people. You will incorporate camera movement into what you are to shoot using a dolly, track, or shoulder rig. You must use a minimum of two different focal length lenses.

ASSIGNMENT 5
SHORT NON-FICTION FILM
1.5 - 3 Minutes in length.

This is to be an observational, essay, or interview based “documentary” film.

Throughout the semester we will look at a number of formal and stylistic approaches to non-fiction filmmaking. For this assignment you will shoot and edit a short non-fiction film. You may work individually or in groups.

Students are strongly encouraged to start, at the very beginning of the semester to come up with of a subject that they wish to pursue for this assignment. You will write a short 1-2 paragraph proposal on what you might intend to pursue for this assignment. The proposal is due on October 15th, a second draft is Due on November 5th and the Final Assignment is due November 19th

ASSIGNMENT 6 FINAL PROJECTS
SHORT NARRATIVE FILM
2-5 Minutes In Length

You will submit a proposal as individuals or as a group, depending on how you want to accomplish this assignment. A proposal for your final project is due on October 15th a second draft containing relevant material (i.e. shooting scenario, scripts, lighting charts) is due November 5th. Final Assignment is Due November 26th and December 3rd.

PLEASE NOTE

If students wish to pursue one or the other of assignments 5 and 6 they may. However the final film must be 4-6 Minutes in Length.
WEEKLY RESPONSES TO VIEWINGS AND READINGS

You will be expected to engage with the readings and viewings offered by this class. This means that you will be asked to interact in class and through LATTE with the readings and viewings in the forum of a response journal. The goal is for the creation of a dialogue in class and outside.

These responses are mandatory.

WEEKLEY MEETINGS

MEETING ONE
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2nd

Bring 10 Images to Class.

Course Overview, introductions, and expectations.
Beginning to work with Cameras and lenses.

Introduction and Overview of AF100/GH4, Lenses, taking out equipment, etc.

Class Server and File Management.

How cameras and lenses work. "EXPOSURE TRIANGLE" SHUTTER/APERTURE/ISO,
Care and treatment of equipment.

Assignment 1
(DETAILED EXPLANATION AT TOP OF SYLLABUS)

Capture 10-20 images that you intend to build into scene. Considerations should be establishing the scene, moving through the scene from one image to the next using the space of the screen. Consider composition, pace, movement, light.

Reading:
Voice and Vision; Chapters 10, 11, 12
Cinematography; Shooting Methods and Visual Language. HD cinematography
Film Forum; Chapter 2 (Cinematography)

•• PLEASE REVIEW GH4 MANUAL ••
Viewing:
Eggleston and Winogrand clips.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQhZcKzbM9s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RM9KcYEYXs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGR6_H-G17c

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MEETING TWO
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9th

• ASSIGNMENT 1 PART 1 DUE. 10 Images in sequence.

SOUND RECORDING. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUND AND IMAGE.

Working with Sound. Microphones, recorders, levels, ambient audio, direct audio, recording for the edit and sound design, room tone, background sounds,

We will go over Assignment 1 part 2 recording sound for your image sequences.

Readings.
*Voice and Vision*; Chapter 15 Sound For Production, Chapter 16 Location Sound Techniques.
Film Forum; Chapter 3 Sound
Film Art, An Introduction; Excerpts.

Viewings;
Clips from Godard, Phil Solomon, Kurosawa, Coen Brothers. Jim Jarmusch.

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MEETING THREE
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16th

EDITING.

Bringing sound and video material into the Premiere. Organizing within project. Creating a timeline, editing sound and image in the timeline. L Cuts, J Cuts, Timelines and sequences, working with audio tracks. Backing up your work, media management.

Readings
Sound and Vision; Chapters 19, 20, and 21.
Film Grammar; Chapters 1-3
Cinematography; Cinematic Continuity.
Phil Solomon Interview
**Viewings.**

Premiere Tutorial Videos.
Orson Welles’ *Magnificent Ambersons*.
Phil Solomon’s *Psalm III: “NIGHT OF THE MEEK”*

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**WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16th 7-9 PM**

AFTER CLASS EDITING WORKSHOP, NOT MANDATORY BUT YOU ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND. WE WILL WORK FURTHER WITH THE EDIT OF YOUR ASSIGNMENT 1 PROJECTS.

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**MEETING FOUR**

**WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 23rd**

• EDIT OF IMAGE AND SOUND EXERCISE DUE.
• SHOT BY SHOT ANALYSIS OF A SHORT SCENE DUE.

**CONCEPTS FOR SCENE CREATION.**

Establishing shots. Shot reverse Shot/ 180 degree rule. Working with actors or “models” in space. How to begin constructing and building a scene. Spatial, Temporal, Narrative Continuity.

• In class exercise, how to bring a viewer into a scene •

**PREPERATION FOR ASSIGNMENT 3**
(DETAILED EXPLANTION AT TOP OF SYLLBUS.)

Working in groups you will create a rough outline for assignment 3. You will go about choosing a script or text at this time that you will work with for this assignment.

**Readings.**

*Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; Chapter 9
*Sound and Vision Chapters*; Chapters 4-6
*Cinematography Chapters*
Excerpt from Bresson’s *Notes on Cinematography*

**Viewings:**
MEETING FIVE
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 30th

• INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR ASSIGNMENTS 5 AND 6 ARE DUE.

LIGHTING.
Working with lights, filters, scrims, 3 point lighting setup.

• We will go over and construct a 3-point lighting set up using two volunteers as stand-ins. As a group we will decided on a short scene that we want our volunteers to play.

We will use a dolly, and track, and a hand held camera to examine the changes in light as the scene is shot.

Light and shoot a still life or tableaux using a three point light setup and dolly, track, or shoulder mount rig. Key, fill, backlights. Attempt to incorporate movement of camera using Dolly, track, or shoulder rig in order to explore shift and shape of light in relation to objects or characters.

Readings.
*Cinematography; Lighting Basics, Lighting Sources,*

Viewings. FW Marnau, Nick Ray's *Johnny Guitar and Rebel Without a Cause,* Orson Welles’ *The Trial,* Othello. Bertolucci’s *The Conformist.*

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MEETING SIX
WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 7th

SYNC SOUND. GROUP WORK.

Working in groups of 4. Recreate a short scene from a film shot by shot. I would advise students to short and contained scenes that feature two to three characters. An example might be a scene that has a conversation, a meeting, and/or a departure. Directing actors/models.

Find a screenplay, write your own, create a scenario or use a prose piece, whatever text you like but there should be interaction between two people. Think about composition, movement into the space by the camera, movement between camera and actors, blocking. mapping of scene for actor, lighting, and camera placement set. Where is your light source? Where is the sound coming from? Where are you putting the camera? Is the camera moving or static? One group shoots the other edits that batch of footage and vice versa.
We will shoot in sync sound. Groups should decide on roles for each person, a camera operator, a sound person, a script supervisor and editor and a director.

**Readings:**
*Film Art an Introduction* Chapter 11.
*Film Forum*; “The Actor”
*Poetics of Screen writing* Chapter 1

**Viewings:**
Bresson, Antonioni, Bigelow, Fassbinder. Cassavettes.

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**MEETING SEVEN**
**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 14th**

**ONE PARAGRAPH TREATMENTS FOR NON-FICTION FILM AND/OR FINAL PROJECTS DUE.**

**SCREEN ASSIGNMENT 3**

How to plan your shoot.
Casting, Location Scouting.
Working with Scripts, Shooting Scripts, Storyboards and shooting charts.

**Readings:**
*Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; Chapter 18 – 26
*Voice and Vision*; Chapters 5, 6, and 7.
Stanley Kubrick Interviews
Tarkovsky, Excerpts from *Sculpting in Time*

**Viewings:**
Tarkovsky’s *The Mirror*, Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory and Barry Lyndon.*
Copolla’s *Rumblefish*

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**MEETING EIGHT**
**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21st**

**NON-FICTION FILMMAKING OR “THE DOCUMENTARY”**
In class screening and discussion on modes and methods of non-fiction filmmaking.

**Readings:**
Dziga Vertov, Chris Marker, Errol Morris, Frederick Wiseman, Chantel Ackerman, and Trinh Minh Ha interviews.

*Directing, Film Techniques and Aesthetics* Chapter 31 and 32.

**Viewings:**
Excerpts from non-fiction films; *Enthusiasm, Thin Blue Line, D’Est, Belfast Maine, Gatekeepers, Lessons of Darkness.*

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**MEETING NINE**
WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 28th

**FOOTAGE FOR NON-FICTION SHORT DUE.**
**SCREENING OF DAILIES.**

**Readings:**
*Film Art an Introduction* Chapter 8
*Eisenstein on Montage.*
*Directing, Film Techniques and Aesthetics* Chapter 33-37
*Film Forum ‘Film and Reality’*

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**MEETING TEN**
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 4th

**IN DEPTH TREATMENTS/SCRIPTS/SHOOTING SCRIPTS FOR ASSIGNMENT 6 DUE.**

**FURTHER EDITING WORKSHOP.**

Organization of project and timeline. Fundamentals of Sound design.

**Reading:**
*Voice and Vision* Chapters 20-23
*Film Forum ‘Structure and Rhythm’*

**Viewing:**
Premiere and After Effects tutorials.

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MEETING ELEVEN  
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 11th

SCREEN FINE CUTS OF NON FICTION FILMS.  
EDITING OF PROJECTS AND GROUP MEETINGS.

MEETING TWELVE  
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 18th

SCREEN ROUGH CUTS OF FINAL PROJECT.  
EDITING OF PROJECTS GROUP MEETINGS.

MEETING THIRTEEN  
WEDNESDAY December 2nd

FIRST FINE CUT OF FINAL PROJECT DUE

CLASS FOURTEEN  
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9th

FINAL PROJECTS SCREENED

*** READINGs AND VIEWINGs MAYBE SUBJECT TO REVISION OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER ***