COMM 135 – Intro to Video Production

Tuesdays/Thursdays 10:00 – 11:15 a.m. in SOC Room 002
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Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursday 1:00-3:30 or by appointment

COMM 135 is a course that aims to promote creative expression and basic competency in media production. The course will serve as an introduction to video production, sound recording and editing, as well as exposing students to various approaches to visual storytelling. The goal of the course is for the student to develop a personal aesthetic and strong production skills via an integration of theory and practice. During the course we will:

1. learn the basics of videography and composition,
2. study the essential concepts of cinematic storytelling,
3. explore a variety of cinematic forms, styles and strategies,
4. learn to edit video and sound,
5. produce short videos.

Screenings and Readings

• Articles, videos and materials on Sakai.

Equipment and Material Supplies

The School of Communication provides cameras, tripods, microphones, lighting and editing equipment that can be checked out from the Equipment Room in SOC 004 (the Owl Lab). **Note**: the School does not have insurance that covers your use of the equipment; i.e. you are financially responsible for all of the equipment you use and should treat it with great care! You are welcome to use your own equipment OR equipment checked-out from the Digital Media Lab in the Info Commons, but please consult the instructor first.

Required Materials:
• 1-2 Class 10 16+ GB SD cards.
• Stereo headphones with a 1/8" (mini-phone) jack.
• 1 external, portable USB 3.0, 350+ GB hard-drive.

Computer Use:
On occasion, software bugs, virus presence, human error and/or hardware issues can result in damaged, corrupted or deleted files. Consequently, it is your responsibility to back-up your project files during and after each use.

Grading and Evaluation

Attendance Policy and Late Assignments:
Students are expected to complete all of the assigned projects on time. Late projects will automatically be penalized one point per day (i.e. a project that would normally receive a score of 15/15, will score a 14/15 if submitted a day late). No project will be accepted more than two weeks after the initial due date.

Students are also expected to attend class. Students are responsible for getting notes and learning any material that they missed due to absence; i.e. unless an absence is excused for medical condition or emergency, the instructor will not go over or repeat any material covered during the regularly scheduled class-time

Calculating Final Grades:

Your final grade will be based on your participation in classroom discussions, critiques and exercises, your performance on quizzes and the quality of your production assignments. The course is not intended to be a competition of technical wizardry, but as a place to develop and express emerging creativity. Production assignments will therefore be evaluated as part of an evolving body of work over the course of the semester.

The percentage breakdown of your grade is as follows:
Picture Me: 15%
The Documentary: 25%
The Narrative: 25%
The Final Project: 25%
Mid-term Quiz: 10%

Assignments

• Picture Me- composition, framing and creating meaningful images.
• The Documentary- basic lighting, recording interviews, editing.
• The Narrative- designing shots, analytic montage and narrative storytelling.
• The Final Project- putting it all together: camera, sound, editing and storytelling.

The assignments are designed to introduce you to the various components of media production. Each project relates to and builds on the previous one, culminating in a final project utilizing the videography, editing and storytelling skills learned over the course of the semester.

Each assignment will be evaluated based on a set of criteria (a rubric) outlined in the assignment descriptions, with each criterion scored on a scale of 1-5 (1 = extremely poor and 5 = excellent). In addition to receiving a rubric with a quantitative score, all students will get brief feedback on their video assignments. To this end, all projects must be submitted via ScreeningRoom.

Note on working in groups: media making is by nature a collaborative medium and students will be encouraged to work together and help each other on creative projects. However, as this course is designed to teach competency in all of the basic skills of production, it is important that the first two projects be completed as individual assignments. The last two assignments will be completed in groups. Please note that every member of the group will receive the same grade for the completed group projects, so you are each equally responsible for the success or failure of the team.

Picture Me – visual representation.

Pair up with another member of the class. Exchange copies of the last picture and first pictures saved on your phones. Briefly describe the story behind each picture, its importance and what it says about who you are. Record this discussion. Using a digital video camera, record 15-20 static compositions (locked on a tripod, without camera movement or zoom) that are visually evocative, inspired by one of the pictures and express your partner's story/personality.

The idea is not to recreate (i.e. dramatize) the picture or story behind it, nor to do a full-blown character profile (i.e. documentary) about your partner, but rather to create a set of complex, meaningful and beautiful images that represent (poetically) the person and/or the story of the photograph. Pay close attention to framing and to the graphic qualities (lines, shapes) of the objects within the frame. Make sure there is a variety in shot composition and scale (i.e. close-ups and long shots, low and high angles, deep and shallow focus, etc.).

Finally, make certain that all of the shots are properly exposed, white balanced and in focus.

<u>Grading Rubric (15 points total)</u>
- Quantity & Variety- 15 or more distinct and varied (scale and angle) images.
- Compositions- effective use of balance, focus, colors and depth.
- Content & Creativity- communicate mood, meaning, and a sense of story.

The Documentary – creating a short, non-fiction video.

For this assignment, find someone to interview about mental health (broadly defined). Your interview subject can speak about their personal experiences, tell a story, describe the work done at/for an organization, etc.

Arrange to interview the subject for 20-40 minutes. Record the interview utilizing the principles of three-point lighting, framing and mis-en-scene discussed in class. Also, be sure that the recording of your subject's voice is clean and clear by utilizing a lavaliere microphone.

Drawing from the best moments (sound-bites/selects) from you interview, create a script for a short documentary that utilizes the interview as its backbone. Plan and shoot the b-roll footage to accompany your interview.

Using Premiere Pro, edit the interview and b-roll footage into a short, 2-5 minute documentary. Pay attention to issues or tempo and rhythm, graphic matches or juxtapositions, and the sound-image relationships created by your edit. Your short video *must* include titles and credits, and may include text in the body of the film. You may also experiment with video transitions and filters, but don't over-do it!

<u>Grading Rubric (25 points total)</u>
- Pre-production – subject, script, interview questions.
- Videography & Lighting – composition, lighting and use of mis-en-scene.
- Sound – interview audio, nat sound, additional sound/music, sound editing/mix.
- Editing – titles, transitions, pacing and sound-image relationships.
- Content & Creativity- originality, meaning and structure.

The Narrative – storytelling, shot design and analytic montage.

You will be provided with a short, open-ended script for two characters. With your assigned partner(s), create, design and shoot a short, narrative video using the script. Your story must take place in a single location and may not include any additions or changes to the dialogue; however, the specific setting, content and theme of the script are open.

In designing the scene, <u>you must use a minimum of 5 distinct shots to cover the action AND include at least one matched action edit and one POV sequence</u>; so plan and pre-visualize carefully.

The final edit should convey a sense of visual or dramatic development, and cut together as seamlessly as possible. The final version should be 1-3 minutes in length. You are required to create a script and floorplans and submit them prior to completing the shoot.

<u>Grading Rubric (25 points total)</u>
- Pre-production- shooting script, shot lists and floorplans.
- Videography- composition, exposure, focus, camera movement.
- Editing- continuity, pacing, and POV/matched-action sequences.
- Sound- audio clarity/fidelity, audio edit, audio mix, sound design.
- Content & Creativity- originality, coherence, narrative impact.

Final Video Project

You will work in teams of 2-3 to create a final video project building on one of your projects from earlier in the semester. The specific form and content of the project are up to you, but it should be a short subject film (roughly 2-5 minutes in length) AND it can not include more than 3 speaking subjects (actors/interviewees) OR more than 3 spaces (sets/interview locations). <u>Note</u>: you may include more people/places if they are simply used as background extras or b-roll.

Whatever you choose, the final cut of your video should include opening and closing credits along with a well-mixed (appropriate levels) soundtrack. You will be required to show your work on the final project during each stage of the process, including scripts, shot lists, interview questions, video rushes, and rough-cuts of edited work. The final version will be due on the day of the final exam.

<u>Grading Rubric (25 points total)</u>
- Pre-production- planning, script, floor plan, shot design, schedule, teamwork.
- Videography- camera work, focus, exposure, color balance and compositions.
- Editing- pace, graphic editing, seamlessness, titles & credits, transitions and fx.
- Sound- clarity/fidelity, sound-image relationship, complexity, mix and transitions.
- Content- originality, coherence, narrative structure, meaning, and length.

Course Schedule – Fall 2017

Week 1   Introductions and Syllabus Review. *Picture Me* assignment.
8/29-31   Power of the image: visual storytelling.

Week 2   Principles of composition and framing.
9/5-7   Intro to the Sony X70 and intro to videography.

                Assignment: *Picture Me* footage due 9/12.

Week 3   Intro to Premiere Pro: ingesting media and cuts only editing.
9/12-14   Uploading to ScreeningRoom. Critique *Picture Me* assignment.

                Assignment: Identify documentary subject(s), due 9/19.

Week 4   Interview techniques and shot design.
9/19-21   Sound recording and microphone use.

                Assignment: *Documentary* interview question due 9/26.

Week 5   Basic lighting (3-point lighting).
9/26-28   Intro to lighting equipment and intermediate videography.

                Assignment: *Documentary* interview footage due 10/3

Week 6   Premiere Pro: audio channels, sub-clipping, string-outs.
10/3-5   Script writing: A/V scripts.

                Assignment: *Documentary* b-roll and scripts due 10/12

                ***** Fall Break – No Class on 10/10 *****

Week 7   Documentary editing techniques.
10/12   Premiere Pro: basic titles, fx and transitions.

Week 8   <u>Mid-term Quiz</u>. Premiere Pro: trouble-shooting and exporting.
10/17-19   Review rough-cuts.

                Assignment: *The Documentary* due 10/24

Week 9   Critique *The Documentary*.
10/24-26   Narrative group and script assignment.

                Assignment: *The Narrative* scripts due 10/31

Week 10   Shooting to edit and continuity editing (analytic montage).
10/31-11/2   Floorplans, storyboards and pre-production.

                Assignment: *The Narrative* footage and pre-viz due 11/9.

Week 11   Production roles. Camera Movement. In-class shoot.
11/7-9   In-class editing. Narrative Editing Techniques.

Week 12	Critique *The Narrative*.
11/14-16	Final projects ideas and team generation.

Assignment: *Final Project* **proposals and scripts due 11/21.**

Week 13	Review final project proposals.
11/21	Pre-viz review.

Assignment: *Final Project* **selects due 11/30.**

***** *Thanksgiving – No Class on 11/23* *****

Week 14	Production team meetings. Pickups and fixes.
11/28-30	Review footage/selects.

Assignment: *Final Project* **rough-cuts due 12/5.**

Week 15	In-class editing and individual meetings.
12/5-6	Course evaluations.

Final Exam   *Final Project* **Critique and Celebration**
12/12 @ 1 p.m.

* Note: the instructor reserves the right to revise the syllabus, including the class schedule and assignment dates, as deemed necessary. Any significant revision will be both announced in class and posted to Sakai.