

COMM 338 – Narrative Production
Wednesdays 7:00-9:30 p.m. SOC Room 002
Professor Aaron Greer

Course Description & Objectives

Applying the media production and narrative filmmaking skills acquired in previous courses, students work as production teams to create short-subject narrative films, taking their projects from pre-production to exhibition. At the conclusion of the course, students will:

1. Understand and experience the five phases of the narrative production process: development, pre-production, production, post-production and exhibition;
2. Experience working as a part of a film production crew and be exposed to a variety of production jobs;
3. Produce polished, original, short-subject films and arrange for their exhibition.

Reading & Course Materials

- All required reading materials and forms will be available via Sakai or LUC Box.

Assignments and Evaluation

There will be two production cycles during the class. During each cycle, every student will be assigned a specific role (director, producer, editor, etc.) in the production of a short film, switching roles during the second cycle. Each role comes with a specific set of responsibilities and tasks due each week of the production. You will be graded on a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent) on each of these tasks, as well as receiving a group evaluation for the final product.

Each student will also be evaluated based on their participation and work as a member of the group, an evaluation that will be based on attendance, class participation, the instructor's evaluation of the student's accountability to the group, and peer evaluation.

Accordingly, the final grade for the class is broken down thusly:

Pre-semester Prep: 5%

Project Development and Pitches: 5%

Project 1: Production Tasks (weeks 3-8): 5% each, 30% total.

Project 1: Participation, Attendance and Group Work: 5%

Project 1: Final Product Quality and Impact: 10%

Project 2: Production Tasks (weeks 9-14): 5% each, 30% total.

Project 2: Participation, Attendance and Group Work: 5%

Project 2: Final Product Quality and Impact: 10%

NOTE: assignment materials should be submitted electronically via email, LUC Box or similar before the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Late assignments will be docked one point per weekday. No assignment will be accepted more than 1-week after its initial due date.

Course Schedule and Assignment Deadlines

- Week 1**
1/20 Project selection & crew assignment. Pre-production and Development: identifying stories and scripts. Pitches and scripts.
Reading for Week 2: Excerpts from Rea & Irving, chapters 1, 2 & 6.
Assignment for Week 2: Shooting scripts and pitches (both projects).
Directors: rewritten/shooting scripts (revised script), max 15 pages.
Producers: elevator pitch, tag line, pre-lim marketing plan.
Editors: Mood reels.
- Week 2**
1/27 Table read and pitches. Pre-production: script breakdowns, budgets and pre-viz.
Assignment for Week 3: breakdowns and prelim design plans.
Director: script analysis.
Producer: script breakdown, budget and casting call.
Editor: website and/or fx look book (if necessary).
DP: cinematography look book.
Art: costume/prop/set look book.
Sound: social media set-up.
- Week 3**
2/3 Review breakdowns and design plans. Audition prep, locations and tests.
Assignment for Week 4: audition prep, pre-viz, locations, tests.
Director: audition scheduling.
Producer: audition setup and location scout.
Editor: vfx/color tests.
DP: camera/lighting tests and diagrams.
Art: shopping list and location scout.
Sound: sound fx procurement and tests.
- Week 4**
2/10 Review tests. Auditions. Pre-production: scheduling, releases & rehearsal.
Assignment for Week 5: releases, scheduling, art procurement, title design, etc.
Director: pre-viz (storyboards, shot lists, floorplans).
Producer: releases forms and production/rehearsal schedule.
Editor: title/credit design.
DP: equipment list and reservation, location report/diagram.
Art: wardrobe, prop, set dressing procurement.
Sound: music procurement, location report.
- Week 5**
2/17 Auditions, callbacks & rehearsal. Prop/Wardrobe review and fittings.
Production rehearsal and set protocol.
Assignment for Week 6: cast list, shooting schedules, prop/wardrobe.
Director: pre-viz revised (storyboards, shot lists, floorplans).
Producer: shooting schedule, cast list and call sheets.
Editor: website update.
DP: equipment procurement/test.
Art: wardrobe, prop, set dressing procurement.
Sound: sound equipment procurement/test.

Week 6
2/24 Production: Principle Photography, Media Management, etc.
Assignment for Week 7: Selects, logs, media management, production stills.
Director: pick-up plan/shot list.
Producer: signed releases, updated schedule/call sheets.
Editor: selects and production stills.
DP: equipment return and reservation.
Art: returns and procurement, scripty notes/reports.
Sound: ADR/Foley.

Week 7
3/2 Review selects. Production post-mortem (group eval). Exhibition planning.
Post: Pick-ups, sound design, color correction and rough-cut
Assignment for Week 8: Fine cut, poster, website, trailer & exhibition plan.
Director: post-pro supervision.
Producer: festival strategy, FilmFreeway or WithoutaBox project.
Editor: rough-cut and fine-cut.
DP: color correction.
Art: key art/poster, website update.
Sound: sound design and mix (fine-cut).

******* *Spring Break* *******

Week 8
3/16 Review Fine-cuts and exhibition plans.
Project #2 review and crew assignments
Assignment for Week 9: see Assignments for Week 3.

Week 9
3/23 Review breakdowns and design plans. Casting calls, pre-viz and locations.
Assignment for Week 10: see Assignments for Week 4.

Week 10
3/30 Review tests. Casting. Pre-production: Scheduling, Releases & rehearsal.
Assignment for Week 11: see Assignments for Week 5.

Week 11
4/6 Auditions, callbacks, rehearsals. Prop/Wardrobe Review.
Assignment for Week 12: see Assignments for Week 6.

Week 12
4/13 Production: Principle Photography, Media Management, etc.
Assignment for Week 13: see Assignments for Week 7.

Week 13
4/20 Production: Principle Photography, pick-ups.
Assignment for Week 14: rough-cut.

Week 14
4/27 Review selects/rough. Production post-mortem (group eval).
Post: Pick-ups, rough-cut, sound design, and color correction.
Assignment for Final Exam: see Assignments for Week 8.

Final Exam Final Screening: review fine cuts and exhibition plans.

** Project 1's shooting period is 2/18-3/1. Please reserve the weekends of 2/19 and 2/26. Project 2's shooting period is 4/7-26. Please reserve the weekends of 4/8, 4/15 and 4/22.*

*** This syllabus and schedule are subject to revision as deemed necessary by the instructor. Any significant changes will be announced and posted to Sakai.*

Production Roles and Tasks

What follows is a list of the production roles along with the primary responsibilities and tasks associated with each job. Note: for a complete list of course assignments/tasks associated with each role, please consult the instructor and/or refer to the assignment schedule above.

Producer (UPM, Production Coordinator, Line Producer, 1st AD, Producer's Rep) – primary responsibilities include scheduling; paperwork/release; coordinating locations, cast and crew; budget management; exhibition strategy.

Director (Casting Director) – primary responsibilities include supervising auditions; scene analysis; camera/actor blocking; shot design; directing actors; choosing takes during post.

Director of Photography (Swing G&E, Camera Op, Colorist) – primary responsibilities include shot/visual design; equipment procurement; lighting; camera operation; grip work; and supervising color correction.

Art Director (Production Designer, Costume Designer, Prop Master, Hair & Make-up, Distribution Art, Script Supervisor) – primary responsibilities include set dressing; prop/wardrobe design and procurement; hair & make-up; continuity; key art design.

Sound Mixer (Production Sound Mixer, Composer, Music Supervisor, Sound Design) – primary responsibilities include sound recording; ADR; music acquisition; sound design and mix; and social media coordinator.

Editor (VFX, Colorist, Post-Production Supervisor, Title Design, Production Photographer, Webmaster). – primary responsibilities include title/credit design; visual effects and motion graphics; media management; editing; color correction; web design; and media prep.

Gaffer/1st AC/Producer's Rep/Other – primary responsibilities may include focus pulling; dolly operation; lighting; web and social media design; key art design; script supervision; etc.