MCOM 2320: Introduction to Media Production
Fall 2015
Mondays and Wednesdays, Noon-1:15 p.m., UC323
Professor Drew Morton
E-mail: DMorton@tamut.edu
Office Hours: Monday (1:30-2:30 p.m.), Wednesday (1:30-2:30 p.m.), Thursday (12:30-2:30 p.m.), UC228

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:
The worlds of television, video, and film production have all begun to converge in the contemporary moment. The American film industry is increasingly embracing digital distribution to cut down on analog 35mm print costs. American television is often shot on film studio backlots, using single-camera production methods that have been steadily established through Hollywood. Moreover, in another cost-cutting move, more and more studios and filmmakers are embracing digital video as an economic and malleable means to produce both film and television content. With this technological and industrial convergence noted, this course is designed to give you an overview of international film history (silent film, Russian Formalism, Classical Hollywood Cinema, German Expressionism, French Impressionism and Surrealism, Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and American Independent Cinema), the film industry (production, distribution, and exhibition), and critical concepts in film production (film form, genres of film, and film style). Moreover, you will be asked to apply these historical and critical concepts towards the production of four short film exercises by utilizing the foundational hardware (the DV camera) and software (Final Cut Express) that currently film, television, and video production.

Before the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the fundamental events in the history of film.
2. Describe the principles of film form and various elements of film production.
3. Mobilize the principles of film form and elements of film production.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the video camera.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of Final Cut Express.

REQUIRED TEXTS/MATERIALS:

Other required readings will be distributed in PDF format (via electronic distribution) or in photocopy form.

You will also need to be able to secure the films being assigned for a given day. You can do this through Netflix or Amazon Streaming most easily. [NOTE: Netflix may not have everything available for streaming, so you may wish to sign up for a disc plan.]
SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE

August 24th: Introduction to Course Material and American Movie
Reading: In-class handout regarding film terminology.
In-Class Screening: American Movie (Chris Smith and Sarah Price, 1999).

August 26th: American Movie, Continued.

WEEK TWO

August 31st: Film Production, Distribution, and Exhibition
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter One and pgs. 457-469.

September 2nd: Early Cinema
In-Class Screenings: Short films by the Lumière Brothers, Méliès, Porter, and Griffith.

WEEK THREE

September 7th: No Class Due to Labor Day Holiday

September 9th: Introduction to Production: The Camera
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapters Four and Five.

WEEK FOUR

September 14th: No Class - Lab Time for Assignment #1
Assignment #1: Introduction to Camera Movement: Make Your Own Single-Shot Lumière Short.

September 16th: Film Form and the Russian Formalists
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter Six and pgs. 476-479, and Eisenstein [PDF or Handout].
Outside of Class Screening: Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).
Assignment #1 Due via Vimeo or YouTube Link BEFORE Class Film Journal on Battleship Potemkin Due.

WEEK FIVE

September 21st: Introduction to Production: Editing
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter Eight.
In-Class Lab Workshop on Production Hardware and Software
Assignment #2: Make a Russian Montage Film [Group Assignment]: Follow in the Footsteps of Eisenstein by Making a Film that Engages in Intellectual Montage.
WEEK FIVE

September 23rd: Lab Time for Assignment #2

September 28th: Lab Time for Assignment #2

September 30th: Lab Time for Assignment #2

WEEK SIX

October 5th: Film Narrative, Style, and the Classical Hollywood Cinema
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapters Two and Three and pgs. 406-410.
Outside of Class Screening: The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming, 1939).
Assignment #2 Due via Vimeo or YouTube Link BEFORE Class

October 7th: Film Narrative, Style, and the Classical Hollywood Cinema
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, pgs. 480-483.
Outside of Class Screening: Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941).

WEEK SEVEN

October 12th: MIDTERM EXAM

October 14th: Film Genre
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter Nine.
Outside of Class Screening: Sunset Blvd. (Billy Wilder, 1944).
Screening Journal on The Wizard of Oz, Citizen Kane, or Sunset Blvd. Due.

WEEK EIGHT

October 19th: Screenwriting and Storyboarding
Assignment #3: Re-create a scene from Citizen Kane, The Wizard of Oz, or Sunset Blvd. (include a script transcription and storyboard!) in order to understand the Classical Hollywood Film Style [Group Project].

October 21st: Lab Time for Assignment #3

WEEK NINE

October 26th: Lab Time for Assignment #3

October 28th: Lab Time for Assignment #3

WEEK TEN

November 2nd: Film Sound
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter Seven.
Assignment #3 Due via Vimeo or YouTube Link BEFORE Class
Film Journal Entry on Blow Out Due.

November 4th: Alternatives to Hollywood: German Expressionism and French Surrealism
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, pgs. 469-476
Outside of Class Screening: Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, 1922) and Un Chien Andalou (Bunuel and Dali, 1928).
Film Journal Entry on Nosferatu Due.

WEEK ELEVEN

November 9th: Alternatives to Hollywood: Italian Neorealism and The French New Wave
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, pgs. 483-488, 415-420 and Bazin (PDF or handout).
Outside of Class Screening: Umberto D. (Vittorio De Sica, 1952) and Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960).
Film Journal Entry on Umberto D. OR Breathless Due.

November 11th: Alternatives to Hollywood: American Independent Cinema
Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, pgs. 488-494, 410-415.
Outside of Class Screening: Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989) AND one of the following films: Memento (Christopher Nolan, 2000), A Serious Man (The Coen Brothers, 2009), or Drive (Nicolas Winding Refn, 2011).
Assignment #4: Script, storyboard, shoot, and edit a 3-4 minute short film in one of the five alternative styles discussed in weeks eleven through thirteen [Group Project].

WEEK TWELVE

November 11th: Lab Time for Assignment #4

November 13th: Lab Time for Assignment #4
Proposal of Project Due

WEEK THIRTEEN

November 18th: Lab Time for Assignment #4

November 20th: Lab Time for Assignment #4

WEEK FOURTEEN

November 25th: Screening of Rough Cuts in Class
November 27th: Thanksgiving Holiday

WEEK FIFTEEN

December 2nd: In-Class Compression and Presentation for the Web, Upload to YouTube or Vimeo.

December 4th: In-Class Presentations
Assignment #4 Due via Vimeo or YouTube Link BEFORE Class.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Attendance/Participation/Quizzes: 10%
Screening Journal: 10% (5 entries, 2% each.)
Assignment #1: 10%
Assignment #2: 10%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Assignment #3: 15%
Assignment #4: 25%

COURSE POLICIES:
Be sure to complete your reading and assignments on the date they are scheduled on the syllabus.

Late assignments are not accepted.

In accordance with the University’s academic integrity policy (see below), students who violate the policy will earn an automatic F for the course.

Cell phones are to be set on vibrate and not to be used during class.

This course is structured like a workshop. That means that attendance and participation are especially important. You will be asked to share and critique one another’s work (constructively and kindly!). Please see me if you have any reservations about this.

You are not required to buy any hardware or software for this course. Supervised, in-class, lab time will be provided to you. If you should you need access to the lab’s resources outside of class, let me know.

You will need to provide a group report for your group assignments. Essentially, you must report to me what each group member did so I can determine if each student did his or her fair share of work.

Be sure to bring all your course materials to class each day we meet.
Finally, please allow a 24-48 hour turn-around time for any e-mails. Due to this policy, be sure not to leave any major concerns/questions about assignments for the last minute!

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus.

**TAMUT POLICIES:**

**Disability Accommodations:** Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of ‘F’ in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

**A&M-Texarkana Email Address:** Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

**Drop Policy:** Beginning with the first class day of the semester, faculty should report to the Registrar’s Office via the preliminary class roster and/or email communication, by a date established by the Registrar’s Office, any student who is not attending their class or who has not logged into Blackboard for an online class.

Faculty members shall automatically initiate an administrative drop for any student who has not been in attendance (face to face class) or has not reported in (web or web enhanced class) by the due date of the preliminary class roster as established by the Registrar’s Office. The Registrar’s Office will notify students by certified mail and/or email that the instructor has initiated the drop process and will instruct them to contact the instructor immediately. If the instructor does not rescind the request in writing within seven (7) days of documentable receipt of the notification, the Registrar’s Office will drop the student from the class. Faculty who fail to submit an administrative drop by the established deadline, must record the grade earned by the student at the end of the semester. Faculty submitting a grade of F for a student will be required to enter the last date of attendance during the grading cycle.

Subsequent to the census date final roster, all drops during the semester must be student initiated.