

“PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION METHODS”

Boston University - COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

COM F/T 552 E Section B1 FALL 2006

Los Angeles Internship Program

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SYLLABUS

The objective of this class:

To introduce film and television students to professional quality production techniques, suppliers, and equipment. This will be by field trips and speakers in the PLB classroom and at:

- film and video shoots
- vendors – camera suppliers, lighting & grip, etc.
- post-production facilities – edit houses, labs, sound mixing, video post

The class will meet one-day-a-week for 3 hours. There will be homework assignments including short papers and submitting a journal detailing the students’ experiences at the various field trips (including names and specific contact efforts regarding “networking” and continued learning in all phases of production).

*I will provide regularly scheduled office hours and I will also be available to students by way of arranged individual appointments in order to help students with questions particular to their class experience and their career goals.

The class will consist of, primarily, required excursions; it will also include lectures, guest speakers, screenings, class discussions, and demonstrations. The class meetings, insofar as possible, will be informal, striving for an open exchange of ideas, points of view, experiences and difficulties encountered in film and video production. Students are encouraged to participate in an open forum of discussions regarding techniques, problems encountered related to directing and producing skills, and so forth. We will also discuss potential solutions to problems, some of which are routinely encountered in the film industry and some of which we will invent. I will share with the class the experiences, difficulties, problems, solutions and successes I’ve had as a commercial filmmaker (shooting mostly 35mm film in professional high budget situations) over a long career in the television commercial industry.

N.B.: Each student is responsible for making their own travel arrangements to the various field sites that are set up as part of the learning experience for this course. It is recommended, because of limited parking, and to conserve resources, that students carpool or use public transportation when/if possible. Student's travel to and from these excursion destinations remains the responsibility of the students. Most of these excursions will take place within the greater Los Angeles area.

Be sure to check your e-mail daily: For last minute scheduling changes, driving directions, parking plans, etc. We have no other way of getting information to you.

If you have questions or comments related to this syllabus or to the course please contact me by way of email: bill@linsman.com. Also, to review my personal web page: www.crocker.com/~linsman/

Proposed sessions as follows, though scheduling/order will likely change:

- _ **Session 1 –Introduction and course goals:** Introduction of participants and instructor; share previous works (showreels, portfolios, etc). Brief discussion of the plan for the following eleven sessions. Convey the goals of the course and expectations of the students’ work.
- **Session 2 – How a set works, on-stage; and on-location:** Lecture/discussion of the mechanics of a “set”; the organization of labor, protocol, chain-of-command.
- **Session 3 - How the professional film and video business is structured:** Lecture/discussion about the film and television production structure. Assignment: Research and write a brief analysis of a typical production company.
- **Session 4 – The equipment supplier:** Visit to a lighting and/or camera supplier.
- **Session 5 – The director as the aesthetic leader:** A guest speaker; a feature or episodic director, or a feature line producer who talks about the decisions and responsibilities he/she faces on a daily basis. We may screen previous work of the guest. Class will see typical dailies from a feature, a commercial, and/or television episode.
- **Session 6 – Further defining the look:** Selected students will present director’s interpretation to class,. Screening various examples of types of photography, editing, and various approaches to the same concept. The idea of staying flexible. Discussion of criteria selecting a director of photography (DP). Possible excursion to American Society of Cinematographers.
- **Session 7 – Problem solving:** Lecture/discussion/demonstration about dealing with conflict. How to be resourceful and creative when the budget is tight. How to use available resources wisely. Screening of production, behind-the-scenes documentaries. Assignment: Offer, in writing, several possible solutions to three directing/producing problems as presented in written form by the instructor.
- **Session 8 – Choosing the right performers/maintaining control:** Students are briefed on professional protocol. Criteria for making the right choices are explained. The psychological ramifications of such choices and the interpersonal relationship between writer, producer, director, and (studio). Visit to a casting agency. Assignments: Read handout of portions of *Directing Actors* by Judith Weston.
- **Session 9 & 10 – Visits to feature or episodic film set. TBD**
- _ **Section 11 – Visit to a stage-oriented series with multiple cameras. (or possibly a special effects shooting set TBD.)**
- _ **Section 12- The indispensable supplier: The LAB:** Lecture/visit to a major film laboratory
- **Session 13 - Finishing the work:** Visit to an editorial and/or post production facility
- **Session 14 - “Pick-ups”:** Further discussion about topics not already covered + **FINAL EXAM** + **research paper due;** + **career paths meetings** (group or individual TBD).

NOTE: Occasionally, when scheduling will not permit adherence to the above plan, a screening/discussion of a behind-the-scenes production-oriented documentary will supplant a speaker or excursion.

By the end of the course the students should be thoroughly familiar with the design, production, and the director's and producer's responsibilities. They will be familiar with vendor/producer relationships, state of the art (basic) equipment, and what is expected of key participants (producer, director, actors, DP, editor) in the film and/or video production in varying situations and in multiple formats.

Reading: Required reading: *The American Cinematographer Magazine, Below the Line* (these two publications will be provided free of charge by the publishers)

Recommended Reading:

The People and Process of Film and Video Production by Lorene M. Wales, Pearson Education, 2005
ISBN 0-205-37521-9

In The Blink of an Eye by Walter Murch, Silman-James Press, 2001 ISBN 1-879505-62-2

Creative Postproduction by Robert Benedetti, Michael Brown, Bernie Laramie, and Patrick Williams, Pearson, Allyn & Bacon, 2004, ISBN 0-205-37575-8

Grading: Attendance & Class assignments*: 40%
Research Paper**: 30%
Final Exam: 30%

*Including excursion/contact diary, ideas and work associated with the excursions.

Note: Any late assignments will be penalized at the instructor's discretion.

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions.

Re attendance: 1 percentage point deducted for each tardy; 3 points deducted for each unexcused absence.

** Research Paper: Students are expected to use resources available in Los Angeles to thoroughly examine a specific production. They will be expected to write a 4-6 page paper detailing the creation and development of a specific production, the choice of a director, the specifics of the production (methods of shooting and post-production, casting, special effects, pre-production meeting highlights), and the airing/screening and subsequent financial (if available) and critical impact of the production. Further, the students are encouraged to critique any and all of the activities involved, and argue the pros and cons of the positions taken by the producer, talent, director, and studio (or financing entity).

Grading conversion chart: 95-100 =A, 91-94=A-, 88-90=B+, 86-87=B. 84-85=B-, 82-83=C+, 78-81=C, 74-77=C-, 70-73=D, 69 and below=F.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

A word about participation: You are expected to contribute energetically to all shoots, regardless of your duties, a to behave in a professional manner at all times. During conferences and critique sessions, anything less than alert and active involvement is unsatisfactory.
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Please also note that repeated absences or routine tardiness will have an adverse effect on your grade. Furthermore, a minimum level of attendance is required in order to receive credit for this course. Students who miss more than one-third of the class sessions, regardless of the quality of their other work for the course, will receive an “F”.

Completion of *all* assignments is a basic requirement of this course. Failure to complete any single component of the coursework— regardless of its value within the overall grading structure— will constitute a failure to complete the course as a whole and will result in an “F” for the course.

Finally, failure to abide by departmental policy and other misconduct, including cases involving the suspicion of plagiarism, will result in a hearing before the Academic Affairs Committee.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's creative and/or academic work as your own, in full or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those words, pictures or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes, or sources, other than that created in a work of fiction, is also plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension or expulsion.

PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION METHODS- MEETING DATES-SPRING 06

NOTE- READING ASSIGNMENTS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DATE OF THE CLASS MEETING; OTHER ASSIGNMENT DUE-DATES TO BE PUBLISHED

Meeting specifics, beyond dates specified below, have not been fixed at this time. So a revised, detailed document will be given out to the class OR you will receive e-mails specifying meeting locations and times---
SO—watch your e-mails, especially checking the morning of the day of the class dates below FOR ANY CHANGES!!! -- Please make sure you plan on class meetings (including excursions) for the following dates:

September 8 First meeting of class (note-this is a Friday, replacing a Monday holiday)

September 11

September 18

September 25 (Note this class MAY be replaced by a Friday session Sept. 29, because of the proposed symposium on Sept. 25)

October 2 (Yom Kippur**)

October 9

October 16

October 23

October 30

November 6

November 13

November 27

December 4 - FINAL EXAM + final day of class