

# BU Composite Course Syllabus COM FT352

**Course Number and Title:** COM FT352 – Film Production Using Video

**Instructor/s Name:** Dr Will Davies Ph.D.

**Course Dates:** Spring semesters only

**Office Location:** BU Sydney Programs, Australia, a division of BU Study Abroad.  
15-25 Regent Street, Chippendale. NSW

**Course Time:** This course runs for 40 hours across a 7-week teaching session (intensive delivery) and meets twice per week; Monday (2-6.30pm) and Tuesday (1-4pm)

**Location:** Classrooms, BU Sydney Academic Centre, Sydney, Australia

**Contact Information:** Cell : 0411.725.847 Email: [will@willdavies.net.au](mailto:will@willdavies.net.au)

**Office Hours:** 10 minutes prior to and following class; or via a scheduled appointment

**Principal Lecturer:** Dr. Will Davies  
Veteran film documentary producer of 37 years, author and historian.

**Guest Lecturers:** DAVID COLLINS: 45 years as documentary cameraman  
PHILIP HOWE: 50 years as documentary editor and teacher  
BAYLIN DAVIES: 20 years as media producer and editor  
BILL LEIMBACH: Leading feature film producer originally from California with over 45 years' experience.

## **Question-driven Course Description:**

- In a visual media world where information, facts and images are instant and in high demand, how can we identify practical ways to construct and deliver information?
- How can the basic skills of storytelling and film production be understood and used in new ways and with new technology?

- What observational skills will students gain to better assess information and understand the creative process of film production?
- What challenges will students face in applying technology to an idea, their script or factual documentary and deliver a finished film that addresses the criteria of the course?

What educational strategies will students employ in answering and exploring these questions, and how will their progress be assessed throughout the course?

Students will employ a variety of strategies in answering all the above questions. These include: attending lectures, classroom discussions, undertaking practical location filming exercises, experiencing practical tuition and ‘hands on’ experience with both camera and editing equipment, learning to research, develop and ‘pitch’ ideas to the professor and the class and attend a master class with a veteran producer of both feature films and documentary.

During this time, they will be exposed to visual challenges, new ways to look at composition, screen movement, light and the subtlety of direction, visual persuasion and argument. Reading the required texts, watching films and understanding visual language in all forms will transfer students into another level of perception and appreciation.

During the 40-hour course, students will be taken through the following:

- An overview of the film and television production industry and the role various creative technicians like producers, directors, editors, writers and cinematographers play in the creative process.
- A practical class on operating and getting the best from a video camera, lighting basics and a review of the work of the cinematographer.
- Basic directing including camera moves, composition, screen direction and covering the action.
- Basic producing skills, both theoretical and practical, including an understanding of the producer’s role, copyright, pitching an idea, crew selection and creative roles and the overall management and control of a production to completion.
- Script writing skills including defining, then refining, the topic or story, getting ideas on paper and working to have ideas or script realised on film.

- The editing process including shot listing and completing a paper edit, working with a director and the practical skills required to operate one of a number of edit programs available on a laptop computer.
- Finally, introducing and screening the final production.

**Course Credits:** 4 BU credits

**Hub Units:** 2 Hub areas:

Capacity: Communication

Area: Digital/Multimedia Expression (1 unit)

*Learning Outcome 1:*

*Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.*

*Communication through means other than words—whether spoken or written—requires a distinct set of skills. In a world where messages are routinely conveyed through audio visual media, BU students need to develop an understanding of the role and impact of colour, composition, rhythm, and acoustics that matches their mastery of verbal syntax and rhetoric. Today, in addition to live performances and installations, BU graduates receive information and experience the world through websites, videos, and podcasts. They must be able not only to consume and appreciate these and other forms of digital expression, but to evaluate and produce them. Courses in this area must have all outcomes.*

This course will develop an understanding of the role and impact of traditional production and media skills and reveal how to apply these to the evolving worlds of social media, corporate communications, information transmission, through production skills and theoretical knowledge.

During the course, students work in creative teams on a film project which essentially provides a visual narrative of images and sound, taking into account colour, rhythm of speech and acoustics. The focus is also on content, and shaped by a range of creative factors including composition, screen direction and editing. This content also reflects the film's message, audience and creative 'devise' in visualizing a concept and delivering a completed 'message'.

This is a creative process involving research, scripting, pre-production, filming, editing and post production through to delivery. With the need for a range of skills, this process relies heavily on teamwork, co-operation and collaborative contribution. Students are taught the fundamentals of visual expression, skills and techniques that are as relevant today as they were throughout the develop of the film production process. This includes the production of short Youtube type videos, websites, and a range of visual content used across the evolving landscape of social media and information transfer.

*Learning Outcome 2:*

*Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and be able to use these technologies ethically and effectively.*

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and be able to use these technologies ethically and effectively. Students will be instructed in the use of video tape cameras and electronic digital-based edit systems to complete the production of a film. Because students work in teams and on location in public and private spaces, students will be made aware to clear locations, deal with municipal requirements, and inform residents of the time, date, and content of their film work.

Back in the lab, the editing process begins with the digitisation of their shot material, the creation of a shot list, and then the writing (with the full team's involvement) of a "paper edit". From here, a non-linear edit is completed using one of a range of new, computer-based edit programs.

*Learning Outcome 3:*

*Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of visual communication, such as principles governing design, time-based and interactive media, and the audio-visual representation of qualitative and quantitative data.*

Working to tight deadlines, students, having acquired the necessary skills of film making and editing, can demonstrate the production process that highlights their understanding of the visual skills necessary to complete a film. The 'design' aspects of their film project begin with the idea and the 'message' and from this, evolves script writing and other aspects of the conceptual design in terms of light, colour saturation, set design and planning, and a range of other design considerations based on the overall concept design for the film project.

Capacity: Intellectual Toolkit

Area: Teamwork/Collaboration – one unit

*In today's world, team work is the key to efficient and effective effort and productive outcomes. Across the spectrum of skills, trades and professions, employers, team leaders and management rely on the building and maintaining of teams who can provide a range of oft-times diverse skills from a range of backgrounds and perspectives, to combine for the common purpose. However, this teamwork and the management of creative, productive teams requires unique skills and a co-operative spirit, something that also needs nurturing and building.*

Producing media across a broad spectrum of genres and platforms requires students to contribute skills in a team enterprise to secure an end product. Students need to co-operate, work together and function as a team and the media production process requires this co-operation and mutual support where separate and disparate ideas, skills and points-of-view are pooled and coordinated in a unique way.

This course is designed to not only provide students with basic practical and theoretical skills to visualise factual and fictional scripted information and from this, produce a film project which demonstrates these skills and which can be used for future employment opportunities. It also teaches the need to combine these creative skills, to contribute and share ideas and collaborate in a positive, team-based way for a single outcome.

### Learning Outcome 1

Teamwork begins with the first location filming exercise where students are rotated around various production roles including directing, camera operation, note taking, shot identification and the co-ordination of talent, as well as assisting the movement of the camera (grip role) and also site safety and traffic control. By undertaking each role, students are made aware of the importance of teamwork and providing skills in a collaborative and positive way.

### Learning Outcome 2

In a second production stage, that of editing, students are again assigned production roles and required, in a collaborative and meaningful way, to contribute to the editing and final post production process of the film project. This often involves discussion, the analysis of ideas and the selection and justification of a way forward. Students need to take criticism and engage in solid discussion and feedback to ensure that the

best outcomes are generated by the creative team, that ideas are espoused, discussed, rejected or accepted and then seamlessly integrated into the team project. This at times requires both respect for opinions and ideas and also a modesty and acceptance of other ideas as opposed to one's own. This sheds a strong light on real teamwork, collective collaboration and the engagement and blending of ideas and results.

The formation of teams by students to successfully navigate the requirements of the course, strengthens these skills in each individual which they can take forward in the workplace or to other ventures in their personal lives. They will come away from this course with new skills and an appreciation of how teamwork and collaborative contribution make for a better end product and better project outcome.

### Other Outcomes

Study Abroad Sydney Program Outcome:

The student will “demonstrate knowledge of Australian culture and society” with respect to a combination of the following areas: Australian politics, industry, science and technology, economics, social policy, environmental policy, literature and the arts, film, marketing, advertising, and mass media”.

### Instructional Format: Lecture, Seminar, Field Trips and Guest Speaker Pedagogy

After an introduction to the course, explaining the course outlines and the assessment procedures, the practical skills will be demonstrated and blended with theoretical information and notional imagery. For this course, formal lectures, group pitching workshops, practical hands-on experience, guest lectures, field trips, and seminar presentations have been organised. Attendance at, and preparatory reading for, all sessions is compulsory.

All students will be expected to contribute to all practical workshop and seminar discussions. In this regard, they will have to research and script two ideas as potential film projects and present these to the class in a pitching session. They will therefore need to prepare for each session and read the supplied student notes and be ready to undertake practical instruction and then demonstrate these skills in the examination and marking process. Apart from a final examination, each student will also be expected to submit a completed film, made by a student team within the class and then screen this before the entire BU student body.

## Courseware

[www.bu.edu/learn](http://www.bu.edu/learn)

This is an active online link to all materials including the course outline, criteria sheets, due dates of assignments, secondary sources, online links, and announcements. From time to time, there is contemporary material posted on blackboard learn.

## Assessment and Grading

This course is assessed based on four separate examinable sections. The first is for the pitch and supporting documentation (30%), the second for the film project (40%), the third, the final examination (25%) and a final 5% for class contribution.

The following is provided to students and posted on blackboard learn to clarify the assessment process.

Final assessment for this course will be made from four separate elements:

1.	Pitch and supporting documentation	TOTAL 30%
2.	Film project	TOTAL 40%
3.	Final examination	TOTAL 25%
4.	Class contribution	TOTAL 5%

### 1. Pitch and Supporting Documentation

In class 2 of week 2, each student will have to present two “pitches” – possible story lines for the production of the class film projects.

These pitches will take approximately two or three minutes per story line and will be presented in front of the class. This will be given a total score out of 30%; and be made up of:

- \* 5% each for the quality of the idea x 2
- \* 5% for the quality of the delivery of the pitch to the class.
- \* A further 15% will be for the presentation of the idea on paper and supporting documentation. This documentation will include:
  - \* A one page Treatment of each of your two stories.
  - \* Story board of one idea, the one you like the best.
  - \* List of elements you need like locations, actors, for that film.

This is the first assignment for the course and due on Friday of week 2.

## 2. Film Project:

The class will divide into production teams of two or three to make their chosen film. Students can select which film ideas they would like to make and form teams around the writer to complete the film project. It is suggested that the following team members will be:

- Director-writer
- Cameraman-editor
- Producer-sound recordist

The team as a whole will be responsible for the completed film and all members of that production team will be marked equally. The maximum mark for the film is 40%.

The film exercise is to make a film for YOUTUBE. The film should have a strong Australian influence and NOT be an American story shot in Sydney. The focus should be on difference, on comparison, on questioning known values, and on making the most of the Australian experience by challenging yourself and your current mindset. The chief exploration is: creative thoughts and ways, given the tools at hand, to experiment, express ideas and to explore cultural differences between what you know at home and what you find here. This is an important element to the film making process, much like a commercial brief to make a film or promotional presentation and marks will be deducted if this is not met.

REMEMBER, this is a film/video for the internet and part of the brief. Think how you can get thousands of hits by making a film that works for this medium. This is what you will be graded on.

## 3. Final Examination:

Each student will sit for a final examination. This will be made up of short questions, often with one word answers, multiple choice questions, short written answers and one longer, essay-type answer of about 250-400 words.

The weighting for this exam is 25%.

This 2-hour examination will be in the BU Sydney Central campus complex on Friday of Week 7



Grades will be provided on the Boston University alpha scale: from A at the top down to D and F if appropriate. (See grading scale in a grid at the end of this course overview.)

It should be noted that as this course and the information and technical aspects of production will be new to most students, consideration will be given in the allocation of grades bearing this in mind.

The film project is an effort to learn, understand and contribute, but most importantly to engage, and be creative.

#### 4. Class Contribution:

Each student is expected to attend every class, be punctual and active within the classroom forum. Students must be on time, and may not bring food, including coffee into the classroom. (Water is okay). The program Academic Director imposes strict grade penalties for missing a portion of, or a whole class.

Students are encouraged to ask questions during lecture times and to actively participate and engage with the rest of the students.

A mark of up to 5% will be awarded for the degree of class participation of each student.

#### **Resources/Support/How to Succeed in This Course:**

There is the opportunity for students to meet professors face-to-face either ahead of, or following class times; students can also make contact for longer meeting times via email or submit questions via email.

The way to succeed in this course is to keep reading along the time line of required readings. Being prepared for each scheduled class will mean students reap more from lectures, modules, and interactive class discussions. Time management is crucial to such success, as is an open and enquiring mind. Following advice contained in this course outline will also be of great value.

When writing or presenting, it is crucial that students are guided by the Grading Criteria as a means to successful navigation of requirements.

Professors are notified of students with documented disabilities or special needs ahead of first classes and offer assistance to these students in line with BU policy.

### **Course Required Reading List**

This course, while principally directed at practical skills, requires students to read both practical film/video production handbooks, but also books covering screen history and theory. The following will be required reading for the course:

- Barnouw, E.           *Documentary: A History of Non-Fiction Film*  
Oxford UP, Oxford, 1993.
- Collins, D.           *Hollywood Downunder: Australians at the Movies 1896 to the Present.* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1987
- FitzSimons, K.       *Australian Documentary: History Practices and Genres*  
et al (eds)           Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011
- Hamilton, P.         *American Dreams, Australian Movies*  
And Mathews, S.     Currency Press, Sydney 1986
- Dancyger, K.         *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*  
Focal Press, Waltham, Mass. 2006
- Millerson, G.        *Video Camera Techniques*  
Focal Press, Waltham, Mass. 2015
- Proferes, N.         *Film Directing Fundamentals*  
Routledge, Waltham, Mass. 2017
- Mascelli, J.V.        *The Three C's of Cinematography*  
Silman-James Press, Hollywood, 2005

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

The course meets twice per week and usually runs over a Monday afternoon (2pm-6.30pm) and Tuesday afternoon, (1pm-4pm)

#### WEEK 1:

Monday     An introduction to the course. David Collins camera and lighting Master Class.

- Tuesday Reading: Millerson, G. *Video Camera Techniques*  
Basic Directing I (theory) and examples.  
Reading: *The Three C's of Cinematography*
- WEEK 2:
- Monday Basic Directing II (practical). Shoot the short film *Rendezvous*.  
Screening rushes. NOTE: early start on this day at 1pm.  
Reading: Read the script for the shoot.
- Tuesday Pitching session. Assessing and developing an idea.  
Reading: *Australian Documentary: History Practices and Genres*
- WEEK 3:
- Monday Editing Master Class with Philip Howe  
Reading: *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*
- Tuesday Editing Master Class with Philip Howe  
Reading: *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*
- WEEK 4:
- Monday Location film with Will Davies. Status and review of film projects.  
Reading: *Film Directing Fundamentals*
- Tuesday Producer Master Class with Bill Leimbach  
Reading: *American Dreams, Australian Movies*
- WEEK 5: MELBOURNE (Full program fieldtrip – FT 352 students requested to sign up for the scheduled visit the Museum of the Moving Image, Federation Square.)
- WEEK 6:
- Monday Class editing – paper edit, transfers, digitizing and logging material shot. No Reading for these edit sessions.
- Tuesday Start edit on class film project.
- WEEK 7:
- Monday Continue edit on class film project
- Tuesday Complete fine cut and sound post production ready for screening.

Although the schedule is intended to be final, it may, from time to time, be necessary to alter it. Should changes be needed, students will be given adequate time to accommodate them. In all such cases, students will be notified individually and a message will be posted on blackboard learn. Any student missing class without verifiable extraordinary reasons will be penalized through grade deduction in

fairness to those who do attend. This includes any guest speaker sessions, and field trips. There are also grade penalties for late submission of written work or missing a final examination. Late work attracts a penalty grade deduction of 5% per day of the grade; missing an examination is generally considered as an omission of that grade weighting from the student's overall mark. In both these cases, however, should the student show just cause (illness, extraordinary circumstance) for their late submission or missing of an exam, the Sydney Program Academic Director will give due consideration to their case.

## **Community of Learning: Class and University Policies**

1. Course members' responsibility for ensuring a positive learning environment (e.g. participation/discussion guidelines).

It is the responsibility of both the professor and all student members of the class to ensure a positive learning environment. It is thus understood that any member of the class who demonstrates behavior which undermines this positive learning environment will: firstly, be questioned and counseled regarding this behavior seeking a satisfactory outcome; secondly, upon further recurrence, be brought into the delivery of the class material in an effort to involve them more; lastly, in light of the behavior continuing, the student will be expelled from the learning space for the rest of the class, and receive a grade penalty according to BU Sydney protocols regarding absenteeism.

2. Attendance & Absences

Attendance at all designated sessions including those with Guest Speakers and field trips is expected. There are no optional absences from class sessions.

Any student missing class without verifiable extraordinary reasons will receive a grade penalty according to protocols set down for BU Sydney by the Program Academic Director.

3. Assignment Completion and Late Work

Completion of all reading/viewing/writing tasks is expected. All written work must be submitted in hard copy through the BU Sydney Library by the time set down in the course outline. For some assignments, an additional soft copy emailed to professors may be required, as indicated.

Our policy on late submission of work is that, unless there is a verifiable extraordinary reason, there is a grade deduction, imposed amounts to 5% of the assignment grade per day which will be processed by the Academic Director.

All written work must be submitted in hard copy with signed cover sheet through the BU Sydney Library by the time set down in the course outline. For some

assignments, an additional soft copy emailed to professors may be required.

- All students are required to sit examinations (without exception) but special times and spaces are made available to those students with documented disabilities, and special needs such as Religious Observance, and any other verifiable extraordinary reasons.

BU Sydney Policy adheres to the general BU campus policy of Religious Observance, which would fall under “verifiable extraordinary reasons” as mentioned in various places above.

4) Academic Conduct Statement:

All students attending courses under the auspices of BU Sydney must have read BU’s policy on academic honesty and understand the consequences of cheating or plagiarism. Within this course, all submitted written work is expected to be that of the individual and only class exercises are collaborative efforts, as indicated. Please see BU’s Academic Conduct Statement:

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

Students on a BU Program are advised that the penalty for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean".

Grading

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	below 60