

INTRODUCTION TO PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE

FILM 20P

WINTER 2008

<http://arts.ucsc.edu/faculty/Gustafson/FILM%2020P.W08.syllabus.html>

Instructor : Irene Gustafson • ireneg@ucsc.edu • COMM 125 • 831. 459 1498

Office Hours: Thursday 12pm-1pm and by appointment

Class: T/TH 1:00pm-2:45pm Studio C/ Communications Building

Teaching Assistants: Antoine Abou Jaoude aaboujao@ucsc.edu
Drew Detweiler ddetweil@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Antoine Abou Jaoude
Drew Detweiler

Sections:

01A	Friday	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Comm 121	Drew Detweiler
01B	Friday	1:15 PM - 2:15 PM	Comm 121	Drew Detweiler
01C	Friday	2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Comm 121	Antoine Abou Jaoude
01D	Friday	3:45 PM - 4:45PM	Comm 121	Antoine Abou Jaoude

COURSE OVERVIEW

"The camera is an instrument that teaches people to see without a camera"
-Dorothea Lange

"The enemy of art is the absence of limitations"
-Orson Welles

"Cameras do not make films; filmmakers make films not by adding more equipment or personnel but by using what you have to the fullest capacity. The most important equipment is yourself, your mobile body, your imaginative mind and your freedom to use both"
- Maya Daren

This class is designed to introduce students to the production processes of visual/aural, time-based, creative work. Students will work on numerous creative projects: performed, written, photographed and created digitally. With an emphasis on low-budget, independent film and video making, we will study all aspects of production from idea generation, conceptualization and scripting through post-production. Assignments, both written and creative, will emphasize creativity, visualization, research and production organization. Presentation of ideas in both the written word and visual media are integral to the production of creative media and form the basis of the assignments for this class.

Course Objectives:

- To demystify the creative process so that you can develop your own and/or become more aware of your own creative processes
- To develop creative adeptness at translating ideas into well designed and competently executed visual works.
- To develop a more sophisticated level of media literacy in creating and seeing, i.e., learning how to constructively critique.
- To foster the collaborative sense necessary for the production of film and video.

→ To develop an understanding and appreciation of production aesthetics, techniques, and technologies. Please be aware that there is a course materials fee of \$15.00 plus \$1.00 administrative fee to cover film rentals and other course materials.

EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT

The equipment checkout facility is located in Communications

Check In: Monday/ Thursday 9:00am-12:30pm

Check Out: Tuesday/ Friday 12:30pm - 4:00pm

fdmcheckout@ucsc.edu 459-4062

The following equipment is available to you on first come first serve basis

Video/Still:

- Apple iSight Webcam (8)
- Canon PowerShot G2 Digital Still Camera (4)

Audio:

- Olympus LS-10 Handheld Audio Recorder (4)
- Sony PCM-D50 Handheld Audio Recorder (5)
- Zoom H2 Handheld Audio Recorder (2)

To sign up for equipment checkout:

1. You must be enrolled for the course
2. you must login at <https://slugfilm.ucsc.edu/secure/signup/>

You are responsible for providing your own digital media storage [CD, DVD], signing up for equipment access via slugfilm, and setting up server space for yourself on 'softserve'.

SLUGFILM— http://film.ucsc.edu/facilities/slugfilm_landing.html

FDM PRODUCTION WIKI— http://128.114.20.49/fwiki/index.php/Main_Page

REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING CREDIT

→ Attendance and participation at both lecture and section is mandatory. Sections will allow students to explore the concepts presented in class through assignments and discussion on a more individualized basis.

→ Three missed sections will constitute a NO PASS in the course, and active participation will count favorably in determining evaluations.

→ *Reading assignments should be completed BEFORE class.*

→ Careful and conscientious treatment of equipment and facilities.

REQUIRED READING:

[available at the Bay Tree Bookstore]

→ Course Reader

ASSIGNMENTS

Your final evaluation and/or grade in the class will be based on the following:

✓ Attendance and Participation		10%
✓ Exercise 1: Alien Anthropologist/Show and Tell	due week 3/in section	5%
✓ Exercise 2: Still Images in Sequence/compositions	due week 4/ in section	10%
✓ Exercise 3: Study of a Space	due week 5/ in section	10%
✓ Exercise 4: Writing a scene	due week 6/ in section	10%
✓ Exercise 5: Performance	due week 7/ in section	5%
✓ Exercise 6: Portrait/Image and Text	due week 8/ in section	15%
✓ Exercise 7: iLife compilation project	due week 10/TH June 4th	25%
✓ Final Exam	Monday June 8 th 4-6pm	10%

- Students must complete each of the assignments in order to pass the class.
- Late assignments will not be accepted; missed exams will not be rescheduled, so please plan your time and commitments carefully. Any emergency situation or special condition should be discussed with the Instructor, not only with your TA.
- Incompletes for the course are NOT routinely given. Please assess your time commitments early in the term. An Incomplete will make you ineligible to proceed into another FILM production class until the "I" has been cleared the following Quarter.
- Lectures will be organized around the topics and the films as listed. Films can be reviewed and studied further at the Film & Music Center at McHenry Library.
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SCHEDULE

- 1 T March 31**
Introduction to the class, assignments, sections and expectations, Admissions
- TH April 2**
Visualization Techniques: framing, aesthetics, and composition.
Photography, Exposure, Depth of Field
Reading Due: [CR] James Monaco, "Technology: Image and Sound"
- SECTION:** No section this week
- 2 T April 7**
Visualization Techniques: framing, aesthetics, and composition.
Photography, Exposure, Depth of Field
Reading Due: Bruce Mamer "Creating the Shots"
Herbert Zettl, "The Two-Dimensional Field: Area" and "The Three-Dimensional Field: Depth and Volume"

TH April 9

How we "read" images/ "Learning to See"

Introduction to iLife

Reading Due: John Berger "Ways of Seeing" Chapter 1, 2, + 3
Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation"

SECTION: Photography/"production groups"

3 T April 14

Photography & Images in sequences

Screening: *La Jetee* [France, Chris Marker, 29 min.] VT1288/ DVD81

Reading Due: Scott McCloud, "Understanding Comics" Ch. 1, 3, + 4
John Berger, "Another Way of Telling" (2 parts),

TH April 16

Alien Exercise

20P assignment workflow: 'softserve,' iphoto, garageband, imovie, idvd

SECTION: ✓ **EXERCISE 1 DUE: "Alien Anthropologist"**

4 T April 21

Form + Content

Mis-en-Scene/Things you include in the "scene"/Working with light and objects

Reading Due: Kris Malkiewicz "Lighting"
Studs Terkel, "Brett Hauser" and "Jill Torrance"

TH April 23

Writing

Alphabet Exercise—still image

Reading Due: short story by A.M Homes, "Chunky in Heat"
David Foster Wallace, "Forever Overhead"

SECTION: ✓ **EXERCISE 2 DUE: "Still Images in a Sequence/compositions"**
Berger vs. Sontag

5 T April 28

Writing a scene

Pre-production/Treatments

Reading Due: [CR] Dancyger and Rush "Beyond the Rules," "Dramatic Voice/Narrative Voice," "Working with Genre"

TH April 30

Screening: *Visions of Light* [USA, Stuart Samuels, 1992, 92 min.] DVD3924

SECTION: ✓ **Exercise 3: Study of a Space**
Communications Computer Lab

- 6 T May 5**
 Acting, Casting, Directing + Drama, Stereotypes
 Screening: *Psycho* [USA, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, 109 min] DVD34/
Psycho [USA, Gus Van Sant, 1999, 104 min.] DVD2383
 Reading Due: Rabiger, "Directing the Actors"
 Mike Leigh, "Directors on Actors and Acting,"
- TH May 7**
 Working with 'iLife'
- SECTION: Communications Computer Lab
 ✓ EXERCISE 4 DUE: "Writing the Scene"
- 7 T May 12**
 Genre and constraints
 Screening: *The Five Obstructions* (Denmark, 2004, 90 min.) DVD3165
 Reading Due: Dogme 95, "The Vow of Chastity"
 Anthony Kaufman, "Breaking Von Trier: Jorgen Leth Survives 'The Five Obstructions'" from <http://www.indiewire.com>
- TH May 14**
 The Documentary Performance
 Screening: *Mister Death* (USA, Errol Morris, 2000, 92 min.) DVD1061
 Reading Due: Interview with Errol Morris, "The Truth is Not Subjective"
 Robert Coles, "The Tradition: Fact and Fiction"
- SECTION: ✓ EXERCISE 5 DUE: "Performance"
- 8 T May 19**
 Sound/ Listening Exercises
 Reading Due: Michel Chion, "Projections of Sound on Image" and "The Three Listening Modes" and Microphone pick-up patterns
- TH May 21**
 Working with Garageband
- SECTION: Communications Computer Lab
 ✓ Exercise 6: "Portrait/Image and Text"
- 9 T May 26**
 Sound + Image
 Screening: *Playtime* [France, Jacques Tati, 1967, 108 min.] DVD3938

TH May 28
Editing— continuity vs. disruptive
Reading Due: Walter Murch, "Cut Out the Bad Bits"
SECTION: Communications Computer Lab

10 T June 2
Review for Final Exam

TH June 4
✓ **EXERCISE 7 DUE: iLife compilation project. DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**
critiques

SECTION: NO SECTION THIS WEEK

FINAL EXAM Monday June 8th 4-6pm

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

✓ Attendance and Participation

✓ Exercise 1: Alien Anthropologist/Show + Tell

One must die as a sighted person to be born again as a blind person and the opposite is equally true: one must die as a blind person to be born again as a seeing person.

Your task is to imagine that you come from a planet that has no visual culture- a society of the blind or a society that has never developed visual representation or has never found visual information of any special interest. This society has sent you to Earth as an anthropologist to study the ways in which visual culture operates. Upon returning to your planet you discover that, due to an unfortunate accident, you have lost all the material samples (images, objects, apparatuses) of this culture that you had gathered along the way, EXCEPT ONE. From that one sample you must try to reconstruct for your audience both a general idea of what your object is and how it comes to be understood by people who approach the world visually. For example, your object is a desktop picture frame. You will need to explain to your audience what a frame is [a polygon or circle made of wood, metal, or plaster], what it does [holds, usually, a two dimensional object for display], and how it functions in the lives of the people who use them. Where did you see this object [on people's walls, by their bedsides, in museums] and how did location affect its contents [personal snapshots, paintings]? You will find that you will need to tell your audience what a snapshot is, what a museum is or what the word "display" means.

Your task is to give a five-minute "show and tell" presentation using your sample to illustrate what a visual culture is like. This sample can be just about anything: it need not be a picture or a piece of art. In fact, your object might be more interesting if it isn't. It could, for instance, be a machine, instrument, found object, a piece of clothing, etc.,...

The objective here is to de-familiarize visual experience and representation, to re-stage it as a problem to be explained rather than a capacity to be taken for granted. The idea is to set up an empty frame in which any object or experience may be staged for inspection and analysis insofar as it helps to explain what a visually oriented culture is.

Our Show + Tell will be staged during discussion section during week 3. You will be presenting in groups of four. Each person in the group will talk. Please come prepared with a 5-minute presentation and an open mind. 10 minutes, in addition to the presentation time, will be dedicated to Q + A from the audience.

✓ Exercise 2: Still Images in Sequence/compositions

1. Working individually, shoot 36 pictures of a PLACE you know well. YOU WILL BE TURNING IN just (6) PHOTOGRAPHS, so try alternate compositions of the same subject.
2. find a subject/environment that is dynamic, visually compelling and offering a lot of possibilities for texture, contrast, color, form....etc. [NOT your dorm room] and then pick the pictures that convey the qualities of place.
3. Use only available light - no flash.
4. Shoot for composition and content. Shoot ONLY horizontal format shots.
5. Include at least 4 of the following composition types:

COMPOSITIONAL TYPES [SHOOT ONLY HORIZONTAL FORMAT ASPECT RATIO]

- a primarily vertical composition
 - a primarily horizontal composition
 - an image which uses focus [depth of field] to attract our attention to the object/person
 - an image which abstracts its subject through de-contextualization [for example, an image of a billboard or sign which is fragmented to spell a new word, or an extreme close up on a texture, object, or pattern].
 - an image which contains foreground, midground, and background
 - an image in which the aspect ratio of the frame is changed through the use of an architectural or natural feature [creating a frame within a frame]
 - an image that creates an interesting relationship between positive and negative space
6. Present these photos by attaching them to a 8.5 X 11 inch page(s) that has your name on each page and identify the compositional type under each photo. OR mount a page on your website, and turn in the URL.
 - if you are printing from a digital camera, use only photo paper and turn in "photo quality" prints. Do not crop or cut the prints. Do not "fix" your images in a photo editor. THIS IS A CAMERA EXERCISE

Please number your images, let us know how to sequence our movement through them (1-6)

✓ Exercise 3: Study of a Space

Scout around for a space (either interior or exterior) that interests you, one that is convenient, visually compelling, accessible, empty of people at times, and reasonably well illuminated. Pick a space that is easily identified as a single, whole space. Try to find an environment that offers a lot of possibilities for texture, contrast, color, and form. Think of production exercises as an opportunity to investigate interesting aspects of the surrounding area that you might otherwise not explore (in other words, please do not film your dorm room!).

Make at least two separate research trips to your selected space at two different times of day (with noticeably different light). Spend at least an hour in the space during each research trip, exploring possible images, camera angles, depth relationships, and framings in the space. Think about patterns of light and shadow, interesting compositions, and how to evoke a sense of the space as a whole.

Write a 2-3 page essay about this PLACE. This is an observational assignment and should be based on what you see, hear and experience. Write in a prose style using complete sentences. You may use small amounts of dialogue [over heard] if its appropriate but don't allow dialogue to dominate the writing. Do not interview anybody. This is a writing exercise designed as 'pre-production' research. Think of this as a short story, a piece of non-fiction that will be adapted for the screen. It is not a screenplay and should NOT be formatted as one. *This is a WRITING assignment—drafts should be proofread for spelling and grammar!!*

✓ Exercise 4: Writing a scene

Write a 2-3 page TREATMENT for a short fictional film that takes place, at least partly, in the location you described in exercise 3. Use your imagination to invent characters or invent fictional lives for people observed there. Shape your story so that it conforms to the needs of narrative — conflict, exposition, etc. Re-read the 2 short stories in your course reader from the course reader ("Forever Overhead" and "Chunky in Heat") and pay attention to how cinematic they are. This is the proper prose style for the treatment. Do not write in a specialized language or screenplay format. Give your story a significant ending.

This is a WRITING assignment—drafts should be proofread for spelling and grammar!

✓ Exercise 5: Performance

You will be working in groups of three—(1) director and (2) actors

The process is as follows:

1. invent a relationship between two characters [co-workers, siblings, lovers, roommates, etc.]
2. devise a given circumstances that bring these people together. [funeral, waiting for a bus, dump date..]
3. re-work the script, if necessary [students are allowed to rearrange the words so long as they do not add words or remove them.]
4. give the words a fresh new context. Find a doing for each generic word that puts it into a dramatic context. For this exercise, it is important to transform these words from generic dialogue into the context of actions.

EXT. NIGHT – A SUBURBAN STREET

In a beat-up 1974 Chevy, Ruth and Rob are listening to the radio and sharing a cigarette. Ruth is panicking, she tries again to start the car, but just hears the clicking of the solenoid and says, "nothing"

5. identify the style or genre you are working with, and develop the scene accordingly.
6. bring all necessary props. Do not pretend a bottle is candle. If you need a candle, bring one.

Count on spending at least 2 two hour sessions working out the moments with your partners. Do not try to put this together twenty minutes before class]

ORIGINAL SCRIPT:

A: Well
B: Well I'm here
A: So I see
B: Yes
A: Well
B: Is that all you can say
A: What do you want me to say
B: Nothing
A: Nothing
B: You don't trust me
A: It's not that
B: Then what
A: Nevermind
B: Stop it
A: What
B: That
A: I can't
B: Try
A: Is that better
B: This is hopeless
A: What's the matter
B: I don't know
A: You don't know

✓ Exercise 6: Portrait/Image and Text

Think about the documentary projects you have seen in class by Studs Terkel, Sophie Calle, and John Berger / Jean Mohr. What does it mean to make a portrait of a person? What is the relationship between the portrait-maker and the portrait subject, and how is this relationship manifest in the portrait? Define your stance towards directing your subject – are you trying to spontaneously capture your subject without intervention or are you creating images that are more staged? What can you convey about the essence of a person in just a few images and words?

Choose a person you find compelling and who is willing to be your subject. Once again, you are strongly encouraged to think of this assignment as an opportunity to get off campus and explore the broader world around you. This means that you are discouraged from choosing a subject who is a fellow UCSC undergraduate unless you absolutely cannot think of anyone else AND can make a strong argument for why this person makes an interesting subject. Spend at least an hour with your subject without a camera planning a strategy for your portrait.

I. Photographic Portrait

Using your still camera, create a series of still images that you think reveal something essential about your subject. You may shoot as many images as you want, though you will only be selecting 5 for your presentation. Continue to think carefully about framing and composition as you did in your first project.

YOU MAY NOT SHOW YOUR SUBJECT'S FACE IN ANY OF YOUR IMAGES. Be creative about how you work with this constraint – you may show other parts of your subject's body, or you may make a portrait without showing your subject at all.

II. Text Interview

Create five simple questions that you would like your subject to answer. You may conduct your interview in writing or verbally (if you conduct your interview verbally, it is highly recommended that you make an audio recording of the interview so that you can accurately record the exact words used by your subject).

One of the skills of a good interviewer is thinking of questions that can get your subject to reveal something interesting, honest, vulnerable, intimate, or unexpected. Try to stay away from generic survey-style questions (like "what's your favorite movie" or "what's on your ipod") and devise questions that will allow us to see what is engaging about your subject. **THE INTERVIEW MUST BE DONE AFTER THE SHOOTING IS COMPLETED.**

III. Presentation

Your finished portrait presentation will consist of 5 images and 5 pieces of text (1-2 sentences each). You may create a paper portrait where you attach printed stills and corresponding text to each page, or you may upload your portrait digitally. Whichever method you choose, you must create an ordered sequence with a beginning and end, and it needs to be clear which image corresponds to which piece of text. Think about the relationship between the images and the text. Do the images simply illustrate the text or can you think of a more interesting way for the two components to relate? How do the images change when they are set next to text?

✓ Exercise 7: iLife '06 movie w/ sound

This is a 3-5 movie comprised of still images, in sequence, with a soundtrack. It must include a title and credit sequence.

With your images constructed and timed in imovie, export the timeline as a quicktime movie (titled, for example as, irene's 20P project.mov). Remember to export out of imovie as 320x240. You may have built a rough soundtrack in imovie but you will be building another one in Garageband. When you import the quicktime movie (irene's 20P project.mov) in to garageband, it will appear as a picture or video track.

1. Working in Garageband you can now create a soundtrack to give your images 'added value.'

- Add sound effects—on screen' off screen/ diegetic/ extra diegetic.
- Record a voice-over narration or produce voice effects for your movie. [Avoid trying to do "lip-synch" dialogue].

Do NOT:

- Use a commercial music track or any copyrighted music
- Place a single piece of music throughout the duration of the film. NO WALL TO WALL MUSIC

2. When you have completed the soundtrack, save it into iTunes [it will save as an MP3 file]

3. Import you garageband soundtrack back in to your imovie project, synching it with your image track

4. Export your movie to idvd and burn it to disc

5. Your Movie should be 3 to 5:00 min. long [image + sound]. Label the DVD clearly [your name/TA/title of project]

✓ Final Exam

In class; closed book; no notes

Exam covers pertinent concepts and required readings