

FILM 404 Digital Video Production Project

Trimesters 1 + 2 2010

1 March –13 November 2010

30 Points



TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	1 March 2010 to 15 October 2010
Mid-year break:	7 June to 11 July 2010
Study week:	18 October to 22 October 2010
Last piece of assessment due:	14 October 2010

WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Course coordinator:

Alex Funke, ASC. Room 305, 83 Fairlie Terrace, 04 463 6827

Email: alex.funke@vuw.ac.nz

Office Hours: These will be posted

AV Technician:

Paul Wolfram, Room 105, 85 Fairlie Terrace, 04 463 6823

Email: Paul.Wolfram@vuw.ac.nz

Assistant AV Technician:

Bernard Blackburn, Room 106, 85 Fairlie Terrace, 04 463 9498

Email: Bernard.Blackburn@vuw.ac.nz

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Workshops

Thursday, 10-12.50, Film Room 205, 77FT

COURSE DELIVERY

FILM 404 will be arranged to encourage the maximum of visual thinking by the students, and the minimum of lecturing by the instructor. The main approaches to be used will include:

- Screening and close analysis of a large number of classical visual references---such as film clips, photographs, and paintings---and directed discussion of how the essential visual techniques are used. This class process will be termed "View-Dissect-Analyse."
- Writing short critical essays expanding upon how cinematic techniques affect the storytelling in a particular filmic context.
- Class demonstration of central imaging concepts e.g. colour and perception, visual coding, composition theory, and the like. We have termed this class process "Principles and Theory."
- Practical work in "Applications Labs" to help explain and apply visual techniques that have been studied.
- Supervised and directed student work in "class practical exercises," in which various defined shooting problems will be worked out on video by the students and then analysed by class and instructor.
- "Equipment briefing" workshops to gain skill using equipment, and to develop a sense of how a filming team must work together to help realise the director's vision.
- Conceptualising, writing, designing, and presenting for class critique, a film concept (script, storyboards, reference imagery, and the like) for later production.
- From this concept, directing a five minute film and completing it through all post-production steps.
- Working on production crews in technical positions, to apply directly what has been studied in the abstract.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At the start of each workshop; posted on blackboard; notice boards in 85ft; and via email.

COURSE CONTENT

The theme for FILM 404 may be described as "Mastering the Compelling Image." In this course, the students will study, evaluate, experiment with, and apply the key visual techniques which are at the heart of cinematic storytelling. These major themes are: *Camera placement, Composition, Movement, Lighting and colour, and Editing.*

In class, students will screen, dissect, and discuss scene clips from a number of seminal films; for example, *The Magnificent Ambersons, Breathless, I Am Cuba, and Stalker*, as a means of extending and developing their own visual vocabulary. Further explorations will be made among the works of painters such as Dinnerstein and Hopper, and great photographers such as Sander, Plowden, and Strand.

Through in-class demonstrations, practical lab exercises, and hands-on workshops, the students will try out various cinematic techniques, and adapt them to their own personal style. Part of this process will involve working with methods of visual planning, such as storyboarding, set maquettes, and animatics.

During the course, students will each conceptualise, script, design, shoot and edit a five-minute film, applying and expanding their grasp of visual storytelling. During shooting, each film maker will work with a small crew composed of students from the class. All students will thereby gain hands-on experience in the main technical positions, as well as learning much from watching their fellow film makers working out their storylines.

Because in the outside world films must be made not only to a budget but also to a precise length, the set five-minute length for student film projects will be a requirement. A limited number of seconds will be allowed at the end for credits. Films shorter than five minutes will be acceptable, but the expectation is that as the film grows shorter, the craftsmanship and visual excellence must increase proportionately!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing FILM 404, students should have attained the following:

- A good basis for "filmic seeing" --the skill which defines successful storytelling on the screen.
- A firm grasp of film's key visual tools; their evolution, their applications and their power.
- A grasp of how *every aspect* of filmmaking, from rough concept to finished cut, must be driven by a chosen visual language.
- A personal visual style developed via observation, study, and reflection.
- A practical knowledge of how all these visual techniques are applied in telling a compelling film story.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The University anticipates that you should be able to devote at least ten hours per week to a two-trimester, 30-point course at the Honours level. On average, you should expect to spend at least seven hours outside of the class periods, becoming familiar with equipment, writing brief critical essays, designing and writing shooting scripts, and shooting and editing your films. The course is highly practical, and the demands on your time will probably increase as you move into the production phases of your project.

In addition to the time spent in class, students will be expected to attend various technical workshops on the use of equipment. Some of these will be presented by the instructor, and some by VUW Technical Staff. Attendance at all sessions is necessary, both as a prerequisite for checking out equipment, and also for students to develop needed skills in the various crew positions.

GROUP WORK

Students will undertake a range of formal and informal group activities during the course. During workshops, the team aspect of film making will be stressed, and each student will be expected to contribute ideas and effort to helping demonstrate the material being evaluated.

Each student will design and direct a five minute film, in conjunction with two (or more) fellow students acting as crew-members and collaborators. In addition to on-set production crews, it is anticipated that students will involve themselves in pre- and post-production activities, such as wardrobe construction, location scouting, casting support, set logistics, and editorial and sound mixing assistance.

The in-class screenings, lectures and demonstrations are intended to be interactive, and will require a high level of attention and participation. When students present the concept work for their films, the class as a whole will act as a critique team to help fine-tune the project.

READINGS

The key text will be: "Selected Tables, Charts and Formulas for the Student Cinematographer" (part of the ASC Manual.) ISBN 0-935578-30-7. I.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Students will be responsible for obtaining video and audio recording media necessary for their projects. Some additional materials such as storyboard and maquette components may also be required. Advice and suggestions on materials and sources will be given in class.

Depending on the nature of the individual film projects, other costs such as location charges, wardrobe rental or construction, transportation rental and so on may also be encountered.

Video cameras, support equipment, lighting, and audio equipment are issued on loan from the VUW Technical Department. Facilities for sound recording, mixing, and editing will be made available by reservation. School equipment must be treated with the utmost care and respect. *The student is in exactly the same relationship to the VUW Technical Department as he or she will be in the outside world renting equipment from a supplier. Learning to bring the gear back on time, and better than you received it, is a hard and valuable lesson!*

It will be a prerequisite to checking out equipment that the student has gone through the safety, operation, and troubleshooting workshop for that piece of equipment. These sessions will be held early in the course, so that all students will be able to work with the gear for the maximum time.

Equipment bookings must be made with the proper lead time, must be strictly adhered to, and returns must be made on time; otherwise fellow students will be inconvenienced and their shooting schedules disrupted. Any gear damage, malfunction, or failure must be reported at once to the Technical Department at 04 463 6823 or 027 4563 6823.

To avoid disappointing incompatibilities among various video standards, only certain specified video recording formats and media may be used. These will be discussed in detail on the first class day.

You are required to read *The Fat Book*, which is Film and Theatre's protocol handbook. This will help you understand the ground rules, and help you know what services, equipment, and facilities are available within the Department.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Two short critical and technical *essays*, showing understanding and interpretation of selected filmic conventions, styles, and methods. (1000 words each, 10% each, 20% in total).

Assignment dates: in class, Week 3 and Week 8

Due dates: Friday, end of Weeks 5 and 10

2. *Development and presentation* of a proposed film project, which will later be produced by the author/director and his or her crew. This in-class demonstration will require complete preparation of the proposed story and script, visual design and development, visual aids such as storyboards and production drawings, reference visuals, maquettes and dioramas if appropriate, or similar elements. The intent is to put the student in a situation such as might be encountered in a professional environment, when proposing a project to a client. (Approximately 10 minutes per presentation. 20%)

Due date: in class, Weeks 14 and 15.

3. Completion of a *five minute film*, from the preliminaries of location selection, casting, art direction and wardrobe, through shooting, recording and post scoring, and on through final editing and post-production. The films will be screened and critiqued by the class as a whole during the final class meeting, and also assessed by a panel of Film School personnel. (40%)

Target start date: Week 15

Delivery date: in class, Week 24

Panel dates: tbc

4. A final *written, open-book project* which will require explaining the technical and creative solutions to a number of varied shooting scenarios. The project will have a three-week time period, with the assignments handed out in class Week 20, and be turned in and discussed during the last class meeting in Week 24. (20%)

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2 percent deduction from your total mark per work day or part work day, starting from the hour the work is due. This means late work will drop one 'grade-step' every second day—i.e. from C+ to C, or A- to B+. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

Extensions

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you require an extension, you must complete an

extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To gain a pass in this course you must:

Submit the written work specified for the course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)

Complete and screen a five minute film of your own devising

Have worked on a minimum of two production crews, helping other directors create their films.

Have at least 75% attendance at all classes and workshops

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course (i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer. Work submitted in the final examination will obviously be handwritten. You are expected to write clearly. Where work is deemed 'illegible', you will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

Material from books, journals or any other printed source

The work of other students or staff

Information from the internet

Software programs and other electronic material

Designs and ideas

The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

TURNITIN

Work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

You should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

FILM 404 COURSE PROGRAMME

- Week 1 Introduction. Method. Materials. Overview of *View-Dissect-Analyse* and *Principles & Theory*. Five Minute Film intro.
- Week 2 View-Dissect-Analyse clips (1). Principles & Theory. Demo.
- Week 3 View-Dissect-Analyse clips (1). Principles & Theory. Demo. **#1 Essay assignment issued.**
- Week 4 Applications Lab (1)
- Week 5 Equipment Briefing: Camera equipment. **#1 Essay assignment due.**

Mid Trimester Break: Friday 2 April - Sunday 18 April 2010

- Week 6 View-Dissect-Analyse clips (3). Principles & Theory. Demo.
- Week 7 Applications Lab (2)
- Week 8 View-Dissect-Analyse clips (4). Principles & Theory. Demo. **#2 Essay assignment issued.**
- Week 9 Preliminary Concept & Design Workshop (1)
- Week 10 Equipment Briefing: Lighting equipment. **#2 Essay assignment due**
- Week 11 Concept & Design Workshop (2). Class Practical Exercises (1)
- Week 12 Concept & Design Workshop (3) Guest: Paul Van Ommen

Mid-Year Break: Monday 7 June - Sunday 11 July 2010

- Week 13 Equipment / Technical Briefing: Editing and Final Cut Pro
- Week 14 Project Development Session (1). Applications Lab (3)
- Week 15 Project Development Session (2). **Film projects to have begun by Week 15.**
- Week 16 Tech Briefing: Sound and Edit Facilities & Equipment
- Week 17 Class Practical Exercises (2)
- Week 18 Project Development Session (3)

Mid Trimester Break: Monday 23 August - Sunday 5 September 2010

- Week 19 Class Practical Exercises (3)
- Week 20 Editing Dynamics. Guest: tba. **Final written exercise issued**
- Week 21 View-Dissect-Analyse clips (5). Applications Lab (4).
- Week 22 Class Practical Exercises (4).
- Week 23 Class Practical Exercises (5).
- Week 24 Completed Film Project Screening. Critique. Final written exercise due. Discussion of exercise questions.