

# **FLM151: Visual Language and Film Analysis**

## **Fall 2016**

### **General Information:**

Credits: 3

Course prerequisites: None.

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### **Description:**

Animation is ultimately filmmaking, and animators should learn from the many classics on how to effectively bring various film production elements together. Students will review several films and study how the relationships between scripts, cameras, lighting, sets, production design, sound, acting, wardrobe, props, directing and production lead to successful visual stories. They will also examine the fundamental theories underlying visual storytelling. Understanding the creative processes utilized by influential filmmakers will provide insight into how students may improve their own animations.

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

#### Overview

The heart of almost any filmed experience is the script. You will need to understand how it works in terms of:

- Narrative structure

- Dramatic elements

- Character

- Physical format

Next, how does the story come alive on the movie screen or the computer screen? You need to understand the basic principles of visual storytelling, including: constructive editing; the classic elements of mise-en-scène, and specifically cinematic mise-en-scène that includes how the camera contributes to storytelling; cinematic framing and blocking.

Many film theorists identify editing as the unique artistic element that defines filmmaking. You need to know the theory and practice of how shots are sequenced and how you can control how the audience perceives the edit point. You will need to learn some basic non-linear editing techniques and work flow. Sound is also a critical part of the cinematic experience in theory and practice. You will need to understand some basic theory and how each element of the soundtrack contributes to how the audience perceives the narrative.

You need to not only expand your experience with cinematic art, but also learn to focus your critical thinking about the medium. This includes using correct industry-standard terms.

You need to be able to communicate. Your audience needs to be entertained, informed and even emotionally moved. You need to be able to communicate with your fellow professionals using screenplays, shot breakouts, storyboards and photographs.

Finally, you need to learn to work as a professional. You will attend meetings on time and prepared. You will turn in work on time and within budget. You will constructively work with others, taking

leadership positions when appropriate. You will ask questions that will allow you to exceed a project's expectations.

### **Critical details:**

You must attend every class, turn in every assignment and pass every assignment. Three unexcused absences and you fail the course. Miss one assignment and you fail the course.

Each week you will have a Film Analysis Assignment. You will spend 2 hours watching a film and responding to a specific question about it in at least 300 words (no more than two pages). Each response must also include a research element (see next paragraph) and examples to support the response. These examples from the assigned films must be documented by a time stamp or frame stamp showing the minute in the film that the example occurs. There will be a link on this page with the question and a link to upload a file with your response. Your response is due no later than one hour prior to class time. DOC, DOCX, RTF or PDF files only please.

Each week as you write your film analysis, you are required to research the film and incorporate your findings into your paper. For example, since the films are picked to demonstrate different narrative structures, you could incorporate research on story structure to help with your analysis. Or you might read about how the film was made and comment on how the process affected the question you are addressing. Perhaps the ending was altered after test screenings?

You must also cite your research source at the bottom of the analysis.

Note: there are many rich sources other than the Web. The school library has many fine texts that will be helpful. There is also a document below with good process and resources for researching films.

Every week you will have a Production Assignment. There will be individual instructions for submitting these assignments. I adjust the reading, film viewing and production assignments to create about 6-8 hours of work outside class. Production Assignments are always due and uploaded one hour before class time. Please, always bring a back up file of your assignment to class on a flash drive.

Most weeks we will have a Class Critique of some production projects. You are expected to take notes on suggestions made in the crit for possible improvements to your work.

Working in Groups: The last four weeks of class we will focus on a Group Film Project. The goal of each Group will be to produce enough assets for each individual member to edit single short film by the end of the semester.

You are expected to have a basic knowledge of consumer cameras and the internet. You will need to use a digital still camera and PowerPoint for several assignments.

### **Specific Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Be able to take a simple story and create a short visual sequence from it that communicates in a cinematic form as it entertains, informs and/or emotionally moves the audience.
2. Be able to take a simple story and use it to create a short script that communicates cinematically and uses industry-standard screenplay conventions and formatting.
3. Be able to use key dramatic and narrative structural elements in telling a visual story in script, still-frame, storyboard and short film formats.

4. Be able to take a script or script sequence and create shot breakouts, simple storyboards and look and feel drawings that will demonstrate your visual approach to a script.
5. Be able to break a scene into a visual story through constructive editing. You will demonstrate this through still frame exercises, storyboards and short filmed exercises.
6. Be able to take a script or script sequence and determine how that will be visually communicated using basic cinematic mise en scene elements. You will do this through storyboards and still frame assignments.
7. Be able to effectively use basic continuity editing elements to keep your story clear. You will demonstrate this with short edited sequences on video.
8. Be able to use the camera frame cinematically including blocking, internal framing and other techniques. You will demonstrate this through still frame exercises, storyboards and short filmed exercises.
9. Be able to demonstrate basic camera concepts that will clarify and intensify your story including lens selection, and camera movement. You will demonstrate this through still frame exercises, storyboards and short, filmed exercises.
10. Be able to sequence, and polish an edited sequence using a non-linear editing system. You will demonstrate this with short, edited sequences on video.
11. Be able to identify basic sound concepts in a test and demonstrate them in a short filmed exercise.
12. Be able to operate a basic video camera, and production equipment in a safe and effective manner.
13. Be able to view a narrative film, identify cinematic techniques and critically comment on their effectiveness. You will be able to do this verbally as well as through academic papers.
14. Be able to identify key film industry terms on a test as well as use them correctly in academic papers and production documents.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Three unexcused absences and you will fail the course. For an absence to be excused, you must notify the instructor of the reason for your absence in writing before the start of class.

### **Textbook:**

*None.* Reading will be short papers on Distance Learning Website plus research required by every Film Analysis assignment.

Syllabus, schedules, quizzes, project descriptions and due dates, reading and homework uploads etc. are all on the FLM 151 Film Analysis Distance Learning Site (Moodle). This site will have the most current information. You are responsible for the material and assignments posted on this site.

ALL STUDENTS MUST ENROLL IN THIS SITE AND CHECK IT TWICE WEEKLY.

<https://distance.digipen.edu> (FLM151F16B)

### **Outline and Tentative Dates:**

*This lecture schedule, films and homework assignments are subject to change to accommodate teaching real students in a real classroom. The Distance Learning Site is always most up to date.*

Week of/Topics	Film Viewing/Reading Assignments Generally due the following week 2-3 hours	Assignment(s) See Film Analysis Distance Learning Site for complete details Generally due the following week 3-4 hours
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<b>Week 1</b> <b>Narrative Storytelling</b> Story/Plot Plot patterns Story information flow	Film Viewing: <i>The Third Man</i> Written Assignment: Armature, Three-Act Structure	Script assignment: :30 second script Act I
<b>Week</b> <b>Narrative Structure</b> How drama drives the story The script as blueprint The 3-act and other script structures Story elements What/Why of the 3-act	Film Viewing: <i>Blade Runner</i>  Written Assignment: Structure analysis	Script assignment :30 second script Act II
<b>Week 3</b> <b>Character</b> Storyboarding Camera Map	Film Viewing: <i>One Flew over the Cuckoos nest</i> Written Assignment: Character analysis	Script assignment :30 second script Act III
<b>Week 4</b> <b>The Scene</b> Constructive Storytelling Basic camera angles Basic story patterns	Film Viewing: <i>What's Up Doc?</i> Graphic assignment: Storyboard/Camera map	Storyboard/Camera Map Based on previous completed script
<b>Week 5</b> <b>The Frame</b> Dominance Proximics Framing Simple aesthetics Frontality Angle of Camera Blocking patterns	Viewing: <i>Mother of George</i> or TBA Written Assignment: Frame Analysis	Still Film #1 Based on script/storyboard/camera map
<b>Week 6</b> <b>Basic continuity</b> Screen direction 180/30 degree rules Simple continuity editing Using parallel action	Film Viewing: <i>Cell 211</i>  Written assignment: Structure analysis: Parallel Action	Still Film #2 Parallel Action
<b>Week 7</b> <b>Classic Mise en scène</b> Acting Setting Props Wardrobe	Film Viewing: <i>The Usual Suspects</i>  Written Assignment: Mise en scene	Still Film #3 Mise-en-scene
<b>Week 8</b> <b>Camera Mise en scène</b>	Film Viewing: TBA Written Assignment: Frame analysis Camera Mise-en-scène	Still Film #4 New Story

<b>Week 9</b> <b>Lighting</b>	Film Viewing: <i>The Conformist</i>  Written Assignment: Lighting	Still Film #5 Group lighting project
<b>Week 10</b> <b>Simple lens logic and pre-production</b>		Shoot team video project Benchmark #1 Shakedown
<b>Week 11</b> <b>Practical Video camera</b> Basic camera techniques		Benchmark #2 Acquisition 1 Rough Cut
<b>Week 12</b> <b>Practical Non-linear Editing</b> Nomenclature The Interface Outputting		Benchmark #3 Acquisition 2 Editing project Final film assignment
<b>Week 13</b> <b>Basic sound concepts</b>		Sound sweetening for video project
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Sound Tracks</b>		Final individual cut of team video project due
<b>Week 15</b> Final		<b>Film Festival!</b>

## **GRADING POLICY:**

### **Approximate weighting:**

- a) Film analysis of weekly films: 30%
- b) Quizzes: 15% (no curve)
- c) Storyboards/Script: 15%
- d) Still Films: 15%
- e) Film Project: 15%
- f) Attendance/Professionalism: 10%

Note: each assignment has an assignment evaluation rubric that outlines how I evaluate each assignment. The rubrics are posted with the syllabus on the Learning Site. Keep in mind; the ultimate test of your ability to pass this course is contained in the course objectives. The question is whether you can you meet those objectives. The above weighting process simply gives you an indication of how I will evaluate the data points each of your assignments represents. I am also looking for consistent improvement and/or consistent high standards.

### **25 Point Scale:**

A+	25 (100%)
A	24
A-	23
B+	22
B	21
B-	20
C+	19
C	18
C-	17
D	16
F	below 15 (56%)

### **Standards:**

Your final grade for the course will be calculated according to the breakdown listed above. When assessing the quality of your work, the following standards will apply:

- A: I'm extremely impressed with the outstanding creativity/quality/professionalism of your work.
- B: I'm very impressed with the creativity/quality/professionalism of your work.
- C: Average student work; you filled the seat and turned in the work.
- D: I'm not impressed.
- F: Consider a different career path.

### Rubrics and Assessment:

Rubrics for this class are always tied to the course objectives. The rubrics detail my thinking on how I evaluate elements of each assignment. The rubrics are posted on the Distance Learning Site.

### Mechanisms and Procedures:

Many weeks you'll do a reading/research assignment from the Distance Learning Site or a course pack of papers that offers a different perspective. All assignments due before class starts that week.

### The Structure

- The class is divided into two discreet parts: Analysis and Production.
- You will have weekly Analysis assignments: A major part of your learning how to tell visual stories will be watching excellent examples of the elements you are learning. An essential part of your homework each week will be to watch an assigned film. The series of films is designed to reinforce the concept of narrative in classic and modern forms. You may Netflix to your heart's content. Although there is no textbook, there will be required reading in the form of research based upon the film screened during that week. The result will be presented in the form of a well documented and footnoted research paper, at least 300 words in length, that will be due by following Sunday evening. All film references will require a *time stamp*, indicating the place in the film that is referenced. Internet references will be documented by a URL and books by title, author, publisher and page number. **Every assignment must be turned in to receive a grade. In other words, miss one assignment and fail the course.**
- During the first two weeks of the course, in addition to the weekly research paper, each student will write an original script for a short film.
- During the next three weeks, students will visualize their scripts as storyboards. Group members may swap scripts and visualize each other's' concepts.
- During the next four weeks, students will visualize their scripts by creating Still Movies using a still camera for acquisition. Group members may swap scripts and visualize each other's' concepts.
- By mid-term, each group will have selected a single script for production. And from that point, each group will shoot and edit a short film based upon that script.
- Each group will be responsible for the delivery of a short film in the last week of the semester. This will be called "the Project."

### Homework

- will include reading, film viewing, storyboards, still and filmed team and individual assignments that cannot be completed in class. There will be about 6 hours of homework each week, including all phases of your work on *The Project*.
- Occasionally there will be a quiz. You will demonstrate cinematic problem solving as well as correct usage of terminology. These quizzes are on-line.
- Assignments will be posted on the Film Analysis Distance Learning Site. There may be additional assignments based on specific needs of the class.
- Class starts on time. Since much of the discussion on projects, due dates, announcements etc. happen at the beginning of class, being late is not only disruptive, but you may miss important information. In addition, being late is not a good professional practice.
- This is a class that moves back and forth between hands-on practicality and the theory that drives practice. You must attend every class. If you cannot make your scheduled time, pre-arrange with

me at least 24 hours in advance (if possible) to make up the missed class. Since there are team projects, it is a bad idea to miss your scheduled class.

- *Note: if you miss a class because of illness, you will need to arrange to come to a different section that week or make arrangements with the instructor.*
- Please turn off cell phone ringers and do not answer calls (voice or text) during class. Also remove headphones/ear buds. These are common professional courtesies.
- You will need access to a digital still camera (phone cameras are usable but you won't like the results). Video equipment, lighting equipment, PowerPoint and editing stations will be provided.

### **Submitting Work and Late Policy:**

**You must do all the assignments in order for me to consider giving you a grade. Miss one assignment, you fail. (SEE ALSO LATE WORK POLICY)**

*All assignment are due one hour prior to the beginning of class.* I'll designate the medium: occasionally hard copy, mostly electronically through the Film Analysis Distance Learning Website. The work needs to be submitted in the proper form. Written assignments in .doc, .docx, .rtf or open office. Still films in .ppt. Images: .jpg. Film compression: H264. Project submissions must be under 1GB, and submitted to the distance site. To be safe, always bring your project work to class on a USB device.

Naming conventions for uploads:

SemesterYear-ClassSection-InstructorName-StudentName- A(Analysis), M(Movie), SF(Still Film) or S(Script) Assignment name.

Example for a submitted Film Analysis Assignment:

**F16\_FLM151b\_KBeeson\_StudentName\_A01.docx**

If I return an assignment that is not up to a minimum standard, I will return it to you with notes. If I put REDO on your returned assignment, you will need to resubmit the assignment the following week. You may improve your grade on an assignment by resubmitting via email. Clearly state this is a resubmission and what you've done to change it.

### **Late Work Policy:**

If your assignment is late: (1) You're missing the critical review you're paying the big bucks for (2) Your work is now out of sequence. Many assignments build on each other. When you miss one, you miss the benefit of the learning curve. (3) There's a penalty.

**Penalties: *Submissions during class time will result in a full letter grade reduction (3 points).***

Otherwise, submissions before midnight of the due day: minus 1 point (i.e.: B to B-). Following that, penalties escalate reaching a maximum 6 points over the next two weeks, as determined by instructor.



### Resubmission Policy:

Film Analyses: You may be required to resubmit a Film Analysis for technical or professional reasons. A common reason is the Filename Convention, where you are given a provisional grade that you will receive upon re-submission. If your Analysis is not returned ungraded, it is not eligible for resubmission.

Production Assignments: Every production assignment is eligible for resubmission. If you improve your work after a crit, you are guaranteed at least 1 point increase in the grade. When you resubmit, upload two items: 1) the improved project and 2) a document explaining what you did to improve it.

**If you are chronically late and attempt to turn in more than 50% of your assignments in the last three weeks (13,14,15); don't bother. You have failed the class for lack of professionalism.**

In addition, you must arrange with me at least 24 hours in advance if the work is going to be late. We will negotiate any penalties and a new due date at that time.

If you miss a test/quiz I won't flunk you, but it's a zero.

### **Last Day to Withdraw:**

In order to withdraw from a course it is not sufficient simply to stop attending class or to inform the instructor. In accordance with the policy, contact your advisor or the Registrar to begin the withdrawal process. The last day for withdrawal from this course is cited in the official catalog.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by DigiPen's Student Enrollment Agreement. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. You will sign all storyboards and lighting plots indicating that this is your own work. Analyses, scripts, still films and videos will have credits with your name(s) indicating that this is your own work.

Many filmed assignments will be accomplished as part of a team. All team members are expected to contribute to the success of the project with specific, documented tasks.

Individually are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an electronic file, e mail, an e mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

Copying material from the Internet or other sources and submitting them as your own work is grounds for disciplinary action. If you are using references in a project or paper, they must be cited.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Copying or imaging test material as well as digitally/electronically copying or altering on-line test material is also grounds for disciplinary action. While study groups encourage the flow of ideas and cooperative work, they are not to be used for on line testing. Any cooperation and sharing of answers by a study group shall be considered cheating and all members of the study group will face administrative penalties as a result.

**Disabled Student Services:**

If students have disabilities and will need formal accommodations in order to fully participate or effectively demonstrate learning in this class, they should contact the Disability Support Services Office at (425)629-5015 or [dss\[at\]digipen\[dot\]edu](mailto:dss@digipen.edu). The DSS Office welcomes the opportunity to meet with students to discuss how the accommodations will be implemented. Also, if you may need assistance in the event of an evacuation, please let the instructor know.