

# INTRODUCTION TO PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE

## FILM 20P, SUMMER 2016

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Office Hours: by appointment

Class: T/TH 1:00-4:30PM Social Sciences II 165

### OVERVIEW

This class is designed to introduce students to the production process with emphasis on low-budget, independent film and video making. We will explore the conceptualization, planning, shooting, and editing of documentary, personal essay, experimental, and/or narrative works. Emphasis is on visualization, shooting style, and screenwriting, but not hands-on editing. Students will work on numerous creative projects: performed, written, photographed and created digitally. Assignments emphasize creativity, visualization, collaboration, research, and production organization.

This is a course about process, action, deliberation and reflection. It is not intended to provide you with the time, space, or resources to produce your own individual dream projects. Rather, my hope is that you leave the class with a greater understanding of the technical, creative and collaborative processes of filmmaking, allowing you to make more interesting, intelligent and beautiful films that reflect your own unique voice(s) and point(s)-of-view.

### OBJECTIVES

- To demystify the creative process and help you develop your own voice.
- To develop skills to design and execute visual works with excellence.
- To advance a sophisticated level of artistic literacy in creating and viewing.
- To foster a constructive process for giving and receiving meaningful feedback.
- To foster the collaborative spirit necessary for the production of crew-based work.
- To expand our understanding and appreciation of production aesthetics, techniques, and technologies.

### TEXTS + EQUIPMENT

You will read one book for 20P, *The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video* by Tom Schroepel, and a collection of readings which engage both creative and technical aspects of the production process. Digital copies of both Shroepel and other readings are available in the Google course folder, or will be linked to from the syllabus. **You will be tested on Shroepel in class on August 2nd!**

You are responsible for securing your own camera, image processing, and digital media storage, as well as signing up for equipment access via SLUGFILM: <http://slugfilm.ucsc.edu>. You will need to read the slugfilm use policy and pass the online Cable Wrapping Test before you can check out equipment. Equipment available for check-out is listed at the end of this syllabus. Equipment and facilities should be treated carefully and conscientiously.

Check-out time: Thursday 12:00 – 1:00

Check-in time: Tuesday 12:00 – 1:00

## PROJECTS + EVALUATION

Participation (25%)

Bare Bones Test (15%)

Final Project (20%)

Exercises (40%) 5% each - 1) Self-portrait 2) Portrait: Image and Text 3) Logline for your life 4) Study of a Space 5) Sound and Image 6) Writing a Treatment 7) Directing and Performing 8) Storyboard and shotlist

- Evaluation of creative assignments will be based on: originality, craftsmanship / technical proficiency, aesthetics, structure, and whether or not the assignment follows project guidelines.
- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion and critique is required.
- 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 as soon as possible.
- 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.
- *Attendance is mandatory; punctuality is required. As this is a 5-week course, 2 unexcused absences or excessive lateness will result in a NO PASS.*

A Note for Summer Session Students with Disabilities - If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of the Summer Session. Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu) for more information.

## SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1: "Making" Images | Obstruction, Constraint and Other Tools of Creative Emancipation

#### Tuesday July 26

\*\*\*Introductions, Goals & Expectations\*\*\*

– Screening:

*La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962, 30min.)

*Marseille Après La Guerre* (Billy Woodberry, 2015, 10min.)

*It's not my memory of it* - excerpt (Julia Meltzer & David Thorne, 2003, 8min.)

*Throat Kicker* (Tyler Knudsen, 2013, 4min.)

*Pattern for Survival* (Kelly Sears, 2015, 6:45min.)

*Tarnation* (Jonathan Caouette, 2003, 88min.)

#### Thursday July 28

Exercise #1 due at beginning of class: Self-Portrait

Lighting Workshop (All students must bring one light source to class!)

– Screening:

*Entrevista Bradford Young* (EFTI School of Photography, 2015, 24min.)

*The Five Obstructions* (Jorgen Leth & Lars Von Trier, 2003, 90 min.)

### WEEK 2: Cut-Paste | The Matter of Light + Space

#### Tuesday August 2

Exercise #2 due at beginning of class: Portrait: Image and Text

\*\*\*Bare Bones Test and Editing Demo with Tristan\*\*\*

#### Thursday August 4

Exercises #3+4 due at beginning of class: Logline for Your Life + Study of a Space

Reading Due: Interview with DP Bradford Young ([https://www.theasc.com/ac\\_magazine/February2015/QandAwithBradfordYoung/page1.php](https://www.theasc.com/ac_magazine/February2015/QandAwithBradfordYoung/page1.php))

## WEEK 3: Sound + Fury Signifying . . . Something | Performance = Collaboration

### Tuesday August 9

Exercise #5 due at beginning of class: Sound and Image  
- Reading Due: Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision* (excerpt)

### Thursday August 11

Exercise #6 due in class: Writing a Treatment  
- Reading Due: Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird* (excerpt)

\*\*\*Treatment Crits and Directing and Performing Planning\*\*\*

## WEEK 4: Performance = Collaboration Contd. | "Fieldwork"

### Tuesday August 16

Exercise #7 due in class: Directing and Performing  
- Screening: *Jeepney* (Esz Casey, 2013, 57min.)

### Thursday August 18

Exercise #8 due at beginning of class: Storyboard and Shotlist

\*\*\*Artist Visit - Esz Casey - Documentary Filmmaker/Cinematographer\*\*\*

## WEEK 5: Putting it All Together

### Tuesday August 23

FINAL PROJECT - Group Work Day in the editing lab  
- Reading Due: Walter Murch, *In The Blink of An Eye* (excerpt)

### Thursday August 25

SCREENING of FINAL PROJECTS!

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### EQUIPMENT LIST

(3x) Nikon 3300 DSLR cameras with 18>55mm lenses. (shoots stills/video)  
(12x) GoPro cameras (water casings included) stills/video  
(8x) Sony PCM D50 Handheld Audio Recorders (built in mics)  
(6x) Tripods

## Exercise #1 - Self-Portrait

How do you see yourself? How do you want to represent yourself at this moment in time? What can you express about your values, desires, or sense of the world through image alone?

In this project you can be whoever you want to be and you don't need anyone other than yourself, so you can take as much time as you want to experiment and explore.

Experiment with types of shots (Wide Shot, Medium Shot, Close-up, etc), camera angles, light sources, texture, color, contrast, and form. Think about how you can use reflections, diffusion, shadows, props and costume, and the history of other images, etc. If you want to use text, think about how you can incorporate it into the image itself (ie. hold up a piece of paper, write on a mirror in the background, etc.) Plan on shooting at least 30 images. Remember that you do not need to be physically in the shot.

You will turn in 3-5 images, uploaded to your google portfolio project. Think about the sequence of the images and make deliberate choices about how the images compliment or contrast with each other, or progress in terms of mood, self-revelation, etc. Be as creative and deliberate in how you compose the frame of the page as you were with each individual image: Landscape or portrait orientation? Frames within the frame? Scale?

\*Verbal introduction: You will re-introduce yourself verbally to the class as you present your work, your experience, your goals, whatever you think is important, relevant, thought provoking to share! Think about Form: Do you want to introduce yourself through a story, poem, letter, list? You can be casual or performative, up to you. How/does the form you choose reflect something about you that might not be communicated otherwise? How/does it compliment or contrast with your self-representation through images?

## Exercise #2 - Portrait: Image and Text

Choose a subject, either another classmate or anyone from the wider world. Choose a person you find compelling and who is willing to be your subject. Spend at least an hour with your subject without a camera planning a strategy for your portrait.

- What can you convey about the essence of a person in just a few images and words?
- What is the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject, and how/is this seen in the work?
- Are you trying to spontaneously capture your subject or are you creating images that are more staged?

### I. Photographic Portrait

Using your still camera, create a series of images that you think reveal something essential about your subject. Shoot as many images as you want, though you will only be selecting FIVE for your presentation. Think carefully about framing and composition. Shoot either HORIZONTALLY or VERTICALLY – do not mix the two! **You can show your subject's face in no more than one (1) image.** Be creative about how you work with this constraint – you may make a portrait showing other parts of your subject's body, or 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 devise questions that will allow us to see what is engaging about your subject. You may decide whether to conduct the interview before or after the shooting.

### III. Presentation

Your finished portrait presentation will consist of 5 images and 5 pieces of text (in words, phrases or sentences). 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 meaningful way for the two components to relate? How do the images change when they are set next to text?

### Exercise #3 - Logline for your Life

Look through your old photographs. Identify and write down five of your most memorable “universal life moments.” Times in your life when your reality shifted and your world turned upside down. Go into these moments and identify the emotions involved in each of them.

Choose five pictures that have the strongest emotional impact for you. Write a logline for each of these photographs using the emotional experience from your universal life moments.

You may represent the truth of how you felt in the moment in the photograph, fictionalize the moment in the photograph (what you wished or feared), or write from the perspective of another person in the photograph.

A logline is a brief description of the plot of your story. Loglines are used to test story structure as well as to pitch or sell stories. Your logline answers the question: What is it about? A good logline should include the following elements:

- Who: your protagonist; create empathy or intrigue
- Dilemma: the central conflict; antagonist; obstacles, often time-bound
- Action: what your protagonist DOES; escalating conflict
- Goal: what your protagonist wants; the stakes
- Arc: the hook, take-away, or twist; often ironic; what your protagonist learns

Examples:

**THE HANGOVER** – A Las Vegas-set comedy centered around three groomsmen who lose their about-to-be-wed buddy during their drunken misadventures, then must retrace their steps in order to find him.

**THE GODFATHER** – The aging patriarch of an organized crime dynasty transfers control of his clandestine empire to his reluctant son.

**THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION** – Two imprisoned men bond over a number of years, finding solace and eventual redemption through acts of common decency.

## Exercise #4 - Study of a Space

Look for a space that is convenient, visually compelling, accessible and safe, empty of people at times, and reasonably well illuminated. Consider possibilities for texture, contrast, color, and form. If using private property ask permission.

Visit your space at different times of day (with noticeably different light). Explore possible images, camera angles, depth relationships, and compositions. Think about patterns of light and shadow, framings, and how to evoke a sense of the space as a whole.

1. Shoot at least 30 pictures experimenting with different lighting, compositions, and, if you have access, different lenses.
2. Shoot at two different times of day – you must include at least one picture from each.
3. Use only available light – no flash. Long exposures are OK.
4. Shoot for dynamic, compelling compositions, light, and content.
5. Shoot ONLY horizontally or ONLY vertically.
6. Shoot at least 4 of the following:
  - a composition using the rule of thirds
  - a balanced composition/ a purposefully unbalanced composition
  - leading lines
  - shallow depth-of-field to draw attention to a subject
  - deep depth-of-field
  - an image which contains foreground, mid-ground, and background
  - a frame within a frame
  - an image that creates a relationship between positive and negative space
7. Choose SIX of your images in a meaningful sequence to upload to your Google portfolio. Label each image with: the camera you shot with, f-stop, lens length (wide, normal, telephoto), approximate distance to subject, and shutter speed. Remember, do not “fix” your images or use filters: THIS IS A CAMERA EXERCISE :-)