



Aural and Visual Storytelling: IB Film 1 a/b

B-CC Film and Media Conservatory

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The film course at B-CC is unique among all of the film courses you might ever experience, even in film school. Because students have the option of taking the course for two academic years, it's possible to meet four to five times a week for approximately twenty months (with an additional two month summer break), leaving enough time for us to cover in some depth what is typically the content of four usually separate classes:

Film Studies and Criticism: an examination of aural and visual choices that comprise films

Film Production: an application of cinematic production concepts to create films

Screenwriting: an exploration and application of the building blocks of screenplays

Film History: an exploration of canonical films, film movements, and their significance

The real benefit of being able to study these different areas of cinema in a single course lies in the simple fact that these areas are not really independent from each other, at least as far as a filmmaker is concerned. If one agrees that the essential aim of filmmakers is to create a story or make a point that resonates with an audience, then filmmakers need to understand the choices available to them, both technical and aesthetic, and apply those choices in a way that builds honors their vision for the story, a job made easier with some historical and critical context of the art form. By studying these four areas of cinema collectively, you get the added benefit of seeing the myriad points at which they intersect and overlap—an understanding that will help you make more effective choices when creating your own film texts and film critiques.

And a note about those film critiques: For those of you new to the formal study of film, your awareness of films far exceeds your vocabulary for describing them. Hence, I hope that you will regard this course as (1) an opportunity to experience a broader range of movies than you are, perhaps, used to seeing, and (2) as an occasion to learn and practice a more analytical--precise and elaborated--language for talking and writing about film. Of course, you will also have the opportunity to experience first hand the tools and techniques needed to create your own projects in this medium, but students taking the course should understand from the outset that creating films is only one of four aspects of film explored in this class.

OBJECTIVES

We have four goals in this class. You will:

1. become aware of film's visual and aural techniques as well as their capacity to tell stories
2. develop skills in analyzing films as texts, understanding in particular the consequences of artistic choices for a film's meaning
3. explore a range of great movies from film history (as opposed to recent films students might find more accessible)
4. extend and deepen your in-class learning by producing your own short films and collaborating on others

EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, AND FEES

Mini DV cameras, tripods, dollies, and portable lighting kits can be checked out by anyone enrolled in the course once you and your parents/guardians have signed sign a usage agreement. Due to the limited number of cameras, students who own their own cameras are strongly encouraged to use them for film projects. Minor supplies such as additional mini-DV tapes, gels, and filters are limited and may need to be purchased by the student.

ALLOWANCES AND EXPECTATIONS

Students should be aware that this class will be both fun and challenging. On some days, we will watch a premier of a student-made film. On other days, we'll watch films that might seem rather foreign to you. Regardless of the activities, however, you should not forget that the expectations for the contributions you make to the class are high and should not be approached lightly. Anyone can and is expected to do well in this course. A background in television or film production is not required, just a strong dose of curiosity, a commitment to meet deadlines, willingness to try new things, and a modicum of self-discipline.

COMMUNICATION

All scores for work--written or filmed--will be accompanied by direct feedback from the teacher, in writing or orally. Scores will be based a point system with more demanding projects being assigned more points possible. Anytime you'd like an update on your progress, check Edline or schedule a brief meeting w/ the instructor before or after class to ensure meaningful feedback. Parents wishing to discuss your progress need only to contact the teacher via email. Otherwise, the teacher will communicate progress regularly through interim reports.

GRADING AND COURSEWORK

No assignment will be worth more than 25% of your grade. All films and written work will be graded using a rubric listing standards and expectations tailored to particular assignments. Students will receive the rubric when the work is assigned. *Generally*, a grade of "C" on a project / performance is an indication of satisfactory completion of the assignment, both in terms of preparation and execution. Grades higher than "C" will be based on those elements of the project / performance that indicate a high degree of personal investment, thoughtful preparation (particularly through practice exercises), and a desire to surpass basic standards.

Shorts / 1 per qtr (25%): Class projects, affectionately known as "shorts" for the abbreviated length, are intended to instill in you a degree of confidence in visual storytelling and to provide a foundation in basic film craft. Each short will be screened in class for discussion and critique. If student opts to use his/her own camera, final projects must be turned in on a DVD. (Approx. 50 pts each)

Please note: Your final short, which includes an associated trailer and written documentation in the form of a production portfolio, will be internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IBO near the end of the course.

Production Portfolio and Documentation—when working on a Short / 1 per qtr (10%): Each student, whether working alone or in a group, should maintain an individual journal recording key information throughout the entire production process (which we will study in class beforehand). The journal should note decisions made, issues raised and solutions reached. This journal will form the basis of a production portfolio that includes reflections and lessons learned, as well as objective evaluations of your own and others' performance and the finished productions. Observations about the construction of film texts [production] or the deconstruction [evaluation] of them must use apply the film language modeled in class. (Approx. 20 pts each)

Film Screening Responses—when viewing films / 1 per qtr (5%): You are responsible for responding to the films we see as a class in a bound journal or typed report of no less than 300 words. Your response should be a discussion of the films in light of the readings and programs for each week. You are not being asked to analyze the films, but to think about their relationship to the topics we are studying. Ask yourself:

--What did I notice in this film that I would not have if I hadn't done the reading and attended class during the unit?

or

--How was my appreciation of the film influenced by what I read and saw this week?

You may address any film elements that interest you, but you must also *connect the film with the readings and class discussion*. (Approx. 10 pts each)

Oral Analysis Presentations / 1 per qtr (25%): You will be expected to prepare and deliver several short presentations during the course. Each presentation will help an audience understand a particular film text and its role in film history. You will also be expected to "illustrate" the presentation with film clips. An outline of your presentation should be provided to students before you begin. Presentations, including clips should last 15 to 20 minutes. (Approx. 50 pts each)

Please note: Your final presentation will be recorded and externally assessed by the IBO near the end of the course.

Written Film Analysis / 1 per qtr (25%): You will be asked to analyze an aspect of an assigned film or group of films in writing. You will frequently be asked to conduct outside research on the socio-cultural context of what is assigned. (Approx. 50 pts each)

Please note: Your final written analysis, in the form of a documentary script, will be externally assessed by the IBO near the end of the course.

Film Art Reading Quizzes and Practice Work / 3 to 4 per qtr (10%): At the teacher's discretion, you will be quizzed on readings and complete practice exercises in order to make sure you are ready for upcoming discussions and class projects. (Approx. 5 pts each)

RETEACHING / REASSESSMENT

All assignments graded by rubric can be reassessed. A reassessment must be requested by the student the same week the initial assignment is returned. The reassessment will be scheduled within five days of the return of the initial assignment. The assessment may be in the original format or an alternate format. Students are expected to seek additional help and guidance from the teacher outside of class, preferably after school.