

CMST 260: THE ART OF CINEMATOGRAPHY & LIGHTING

Mondays & Wednesdays: 3:00p - 5:10p // Room R211

We will also meet outside our scheduled blocks to accommodate work in the field.

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COURSE TEXT/SUPPLIES

The Filmmaker's Handbook, 3rd ed. Plume
Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward
ISBN 978-0452286788

Motion Picture and Video Lighting, 2nd ed. Focal Press
Brown, Blain
ISBN 978-0240807638

Access to online and physical video rental services like Netflix, Netflix Instant, iTunes, Vudu, YouTube Rentals, Amazon, Amazon Prime, Scarecrow, Blockbuster, etc. I estimate you'll be spending \$35 on film viewings this quarter (or less if you subscribe to Netflix Instant or Amazon Prime).

A variety of capture and presentation formats (miniDV, DVD, CF/SD card, etc.) will be required as the course progresses, depending on which cameras you choose to use.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Covers the aesthetics of lighting to create mood, intensify drama and enhance the visual narrative.

This course explores the use of camera and light to tell stories. You will create projects on your own as well as in groups. It is expected that you will help other students on their projects so that you gain experience in various crew positions.

Through the production of the projects, hands-on practice, class discussions, lectures, guest speakers, readings and screenings, you will acquire an understanding of what it takes to create great cinematography. We will be developing both technical and analytical skills.

You are encouraged to be creative and adventurous!

COURSE OUTCOMES

- Demonstrate the ability to use lighting to create specific settings.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how light can create mood and a sense of time.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the use of camera angles and how they influence the visual narrative.
- Demonstrate an understanding of camera placement and movement.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how a cinematographer works in a production group.

(Syllabus dated 12/29/12)

ASSIGNMENTS

Film Journals: We will be watching and analyzing six films which have been voted by the *American Society of Cinematographers* as being the best shot-films of their eras (you'll be given a choice of two, pick one based on your interests). You will watch the films on your own (links to online sources provided; some films have to be rented physically) and then, via Canvas, turn in a film journal answering the question, “**why is the cinematography of this film is considered great?**” Three+ pages, MLA formatted, double-spaced, 2+ out-of-class citations. 50 points each.

The Conformist (1970) or *Apocalypse Now* (1979; <http://bit.ly/V8oWRz>)
Raging Bull (1980) or *Days of Heaven* (1978; <http://bit.ly/Tkrqhl>)
American Beauty (1999; <http://bit.ly/12GZ44M>) or *Fight Club* (1999; <http://bit.ly/Yiv4Hq>)
Road to Perdition (2002) or *Amélie* (2001; <http://bit.ly/TqrBH1>)
City of God (2002; <http://bit.ly/10lkyos>) or *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007; <http://bit.ly/UbpRQk>)
Children of Men (2006; <http://bit.ly/QbfA8q>) or *No Country for Old Men* (2007; <http://bit.ly/RTmke6>)

Scene Breakdowns: For two (possibly three) of those films, you will present a scene in class and break it down. Discuss anything you found interesting/noteworthy, providing as much context and analytical insight as possible, with a focus toward the pragmatic. Coverage strategies, composition, image size, image size dynamics, aspect ratio, angles, color, contrast, lighting, focus, blocking, movement, mood, tone, conveyance of emotion/meaning/information, etc. Basically: The *what*, the *how* and the *why*: *what* did the cinematographers do, *how* did they do it and, most importantly, *why*? Why do you think they make the choices they made? 100 points each.

Reading: Readings are assigned every week (for the first 7 weeks). I have tried to limit it to approx. 13 pages per night. Just keep on top of it, and you'll be fine. Falling behind is a very bad idea.

PROJECTS

Composition (individual): Using still photos, tell a story. Grading rubric: adherence to screen-story fundamentals, use of the traditional “rules” of composition, following coverage conventions. 100 pts.

Lighting (individual): Using still photos, tell a story; create a palpable sense of mood/tone through lighting. Grading rubric: adherence to screen-story fundamentals, use of the traditional “rules” of composition, following coverage conventions, utilization of expressive lighting. 100 pts.

Sit & Chat (group): Produce a simple scene (script to be provided): two people, mostly stationary, talking. This is a staple scene of nearly all films; they're relatively simple to execute, but very difficult to make visually compelling. Grading rubric: use of the traditional “rules” of composition, following coverage conventions, utilization of expressive lighting, *purposeful* visual dynamism, group participation. 100 pts.

Music Video Storyboard (individual): Create a storyboard for a music video (song is your choice) that aims to evoke emotion through unique visuals. The best storyboards will go on to be produced. Grading rubric: adherence to screen-story fundamentals, use of the traditional “rules” of composition, following coverage conventions, complex shot variety, potential for emotional resonance. 100 points.

Music Video (group): In small groups, produce music videos based on the storyboards. Obviously, I expect the ideas presented in the storyboard to change, grow and improve now that multiple minds are at work; but use that as your starting point. This is your final project; I expect greatness. Grading rubric: adherence to screen-story fundamentals, use of the traditional “rules” of composition, following coverage conventions, complex shot variety, emotional resonance, group participation. 300 points.

Late assignments and projects will not be accepted.

QUIZZES

There will be three quizzes this quarter — opportunities to prove knowledge. They will cover the books, class discussion, screenings, etc. All tests will be administered via Canvas. You will have at least 54 hours to complete each quiz; they will be neither timed nor limited. **There will be no make-up quizzes.**

ATTENDANCE

Attending and participating in class are the most important ways in which students can set themselves up for success. Conversely, not attending class almost certainly leads to failure.

GRADING

Conversion from points to numeric GPA will be accomplished using the following formula:

Final GPA = $0.06(p^3) + 7.21(p^2) - 2.68(p)$, where p = points earned/total points

95% or higher = **4.0**; 90% = **3.5**; 85% = **3.0**; 80% = **2.5**; 74% = **2.0**; 68% = **1.5**; 60% = **1.0**.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The principle of academic honesty underlies all that we do and applies to all courses at Bellevue College. One kind of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which may take many forms: using a paper written by someone else, using printed sources word-for-word without proper documentation, paraphrasing or summarizing the ideas of others without acknowledging the source, etc. In short, plagiarism is passing off someone else's ideas, words, or images as your own. It amounts to intellectual theft, whether or not it was your intention to steal. Bellevue College instructors have access to commercial plagiarism detection software, so please be advised that any work you submit may be tested for plagiarism.

Academic dishonesty in this course will result in a 0 for the assignment and possibly the class.

EQUIPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

You will check out equipment from the Library. **You are legally and financially responsible for it**; it is very expensive. Do not loan it to anyone or leave it in unsecured areas. Handle all equipment with care.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are required to meet with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DRC office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter. Students who require accommodation in class must review the DRC accommodation letter with each instructor during the first week of the quarter.

Students with mobility challenges who may need assistance in case of an emergency situation or evacuation should register with DRC and review those needs with the instructor as well.

WEEK 1 (1/2)

No class. Watch *Visions of Light*.

WEEK 2 (1/7, 1/9)

1/9: Reading Due — Handbook, ch. 2 & 9 [117 pgs]

WEEK 3 (1/14, 1/16)

1/13: Journal #1 Due — *The Conformist* or *Apocalypse Now* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

1/14: Scene Breakdown #1 Due

1/16: **Composition Project Due**

Reading Due — Handbook, ch. 1 & 3 [90 pgs]

WEEK 4 (1/23)

1/20: Quiz #1 Due (Canvas; 11:59p)

1/23: Reading Due — Handbook, ch. 5, 4 & 8 [107 pgs]

WEEK 5 (1/28, 1/30)

1/27: Journal #2 Due — *Raging Bull* or *Days of Heaven* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

1/28: Scene Breakdown #2 Due

1/30: **Lighting Project Due**

Reading Due — Lighting, ch. 1, 2, 3 & 4 [85 pgs]

WEEK 6 (2/4, 2/6)

2/3: Quiz #2 Due (Canvas; 11:59p)

Journal #3 Due — *American Beauty* or *Fight Club* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

2/4: Scene Breakdown #3 Due

Sit & Chat Groups Assigned

2/6: Reading Due — Lighting, ch. 5, 6, 7 & 8 [87 pgs]

WEEK 7 (2/11, 2/13)

2/10: Journal #4 Due — *Road to Perdition* or *Amelie* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

2/11: Scene Breakdown #4 Due

2/13: **Storyboard Due**

Reading Due — Lighting, ch. 9, 10, 11 & 12 [59 pgs]

WEEK 8 (2/20)

2/17: Quiz #3 Due (Canvas; 11:59p)

Music Video Groups Assigned

WEEK 9 (2/25, 2/27)

2/24: Journal #5 Due — *City of God* or *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

2/25: Scene Breakdown #5 Due

2/27: **Sit & Chat Due**

WEEK 10 (3/4, 3/6)

3/3: Journal #6 Due — *Children of Men* or *No Country for Old Men* (Canvas; Sunday, 11:59p)

3/4: Scene Breakdown #6 Due

WEEK 11 (3/11, 3/13)

Work Week?

FINAL: Monday, March 18th, 1:30 - 3:20p

Music Video Due