**CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING**
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

**FALL 2019**

**SECTION** 535-18642
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> *"The notion of directing a film is the invention of critics - the whole eloquence of cinema is achieved in the editing room." – Walter Murch*

***NOTE: SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE***

**COURSE  DESCRIPTION:**

Editing is much more than putting images together. At its best, it is the conscious action of bringing out a film's text and subtext, to fulfill a larger vision.

This class is about the art and science of editing. As such we will constantly travel between two equally important areas – aesthetics and execution. This means the why of an edit and the how or the style and the technique. Being able to execute a cut is important, but the technical execution of an edit is unuseable and irrelevant without knowing how and why to make a certain edit, taking into consideration the forces at work on the story on both the macro and micro level.

In this class you will learn how to read a script **for story,** analyze the shot footage **for story,** and put it all together to **fulfill that story** (whether that comes from you or someone else).

We will discuss techniques, tools and approaches and work to recognize, understand and begin to intuit what makes for a good cut, what builds a strong sequence and how to shape both a performance and a story.

The course will cover both the theory and the technique of editing and students will put the ideas into practice nearly every week through a series of scenes that are designed to gradually expand the types of editing experiences that you have. The accumulation of these editing experiences should give you an overview of the complete process -- aesthetic and the practical -- teaching you to how to make *informed* editing choices and to begin to develop your own personal taste and style.

In addition, you will be given a working knowledge of how to organize an editing room and operate the various tools that you need to make your editing decisions. The bulk of your hands-on editing tutoring will be given by Jeremy Deneau during his required Labs (more of which below), along with the tutorials on lynda.com (available at http://www.usc.edu/its/lynda). You will start out in these Lab classes learning all of the technical aspects that you will need for this class. As the semester continues you will begin to learn skills that may take you beyond what you do in this class, but are essential if you are to work in any capacity in an editing room today.

Projects will be edited using two non-linear digital editing machines, primarily the Avid Media Composer. During part of the semester you will be editing on Adobe Premiere, from the Adobe Creative Suite CC19. During part of the semester you will also learn various finishing workflows. You will be given a background in some assistant editor techniques – synching (in the Avid), digitizing, creating EDLs, and organizing and media management. You will also get an overview of the entire filmmaking process from the point of view of the editing room. But more importantly than learning the nuts and bolts techniques

of how to prepare your footage for editing, you will learn how to prepare *mentally* for editing: how to look at a scene for optimum editing in order to best bring out your artistic ideas. You will discover editing principles and aesthetics that you can use no matter which format you edit with and what format your project is intended for (television, feature, documentary, etc.).

During your time in this class you will be editing in pairs, learning as many techniques as possible in order to prepare you to undertake the editing process in other USC courses and in your post-school careers, on films edited either by you or by others. You will be expected to edit your projects outside of class time and bring them into the class to present and discuss with others.

## CULTIVATING CREATIVITY

Given that this class is part of a larger curriculum designed to prepare you for employment and success in larger creative fields a portion of each class will be go beyond simply making creative decisions and extend into learning how to cultivate our own creativity as part of a daily and lifelong process.   Some of the exercises we do as part of this section of the course will be optional but encouraged.

Because of the amount of material we need to cover, the 15 weeks (note that our last class happens during finals week on so don't make plans for that night) time period for our classes will get pretty intense. **Be prepared for some classes to go past the official finish time.**

**CLASS FORMAT:**

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of the editing process (and, recently, more and more things are being made the responsibility of the editing staff). Along the way, therefore, you will get a sense of the entire flow of film editing – including its thought processes, technical needs, scheduling, and politics.

The first week will be an introductory week in which we'll discuss a variety of topics including how the class will work, the process of editing, the nuts and bolts of the editorial process. I'll then present a series of pieces of film to look at and begin building our common language so that we understand what we are talking about when we are talking about editing and post-production. We'll refresh the concepts of the "Lean Forward Moment" and the "Rule of Threes" that are taught in CTPR 510 and CTPR 509 and start to pave the way for their expansion. We will also discuss variations on the syllabus that we may want to make.

After that, our weekly meetings will generally include a presentation by one student who will examine a scene from a favorite film of theirs, emphasizing the editorial choices made in the creation of that scene. I will also discuss different aspects of editing, using film clips to illustrate the topics. Over the course of the semester, these talks will provide a more or less complete discussion of the thought processes and techniques of the editing process, from picture editing to sound and music across a wide spectrum of projects.

I will also post several handouts for each class online on the class website (http://www.norman-hollyn.com/535). These are required reading, in lieu of a textbook. Occasionally I will assign a section from Lynda.com (http://www.usc.edu/its/lynda). Some of these will elaborate on our class discussion, some will be preparation for the following week's class, others will be interviews with filmmakers about the process of editing, and some will be Avid or Adobe tutorials.

At least half of each class will be devoted to the screening and critiquing of the scenes that you will have edited, in pairs, during the preceding week. We will give you re-editing notes and you will return to the editing room during the next week for a second cut. During parts of the semester, partners will take on alternating roles as editor and director in order to provide each student with the varied experience that exists in the "real world". If necessary, we will meet once or twice in the editing rooms where you and I will get some hands-on experience together.

A final component of our classes will be a discussion of the politics of editing — from working closely with directors, producers and writers, to getting jobs, getting notes and developing a distinct style.

Along the way, you're going to learn how to make sense of a lot of footage, how to use your NLE (non-linear editor) in a professional way, how to create lists for a DI, how to work better in Adobe Premiere, how to think about music, sound and effects to tell your story, and a whole slew of skills that will better prepare you for the more advanced work here at USC.

**DURING CLASS**

All of us – myself included – are here to become better filmmakers through the collective experience of this 15 week course.  Out of respect for this process I'd ask that you turn off your phone during class and do not look at it. If you need to text, send an email, etc. please excuse yourself and take a 5-10 minute break.

**WEEKLY COURSE BREAKDOWN**

*Please note, that this breakdown is liable to change several times during the course of the semester, depending on the availability of guest speakers or the progress of your own work.*

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| Week 1<br>AUG 26th | Intro To The Editing Thought Process<br>*Werckmeister Harmonies*<br>*Leviathan / Only the Young*<br>*Straight Time*<br>*KENDRICK LAMAR - ELEMENT* | How to Think Like An Editor. Script analysis.<br>The Rule of Threes and The Lean Forward Moment. Review of CTPR 510.<br>Your favorite short films.<br>Editing as re-editing. Lined Scripts<br>Select partners | **LAB LESSONS**<br>*Orientation with Labs<br>Opening and Organizing a project |
| Week 2<br>SEPT 2nd | **NO CLASS LABOR DAY** | | |
| Week 3<br>SEPT 9th | Examining the Cut/Viewing Dailies | Examining the individual cut. How shots can be restructured. Pulldown<br>When to cut. When not to cut. The L- cut.<br>Examining a script for editing (more detailed discussion of Script Analysis)<br>Lining the script pages. Organizing an editing room. The politics of the editing room The Rule of Threes reinforced.<br>Loglines, scene analyses and Lean Forward Moments<br>**(NOTE: Add/Drop period ends Sept 13)** | *Marking clips<br>*Making edits<br>* Auditioning performances |
| Week 4<br>SEPT 16th | Examining The Scene, Trusting The Audience | How scenes can be constructed. Trusting an audience.<br>Synching dailies – an overview.<br>How to organize an editing room in a film world.<br>Academy Leaders. Proper naming conventions.<br>**Logline #1 due.** | Scene cutting with stop-starts |
| Week 5<br>SEPT 23rd | Examining The Sequence<br><br>**ALEX OUT - EMMYS** | Restructuring and rearrangement. Dailies notes.<br>Television, features, and other forms of politics.<br>Preparing dailies for the eventual DI. Script Sync | Scene cutting with stop-starts |

# CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING FALL 2019

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| Week 6<br>SEPT 30th | Humor in Editing | Structure in comedy editing. Rule of Threes as it applies to comedy. Setting up beats. Midterm evaluation | |
| Week 7<br>OCT 7th | Cutting for Performance / Solving Story Problems | Dealing with storytelling problems. Reshaping, eliminating, and reconstructing tricks. Doing the DI Lab work, cutting negative, etc. Post scheduling. | |
| Week 8<br>OCT 14th | Music Design | Using music to tell a story. Spotting music and Lean Forward Moments. What music can do to accentuate your scene and script analysis.<br>What everyone does for music in film. Moving towards a final mix. Musical style. | • Working with music in Avid.<br>• Keyframing and Recording Key Frames |
| Week 9<br>OCT 21st | Sound Design/Post Post Production/ Color Correction (Finishing) | Spotting effects.<br>How to use sound to fulfill your scene and script analyses.<br>Pre-mixing, final mixing. | • Workflow roundup<br>• Guest speaker( ?) |
| Week 10<br>OCT 28th | The Action Sequence | **Moving to Adobe Premiere**. Why? What is necessary for modern editors to know.<br>Creating an action sequence.<br>How a scene analysis may differ in an action sequence. How it doesn't. | • Premiere over-view<br>• Using Premiere for finishing. |
| Week 11<br>NOV 4th | VFX | Manipulating the film image within the context of the script analysis.<br>VFX, CGI.<br>Green Screen and how to use it. How an editing team works with creation and editing of VFX. | • Working with VFX |
| Week 12<br>NOV 11th | Documentaries | Telling a story with real footage. How it is the same as the dramatic footage we've been studying, how it is different.<br>Style in documentaries. Storytelling in documentaries | • Organizing large volumes of footage |
| Week 13<br>NOV 18th | Style | **Move back to Avid.**<br>Change partners. Freelance life. What is style?<br>What do I mean when I talk about creating and living within a style?<br>Editing difficult material. | • **TBD** |

**CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING FALL 2019**

| Week 14<br>NOV 25th | NO CLASS THANKSGIVING | |
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| Week 15<br>DEC 2nd | Short Short Films: Commercials and<br>  Music videos | Music videos<br>Commercials<br>Guest speaker??<br>How to look at longer formats. |
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**COURSE   REQUIREMENTS:**

Beginning with the first week, you and your partner will be required to edit and/or re-edit a scene every week. You will present it at the next class, and accept criticism from your classmates and me so you can re-edit the scenes for a screening during the following week. My comments will be given **verbally** during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Once during the semester, you will be required to choose a short scene from a project you admire, and analyze it from the point of view of its editing — its style and content and anything else that we have learned up until that point. The scene can be from a film of any kind, a television show, a commercial or a music video – whatever. In short, you can choose anything where editing is involved. You will screen the scene in class and present that analysis following the screening, *both written and orally*. You will be expected to bring a copy of the film to class **along with your typed report** on the date it is due.  We will have the availability to screen from a DVD or a QuickTime file of *most codecs*. Once again, my comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Three times during the semester you will be required to create a logline for a film (you can find a further explanation of this in Chapter One and Two of "The Lean Forward Moment," but don't worry, we'll talk about what this means when the assignment is given out). You will be expected to hand in this logline at the beginning of the following class.

You will be required to attend the Lab taught by Jeremy Deneau in SCA B152 in the basement Post Production  labs.

## CTPR 535 INTERMEDIATE EDITING FALL 2019

While there you will learn the techniques that good editors and assistant editors need to know about the editing process, and be able to ask questions that arise during the editing of your own scenes. *Attendance will be taken there and passed along to me.* In order to help gauge the class level, you will be given a short assessment during the first week of class. You will not be graded on this.

For one exercise you will re-edit one of the 508 films that was created last semester. Note that this cannot be a film that you worked on in any way. We're going to see how the things that we've learned in the class help us to reshape films that others struggled with before.

At the end of the semester you will assemble all of the scenes of a film that you will be editing into one long sequence with music and sound effects. At the final class you will hand in that Quicktime. I will provide you with written notes later that week. I expect you to attend that final class, even though it is during the final exam period, since there will be some discussion and hopefully a guest speaker.

Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. **ATTENDANCE WILL BE TAKEN AT EVERY CLASS and LAB**. Written explanations will be necessary *in advance* for all excused absences. **Unexcused absences will be reflected in the course grade.** In addition, students will be expected to be at class on time; *lateness will also be reflected in your grade*. Please make use of my e-mail address or phone number above if you have an unavoidable problem. If you cannot make the class or will be late, <u>let me know by the evening before the class</u>. [Sorry for all of the bold facing, underlining and italics, but this section cannot be emphasized enough. Responsibility is an important skill for an editor.]

Since film editors are judged on their ability to complete their work in a timely manner, you will likewise be responsible for completing each stage of every project on time and in a professional manner.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

We will be reading portions of a number of different texts. For some of these I will expect you to purchase the texts, for others I will distribute PDFs of the necessary reading in the week prior to class.

**GRADES:**

*The primary component of your grade will be your weekly editing assignments*. This involves several factors. The first is your ability to complete these assignments every week, whether they are original edits or recuts. The second is your ability to verbally present a cogent case for every editorial choice you have made during the editing of your scenes. We want to make sure that each decision was conscious and thought out. As the term progresses, this thoughtful aspect of your editing will become more and more important. Third, you will be graded on your progress during the semester. You will be expected to begin to think more like an editor in your work and your discussions of that work. Your thoroughness, completeness and attention to detail any instructions will all contribute to your grade

You will also be judged on your ability to work constructively with others, to accept criticism, and to refine your work on the basis of that criticism.

The above work will constitute **approximately 50%** of your grade. The following skills will also contribute to your grade:

The written and oral analysis of the film scene that you presented to the class (**approximately 10%**)

Satisfactory and *on-time completion* of your log-line assignments (**approximately 10%**)

Prompt attendance at *and participation in* all class meetings and the Avid Lab portion of the class. The participation aspect can't be stressed enough. (**approximately 10%**)

In lieu of a final, you and your partner will need to complete an edited sequence, constructed from a number of scenes that you will have been editing over the course of the final weeks of the course (**approximately20%**).

Meeting all scheduled dates for all projects will be factored into the above numbers. Late log lines, weekly class assignments and the final project (especially the final project) will be reflected in your grade. *If you hand it in late, expect me to deduct from your grade.*

Note: We will frequently screen your scenes right off the Isis shared storage system, but you will still be required to bring a backup to class.

**ACADEMIC  INTEGRITY**

The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on our quiz, submitting any work that you or your partner have not done. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office  of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or doubts about these policies, consult "Scampus" and/or confer with your SA or me.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to Melinda or me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Their phone number is 213/740-0776.