

Department of Communication Studies
Television Aesthetics and Techniques - COM 280-001

Syllabus Fall 2006

Tues., Thurs., 12:30-1:45 Leutze Hall 248

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Required text - Video Basics, 5th Ed., Herb Zettl, 2006

Course Philosophy. Video production is an exciting, complex and potentially powerful means of communication. It is a unique form of communication in that developing an effective message requires both a deep understanding of the medium's aesthetic elements *and* mastery of advanced technical skills. Many viewers have an appreciation of the aesthetics of moving images, either innately or through extensive exposure to television and movies throughout our lives. While many of us "know what we like" and "know a good shot when we see it", for someone wishing to enter some aspect of the film or television production fields it is important to understand the language, concepts, technologies and processes associated with creating an appealing and effective video or film message. This course seeks to expose students to the essential aesthetic principles of the moving image, and the concepts, terminology, processes, technologies and techniques used to create those images. While the many of the principles discussed in this course also apply to film, the primary focus will be on production and aesthetics for television and digital video production.

Course Objectives. The primary goal of Television Aesthetics and Techniques (COM 280) is to introduce students to the basic principles of the video production process in both broadcast and non-broadcast settings. Specifically, students will gain an understanding of the concepts, terminology, aesthetics, techniques and technologies of the following elements of modern video production: moving image acquisition (i.e., cameras) and storage (i.e., recording formats), audio acquisition, lighting, editing, planning, and producing. In addition to learning about these critical areas, students will gain limited experience applying their knowledge in practice production opportunities.

At a minimum, successful completion of the course will enable students to become more critical consumers of video and film. For students interested in pursuing production as a major course of study, COM 280 is the foundation for more advanced courses in video production (e.g., *Field Video Production I and II*, COM 380 and 480), enrollment in film or video production internships and eventually for employment in a related field.

Student Evaluation & Class Activities. Detailed written guidelines for each element will be provided in class. The degree of student comprehension (hence class performance) will be determined through the quality of work on examinations, workshops, projects and written reports. For a number of reasons, *COM 280 is primarily conceptual* rather than practical in approach.

Exams. Three exams will be given, two midterms and a comprehensive final. Exams typically contain a mix of objective and subjective questions including: multiple choice, true/false, matching, fill-in, short answer, and short essay. The **final exam is comprehensive** as it is necessary to understand the concepts from the entire class in order to advance to subsequent production courses.

Participation in Camera/Lighting/Audio Workshops. Students will be required to participate in several in-class production workshops to gain familiarity with production equipment and processes.

Program or Project Proposal. Groups of two students will develop a detailed proposal for either a television series or documentary project that could realistically be produced by students at UNCW. The following steps will be completed for the project: development, analysis and selection of program concept; detailed content/background research; script/story development; location scout, analysis and site diagram; lighting plot; production planning; detailed program/project design; audio, lighting and production evaluation. (Possible option, individual production critique/comparison of programs within a selected genre.)

Production Workshops. Various production workshops on camera, lighting, and sound will be offered during class meeting time. The workshops will provide students the opportunity to apply principles they have learned in class in a "hands-on" setting. Students are expected to take an active role in the workshops. There are no make-ups.

Writing Assignments. Additional writing assignments may be required.

Grade scale. Final grades will be determined on a ten-point scale based on a percentage of total possible points (e.g. A range =90-100%, B range = 80-89%, C range = 70-79%, D range = 60-69%). A plus/minus grade system will be used with the top one percent (e.g., 89-89.9%) of each grade category earning a "plus" grade for that range and the bottom one percent (e.g., 80-80.9%) earning a "minus" grade.

Evaluation Point Values			
<u>Evaluation element</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Evaluation element</u>	<u>Value</u>
Midterm Exams (100 each)	200	Production Workshops (10 pts. @)	30
Final Exam	100	Perfect attendance & participation bonus	(10)
Project development plan	100	Writing Assignment(s)	20
		TOTAL	450

*The exact value and number of assignments may vary depending upon the progress of the class.

Evaluation Policies and Expectations.

- No make-up exams or quizzes will be given without explicit prior approval.
- Students are responsible for all course content, including: lectures, presentations, workshops, discussions, videotapes, guest speakers, field trips, laboratory work.
- All written assignments must be typed and on time. It is also recommended that you save a copy of all assignments on your own jump drive or flash drive. Written assignments are expected to be of the highest quality in all areas including writing quality, organization, layout, professionalism, and neatness.
- Late assignments receive an automatic deduction of one letter grade with the deduction with an additional letter grade deduction per day.
- If offered, extra credit may benefit a student no more than one-half of a letter grade.

Evaluation Philosophy. At best, grades are imperfect and rough indicators of performance on a given set of evaluative elements. In our educational system, however, grades are an essential part of the overarching educational equation. Each evaluative element provides a snapshot of student

knowledge or ability at a given point of the semester regarding a specific content area or skill set. This class attempts to offer a variety of elements through which students may demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills. Exams, written projects, attendance and participation are all-important and combine to provide a snapshot of student understanding and/or ability over the course of the semester.

Grade interpretations. Assigned grades indicate performance quality as follows: A = overall excellence with performance substantially above one's peers. B = good to very good performance in most areas covered in the course with room for improvement. C = average performance on most course elements relative to peers. D = performance below that of peers with some grasp of some elements covered in the course. F = failure to adequately demonstrate knowledge of the topic.

Student Motivation. COM 280 is primarily designed for students considering video or film production careers and who plan to take additional video production courses. COM 280 remains an open enrollment class, however, and students interested in gaining a greater understanding of video production are welcome. Be aware that some students may have substantial prior experience and many elements of this course are highly technical. *Enrollment in subsequent field video production courses is by permission of instructor only and will be limited to the students who perform well in the introductory course. Except in limited circumstances, attainment of a grade of B or higher is the minimum requirement for matriculation into more advanced production courses.*

Attendance and Participation.

- Attendance and participation are very important to success in this class.
- *You may miss one (1) class without penalty.*
- **Every two instances of arriving late or leaving early will count as one absence.**
- **The second absence will result in the automatic deduction of a one half-letter grade in your final course grade (A to A-, A- to B+, etc...).**
- **Each absence beyond two (i.e., 3+) will result in a full letter grade deduction in the student's overall course grade.**
- Thus, regardless of the number of points earned on exams and assignments: a student missing three (3) classes may earn no higher than a B- for the course. A student missing four (4) classes may earn no higher than a C-. A student missing five (5) classes may earn no higher than a D.
- Students with five or more absences will not be eligible to enroll in other video production courses.
- Exceptions to the attendance policy may be made for *extreme* circumstances if those circumstances are handled responsibly. Responsible handling of those situations will include, but is not limited to, communicating with Dr. Bolduc as soon as possible about the situation, communicating with your production team, making arrangements to make up work in a timely manner, and the like. Such efforts may not result in removal of that absence, but are essential if an exception is to be made.
- *If you have a major life or family crisis or illness that prevents your attendance for more than one class meeting, contact me in person (e.g., phone, email) as soon as can be reasonably expected. I recommend that you leave a message on my office voice answering system or with the Communication Studies main office (962-3448). If you must leave campus for an extended period of time to deal with family issues, contact the Dean of Students office as soon as possible so that your professors may be officially notified (962-3119).*

Perfect Attendance and Class Contribution. Perfect attendance for class meetings and workshops combined with appropriate and consistent participation in class discussion may earn a maximum

of 10 bonus points. You are expected to ask questions, actively participate in production workshops discuss issues and offer examples and critique points when appropriate.

Base groups. Early in the semester students will be randomly assigned to small base-groups for the purposes of class discussions, workshops, exam review, and peer academic support. During the organizational session, members will exchange names, phone numbers, email addresses, regular outside time commitments (e.g., jobs) and preferred group meeting times and locations. Groups should also choose a name.

The Web. Dr. Bolduc's university web page is an integral part of this course. It contains lecture notes, important links and production documents and will be used as a means of updating individuals and groups on assignments and projects. Please check it regularly: <http://people.uncwil.edu/bolducw> You may also gain access to the web site through SeaWeb.

Time expectations. While hard work, effort and time spent completing projects are certainly valued in this class and in our society, it is the quality of the final product, as a means of communicative expression (i.e., exam, paper, production) that carries the majority of evaluative weight. This is especially important to understand in the field of video production as projects are strictly judged on their merit of the value of their quality upon completion, not the amount of work or good will that went into producing them. Having said that, as this is an introductory course, students are strongly encouraged to go above and beyond the basic course requirements (e.g., spend time outside of class practicing with cameras) to enhance their cognitive understanding of and skill level in the production process. For hard work and creativity to be justly recognized and rewarded, the final product, regardless of its format (i.e., video production, proposal, paper, script) must demonstrate excellence in its totality, not just in isolated elements.

CONTRIBUTION. The greatest learning takes place when many ideas are exchanged, challenged and intelligently debated. As such, student contribution plays a very important role in this course.

Tips for successful class contribution:

- Ask challenging questions of the instructor or other students.
- Articulate alternative points of view to opinions expressed in class.
- Make connections between course material and situations outside the classroom.
- Make sure contributions relate to the topic at hand.
- Present your opinion in a constructive and respectful manner.
- "Show and Tell" – bring in an artifact, information or issue that ties in with issues introduced in the course.
- For course readings, keep a note card handy to jot down questions or issues that arise. Report those issues to the class when appropriate.

PROFESSOR RESPONSIBILITIES. To assure that students have the greatest possibility to succeed, I will endeavor to provide students with: 1) clear, organized lectures and presentation materials, 2) the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, 3) clear, unambiguous instructions and evaluation criteria, 4) a reasonable amount of time to complete and/or prepare for evaluation elements (pop quizzes excepted), 5) preparative materials when appropriate (e.g., test review and detailed assignment documents), 6) detailed and constructive feedback toward the goal of improving future efforts, and 7) advice and guidance during the preparation of long-term projects. If, at any time during the semester, you have *any questions* about the course or your performance in it, you are encouraged to contact me outside of class.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES. Students are expected to: 1) attend all class meetings, 2) be prepared to contribute by having read the assigned text prior to the corresponding class period, 3) actively participate in class discussions and offer constructive criticism of and comment on peer work, when appropriate, 4) respect fellow class members at all times, 5) be assertive and empowered in their learning experience (e.g., ask questions, seek clarification, identify unique learning opportunities), 6) submit assignments on time, 7) follow assignment directions, and 8) give your best effort on each assignment.

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS. *In choosing UNCW, you have become part of our community of scholars. We recognize that the UNCW learning experience is challenging and requires hard work. It also requires a commitment to make time available to do that hard work. The university expects you to make academics your highest priority by dedicating your time and energy to training your mind and acquiring knowledge. Academic success in critical thinking and problem solving prepares you for the changes and challenges you will encounter in the future. Our faculty and academic support resources are readily available as partners in this effort, but the primary responsibility for learning is yours.*

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE. *The University of North Carolina Wilmington is committed to the proposition that the pursuit of truth requires the presence of honesty among all involved. It is therefore this institution's stated policy that no form of dishonesty among its faculty or students will be tolerated. (See Student Handbook and Code of Student Life for the entire policy, details, and punishment.)*

HOUSEKEEPING POLICY. **Recycle your plastic bottles and aluminum cans in containers located in the hallway.** Classrooms should be kept clean and free of trash, drink containers, chewing gum and food waste at all times. Eating and drinking in a classroom is a conditional privilege that requires individual responsibility.

NOTES FOR PCOM AND COM MAJORS:

PORTFOLIO ARTIFACTS. One of the culminating experiences of a communication studies degree is the completion of COM 490 *Discipline Capstone*, a course that may include the preparation of a personal portfolio to organize and showcase your abilities. I encourage you to retain items from this class, whether produced independently or in groups, for inclusion as portfolio artifacts. Beyond the *Capstone* class, your portfolio may prove a valuable tool as you seek entry into a graduate program or employment in your area of specialization.

BASIC STUDIES/COM 160. COM 160 is a Basic Studies course and as such, does not count toward hours needed for the COM degree.

COURSE COMPLETION AND GATEWAY REQUIREMENTS. Classes typically coded "COM Majors ONLY" may occasionally be opened to PCOM majors or all students. This may most commonly occur during summer terms. Please be aware, however, that to become a full-status COM major, you **MUST** complete the gateway courses (COM 105 and COM 200) **SUCCESSFULLY**, i.e., with a grade of "B" or higher in each. If you do **NOT** successfully complete those two courses, you cannot earn full COM major status, even if you complete one or more COM classes apart from the gateway courses.

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Fall Semester 2006

Semester Schedule

Th Aug 24	Classes begin	
T Aug 29	Production process; Production Types	Ch. 2, 3
W Au 30	Last day for registration/Last day to drop	
Th Aug 31	Production Types – Studio & Field; Camera technology	Ch. 15,10, 14
M Sept 4	Labor Day holiday	
T Sept. 5	Camera technology	Ch. 4, 5, 6
Th Sept. 7	Camera Technology & Technique	
T Sept 12	Camera Technique; Studio Production	
Th Sept 14	Camera Field Practice	
T Sept 19	Camera Field Assignment	
Th Sept 21	Screening of Camera Field Assignment	
T Sept 26	Midterm Exam 1	
Th Sept 28	Audio	Ch. 8
T Oct 3	Audio	
Th Oct 5	Audio	
M Oct 9 & T Oct 10	Fall Vacation – No Classes	
Th Oct 12	Audio Practice	
T Oct 17	Screening of Audio Practice	
Th Oct 19	Midterm Exam 2	
T Oct 24	Lighting	Ch. 7
Th Oct 26	Lighting	
T Oct 31	Lighting	
Th Nov 2	Lighting Practice & Recording	
T Nov 7	Screening of Lighting Practice	
Th Nov 9	Lighting Exam	
T Nov 14	Editing	Ch. 10, 11, 12
Wed. 15	Graduation Application Deadline – Spring 2007	
Th Nov 16	Editing	
T Nov 21	Editing	
Wed.-Fri. Nov. 22-24	Thanksgiving Holiday begins, No classes	
T Nov 28	Editing	
Th Nov 30	Editing	
T Dec 5	Last day of Tuesday/Thursday classes	
Th Dec 14 11:30- 2:30	Final Exam	
Sat. Dec. 16	Commencement	

*Changes to the semester schedule will be announced in class