

CTPR 556 – ADVANCED EDITING
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMA - TELEVISION

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Class Meetings: Thursday, 9am - 11:50pm
Location: Lucas 210

Office: Marcia Lucas Post 102 (outside room)
Hours: Monday 10-12 and by appointment (Mon and Thurs are best)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class is designed for those of you who would like to develop editorial skills that will prepare you for the outside world of editing. Because the prerequisites for this class are CTPR 535, CTPR 545 or CTPR 546 you will have already discussed and explored the basics of storytelling, primarily learning through the editing of a short film or numerous pre-shot scenes. Now, it is time to move into a deeper examination of the various facets of editing and assistant editing in a longer form – both aesthetically and technically – and see just what this world of editing is all about.

Through editing, as well as a more in-depth examination of the visual and sound effects and DVD authoring tools available to the modern film editor, we will learn just how integrally today's film editors are part of the total film production process. This will include a more detailed examination of the effects and sound palettes of the Avid Media Composer, as well as a discussion of how to integrate with tools such as Adobe After Effects or Apple's Motion, Adobe Photoshop and outside visual effects (CGI) houses. We will move beyond the shorter forms of editing that you have spent your time here at USC learning, and move into longer length thinking. You will learn how to author DVDs with moving menus, both for your own reels and for those of you who wish to move into this burgeoning career. We may discuss how web based streaming programs (such as Flash) are affecting the editing world today and how a web site works. Finally, we will work with a professional Job Placement Counselor, to learn how to build a resume and look for work in today's job market.

CLASS FORMAT:

The plan for this course is for all of us to work at recutting a single low-budget independent movie called SHUT UP AND SING, a comedy with music, which was written and directed in 2005 by Bruce Leddy. This film is presently finished and will probably be in theatres sometime in 2007. Bruce has allowed us to use the original footage so that we may learn how to see how editing something long form present similar and different challenges than editing a scene or a short film.

Each of the twelve of you will be assigned a continuous section of the film. You will then edit a scene or so each week, which you will assemble into a long segment of the film. Part way through the semester, we will assemble all of these segments into a complete film and begin to make copious changes in the overall movie. In fact, we will completely emulate the editorial process of most films and television shows.

Unlike most of your previous editing experiences at USC, you will be editing by yourself. This will put certain restrictions on the class – for one thing, we will not be able to screen every scene edited every week. However, at this point, you should be able to give yourself your own re-editing notes, and we will be developing this ability in you. One of the skills that a film editor needs to have is the ability to look objectively at his or her own work.

The other complication that this class structure will impose is the added responsibility to make sure that our completed film doesn't feel like twelve different people edited it. It is important to learn that, even though editors need to bring their own artistry to a film, we are almost always editing in the service of someone else's vision of the story. To that end, we will determine, in advance, a style and editing plan for the film, which I will then guide as a director would.

Scheduling is also an art that good editors and assistants must have, and we will devote a good portion of this class to the construction of good post-production schedules, both for ourselves and for films and television productions.

After a first week of discussing the class, each subsequent class will be devoted to two main tasks – we will be looking at some of the scenes that we have edited out of class during the preceding week, and we will concentrate on a topic for our further learning. In many cases I hope to have guest speakers who will raise our understanding of the editing world (Bruce, himself, will visit us the second week of class, to discuss our perceptions of the scripts and bring him writer/director sensibility to it). A composer will talk about how to talk music and work with it in your cuts. A Visual Effects Supervisor will help guide us in integrating our editing work with VFX houses. A DVD Producer will discuss

this very new job category. It is this combination of editing and listening that will make us better editors and assistants.

As part of the progression of this class, after all of the scenes have been edited, we will do rudimentary sound editing work utilizing the tools built into the Avid Media Composer. Like the picture editing, this sound editing will be accomplished out of class time. We will be able to add music during the course of the editing process and will be finalized during the post-picture editing phase as well.

When all sections of the film are complete and temp-mixed, we are going to try and assemble the entire film onto a chaptered DVD, each of us doing our own moving menus.

A final component of the class will be developing job-hunting skills. Over the course of the semester, each of you will be developing a resume that accurately reflects your job skills. The tools to develop this resume will be provided by a professional Job Consultant who will come twice during the semester - once to give us an outline on how to put together a resume and a circle of contacts, and a second time later in the semester to discuss the resumes that you will have already developed and give feedback for rewriting your resume.

Another factor in job hunting is being aware of the job market and the skills you need in a changing industry. As a result, we will be discussing, on an irregular basis, topics raised by the evolving technologies - such as DRM, new distribution methods, et al. You will occasionally be asked to listen to podcasts which talk about these topics.

I have a bare-bones web site for the class. It includes description of each week's class, the homework assignments, my recutting notes, and some additional materials. You can find it at:

<http://www.norman-hollyn.com/556>

Each week's page will be available starting on the day of the class.

During all phases of the class I encourage questions and comments. We all need to be challenged. That includes me.

Just like in movie theatres and playhouses, I'm going to ask every one of you to **turn off all pagers and cell phones** before coming to class. Ringing phones and buzzing pagers are really disruptive in class and just plain rude to me and your fellow classmates.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Beginning with the second week, you will be required to edit a new scene every week. Until the first cut is complete and screened you will also be re-editing the scene/s you have already cut. You should have your cuts, properly prepared for screening, ready at the subsequent class where we will try and watch them. When we do, the class and I will give criticism so you can re-edit the scenes for a possible second screening the following week. My comments will be given verbally during the class. Any new scenes that you edit should be added to any adjacent scenes so you can see the effect of one scene against the others. It's the Rule of Threes made evident!!

As a rule, we will rarely have the time for our guest speakers, to screen our edited scenes and give feedback on everything. That will, in fact, begin to happen early in our schedule. At that time, I will begin to take the scenes home with me and within several days, have the notes done and posted on the web site. This will enable everyone to see notes for everyone, which is crucial in maintaining a consistent look to the film. Please label your output tapes and DVDs, as well as slating the cuts.

Your SA will give you a run-through sometime in the second week, which is crucial for those of you working on LanShare for the first time, but will be required for all of you even if you have worked on the shared 10.6 systems.

You will not be required to purchase any textbooks for this class, but I strongly recommend one book anyway: Behind the Seen: How Walter Murch Edited Cold Mountain Using Apple's Final Cut Pro and What This Means for Cinema. This rather verbosely titled book, written by Charles Koppelman, is actually, once you get past the hoo-hah of the Final Cut-ness of the title, an excellent description of how an editing room functions. Following the path of the editing process, from pre-production throughout most of the editing, we learn what previews are like, what workflow in an editing is like, and many more things.

I am recommending, though not requiring, that you get subscriptions to two magazines designed for editors - the Cinemeditor (published by ACE, the honorary editor's organization) and The Editors Guild Magazine (published by the union of film, sound and music editors, as well as a number of other job categories). Both of these magazines will not only be a great resource for you for the interviews and technical articles, but they also start to be a resource for suppliers and contacts that can help you move into the Hollywood and New York film industry.

In addition, I recommend picking up several books. Two are on add-on programs that we will discuss briefly in class - *Photoshop for Nonlinear Editors* by Richard Harrington (CMP Books, \$55) and either *Creating Motion*

Graphics with After Effects or *After Effects in Production*, both by Trish and Chris Meyer (CMP Books, \$55 and \$50 respectively). Both of these books are very practical, detailed and instructive texts about these two very important additional tools for the modern editor. As such, it would be good for you to learn about them in more depth than we will cover in the class. Each book also comes with a fantastic CD-ROM of exercises and materials, as well as plug-ins for the programs and demo versions of the programs the books are about.

I am also recommending Gabriella Oldham's *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors* is a great collection of interviews with a large number of editors.

And, just because I like to stretch out my recommendation list, am also highly recommending your purchase of another book – Michael Ondaatje's interviews with editor Walter Murch – *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing film*. This is an incredible series of interviews with one of the top film and sound editors in the art form today. Ondaatje met Murch while on the set of THE ENGLISH PATIENT (which was based on Ondaatje's novel). The two bonded and began a series of wide-ranging conversations which included discussion about the intersection of writing and editing, the thought process of editing a scene, the intertwining of all of the components of filmmaking and much more.

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. Your thoroughness, completeness and attention to detail any instructions will all contribute to your grade.

You will also be graded on your ability to work within the larger context of an entire film, rather than simply the scenes that you are editing. Attention to consistent theme and style, as well as the ability to interact well with all of your fellow editors is of large importance to me. You will, therefore, be judged on your ability to work constructively with others, to accept criticism and to refine your work on the basis of that criticism.

Part of my expectation of your work is that your Digital Cuts/Outputs will all be screenable in the facilities that we have in Lucas 210's (and my home) VHS or DVD machines. That means that you will have checked your work before coming to class, labeled the tapes properly, and provided a slate, bars and tone, and a countdown leader at the head of each tape. Off-camera voices, sound

drop outs, and unrendered or missing media will, after your first cut of each scene, affect your grade.

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. Late weekly class assignments and the final project (*especially* the final project) will be reflected in your grade.

In lieu of a final exam you will be responsible for completing (with all sound and music and special effects) your portion of SHUT UP AND SING along with a moving menu to be integrated into the overall class DVD. This final project should reflect all of the analyses and critiques that we have been working on during the course of the entire semester.

You will also be responsible for creating a resumé for our Career Consultant. You will be asked to put together a preliminary resumé or list of accomplishments for her first visit in Week 6 (February 15). You will also need to revise your resume in time for her second visit in Week 15 (April 26).

Prompt attendance at **and participation in** all class meetings is also a factor in your grade. The participation aspect can't be stressed enough.

In short, then, your grade breakdown will be as follows:

30%	Weekly assignments
30%	Final compilation of scenes
15%	Sound and Music creation and execution
10%	DVD Menu Creation
10%	Attendance and participation in classes
5%	Resumé creation and revision

If you are in danger of failing you will be notified in writing. We can then work together to come up with a plan to enable you to pass.

There will be NO incompletes granted except in the case of severe medical or serious emergency. Editors can't be sick; they lose their jobs if they are.

It is your responsibility to be aware of USC's add/drop and withdraw deadlines.

PRESENTATION OF EDITED MATERIAL:

The surest way to drive me absolutely up a tree is to bring DVDs or tapes to class that aren't prepared properly, so we get to watch you fiddle with out-of-sync film, or tapes with bad audio. As I mentioned above **all material must be properly prepared for screening in class.** It will be your responsibility to

make sure that your videos are complete, with sound, and in viewable condition. You should check your videotapes before leaving the Avid editing station, on a different VHS machine than the one you recorded them on, if possible. Videotapes must be rewound to the beginning of the edited scene and contain a slate (which should include your name, the date and the scene numbers that you are presenting in that edit).

I will occasionally ask to take your tapes home with me to view or review. As a result, all videotapes should be properly identified. This means your names, our class number (CTPR 556), and the name of the scene. A date is handy also.

TRAINING

You will all need to sit with your TA for 30-60 minutes in the second week of classes (out of class time) to get a short tutorial on the systems that we will be working on. Those of you who have not taken the Avid Lab associated with 546 editing sections and 535, should make a commitment to attend one of weekly Avid labs. The purpose of the labs is to make working with the Avid a more enjoyable experience and enable you to stop fighting the machine. As such, this is crucial information for assistant editors. The classes are given at the following times:

Tuesday 9am - 12noon.
Wednesday 6:30 - 9:30p
Thursday 9am - 12noon

This class is designed for CTPR 421/535
Designed for CTPR 480/546
Designed for CTPR 480/546

OFFICE HOURS AND OUT OF CLASS CONSULTATION

I expect to have my office hours on Monday (10-12). My office is in room 126 at the Marcia Lucas Post building (that's one of the outside rooms) and my office number is 213/821-2792. I am, however, available by appointment at many other times. I will also return phone message in a more-or-less prompt manner. The best way to reach me is my USC email address -- nhollyn@cinema.usc.edu.

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, or 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 the SA or with me. There are also online guides for you on the USC website. One place to start is at

http://www.usc.edu/programs/cet/ta_resources/academic_integrity/overview.html

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 Dana 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.

RECOMMENDED READING:

The following books are good sources for aesthetic and technical information about editing.

Arijon, Daniel. *Grammar of The Film Language*. A very detailed, thorough and incredibly tedious (but valuable) look at how to block a scene to create the best cutting. If you've ever tried to plan shots for a group of eight people around a dinner table, you'll appreciate the book. TECHNICAL

Bayes, Steve *The Avid Handbook*. This is an excellent reference book for the intermediate Avid editor, complete with tips and tricks on organizational skills, the Avid program, and the hardware. TECHNICAL

Dmytryk, Edward. *On Film Editing*. Also valuable from the same author are *On Screen Writing*, *On Screen Directing*, and *On Screen Acting* and *On Film*. AESTHETIC.

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*. I haven't actually read this book, but I have had it recommended to me. It covers the pre-production, shooting and editing of documentaries.

LoBrutto, Vincent. *Selected Takes: Film Editors On Editing*. A wonderful series of interviews with some of the top editors of the past and present. AESTHETIC.

Murch, Walter. *In The Blink of an Eye, A Perspective on Film Editing*. AESTHETIC

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. This is an incredible series of interviews with one of the top film and sound editors in the art form today. Described above. AESTHETIC.

Reisz, Karel, and Millar, Gavin. *The Technique of Film Editing*. AESTHETIC

Rosenblum, Ralph. *When The Shooting Stops... The Cutting Begins*. Rosenblum, a veteran film editor who cut many of Woody Allen's early films, talks about his experiences both in and out of the editing room. More raconteurial than instructional, it does give a nice sense of the style of a colorful editor -- both in terms of editing and politics. AESTHETIC.

Rubin, Michael. *Nonlinear - A Field Guide to Digital Video and Film Editing*. A description of the history and equipment in non-linear digital editing. Pictures of the various editing systems with descriptions of each one fill up most of the back part of the book. TECHNICAL

Solomons, Tony. *The Avid Film Editing Room Handbook*. This book is an excellent introductory work to the Avid. Though it isn't a how-to book in the classic sense, it does give the new Avid user a good sense of how to perform varying levels of tasks. TECHNICAL

RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:

Podcasts (subscribe using the iTunes Music Store or a service like Podcast Alley)

Avid Technology Podcast - Interviews with filmmakers and software designers such as Jabez Olssen, editor of King Kong, and Phill Avanzatto, lead animator at PURE.

Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz - Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production.

Creative Screenwriting Magazine. An awesome podcast. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the "final rewrite").

CreativeCOW.net. An increasingly infrequent, but really good series of interviews from the people at creativecow, one of the premiere website/bulletin boards for the DV filmmaker. Lots of great topics here.

DV Show. A weekly podcast devoted to all things digital video.

FCP Tips. Short video podcast with tips and tricks on Final Cut Pro.

Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.

KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business. Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.

Kenradio Broadcasting. A daily podcast that goes into the issues in the communication industry today. With the entertainment and communication industries getting closer together everyday, this is a crucial podcast to keep you informed.

This Week In Media. This podcast, along with another of Leo LaPorte's podcasts "This Week In Tech", is a great series of discussions about topics that should be of interest to you - "Who Uses VHS?", distributing movies on iTunes, the Red Camera, and more.

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A copy of this Syllabus is available on my web site at
<http://www.norman-hollyn.com/556>