

FILMPROD 106 IMAGE AND SOUND: FILMMAKING FUNDAMENTALS FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Summer 2024

Time: Mon/Wed, 1:30pm-3:20pm

Location: McMurtry 115

Instructor: Claire Haughey (haugheyc@stanford.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00am-1:00pm

1. Course Description

We live in a time of unprecedented access to both making and consuming media. Has this digital age democratized who we see behind and in front of the camera? Does this open up pathways to civic participation and artistic expression? Or will these rapid technological changes just fade into history as just another phase of cinema? FILMPROD 106 will explore these big picture questions in the context of a hands-on film production class. We will learn the fundamentals of visual storytelling that remain largely unchanged over the last century despite the digital revolution, while exploring multiple filmmaking tools from iPhones, mirrorless cameras and Premiere Pro. In this course, we will examine how emerging tools and technologies create opportunities for innovation in aesthetic and narrative forms. We will also question their impact on our relationship with images, authenticity, and information, especially as we transition to a world with AI-generated images. The course is not focused on one specific part of the filmmaking process (i.e. just shooting, just editing) but instead gives students the experience of the filmmaking process as a whole, with an emphasis on documentary.

2. COURSE COMPONENTS

Lectures

Lectures will cover aspects of filmmaking craft such as lighting, editing, and sound design. In addition to studying filmmaking fundamentals, we will view digital filmmaking through the lens of specific case studies of our current media landscape, exploring what techniques are a product of our times and what techniques withstand the test of time. History of the evolution of filmmaking form and practice, with a nod to more experimental work, will also be discussed.

Projects/Critiques

This class is structured around a series of seven projects, each of which focuses on a different component of, or approach to, visual/narrative expression. Students will sometimes be working on their own projects and sometimes working in collaboration with partners. Regardless, students will share equipment in groups of three and assist each other in production. Each student is expected to show up, support, and participate in the production of their partners' projects. Critiques will be a key element of the class. They will function primarily as an opportunity for constructive feedback on creative choices, but they'll also provide students a forum to discuss their artistic/journalistic/creative goals and their theoretical understanding of their work. Discussion during lectures will be another opportunity for students to make connections between filmmaking tools, artistic goals, filmmaking theory, and our current cultural moment in regards to digital cinema. Participation in critiques and discussions is required and will be a large part of your grade.

Project 1 – Key Frames: Using your phone, produce 3 *shots* that communicate a particular emotion assigned to you in class. Be prepared to present your images and discuss your visual choices.

Project 2 – Lumiere Minutes: Choose a location or subject you would like to film for continuous 60 seconds, as if you will only have a 60 second reel of film. Think carefully about your composition and the timing of your shot. What will unfold within the frame and how much can you communicate over the course of a single shot?

Project 3 – Silent Portrait : Create a SILENT visual portrait of a person that captures the essence of your subject. All "cuts" must be made by stopping and starting the camera. (Will be reedited later)

Project 4 – Location Soundscapes: Create a soundscape of a real or imaginary place through field recordings and sound effects. They should be 3-5 minutes in length.

Project 5 – Archival Remix (Found footage): Edit a short film using found images (sourced from archive.org). Students can discuss with me about sourcing images from other locations.

Project 6 - Pre Visualizing and Constructing a Scene: Utilizing a written, previsualized scene (made in-class), film a scene that you would like to use in your final project. You will be submitting unedited "rushes" in class on Monday.

Project 7 - Final Project: Expand or revise one of your previous projects into a 3-5 min film.

Technical Workshops/Lab

Technical instruction will cover the Sony A7s camera and audio equipment, as well as editing software (Premiere Pro). Individual and group lab activities will give students guided practice in using these tools.

Readings/Discussions

Readings will investigate pragmatic aspects of filmmaking technique, and offer a theoretical/historical framework in which to situate the creative work we do in this class. Readings are listed on the week they are assigned, and they are due the following week. For some sets of readings, you are required to turn in a brief response paper (one paragraph, see syllabus below for dates) via e-mail (haugheyc@stanford.edu) before the start of class. These will only be graded in terms of participation, not for grammar, but must demonstrate you've done the reading. Free-writes and diary-like entries will be accepted, as will more traditional argumentative/analytical paragraphs.

Reflection Papers

Students are required to submit two reflection papers as noted in the class schedule. These short papers (around 1 page in length) should contain film ideas, thoughts on the filmmaking process, films discussed in class and a self-assessment of your work in this course. Think of this as a journal of your artistic process, not your notes from lectures.

3. ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. This class meets only once a week and having ANY unexcused absences may negatively affect your grade. Please contact the professor in advance if you anticipate missing all or part of a class. Missing more than two classes may result in a lowering of your final class grade. Missing more than three may result in failure of the course.

4. REQUIREMENTS

Hard drive space

All students must have at least 500GB free hard drive space for class, either on their computer or on an external one.

Journal

Journaling is an essential part of the creative process. You must have either a physical journal.

Computer capable of running Premiere Pro is helpful but not required

Lathrop Learning Hub has 5 multimedia machines that can run Adobe Premiere Pro. The Hub is open over Summer Quarter Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. I will arrange a time to visit Lathrop with anyone interested in editing there before we start editing video in the course. If you need access to a computer before then, please reach out to me so that we can arrange something.

5. COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1

Monday, June 24th - What is digital storytelling? Why make media?

- Introduction and Course Orientation
- Short Lecture - Taking a birds eye view of documentary film over time, we look at examples of how documentary films were made and consumed from it's origins with the Muybridge experiment to today, when more images have been made by AI than the last 150 years of cinema.
- Assign: Self-Inventory Exercise

Wednesday, June 26th - Speaking through Images

- We will discuss the function of the image, situating it as the basic storytelling 'unit' of visual media and exploring shot size, angle, and composition. A great deal of the 'storytelling' done by any given film occurs through the stylistic choices made by the filmmaker. We discuss the origins of the shot with the Lumiere brothers' first films and will look at diverse contemporary examples of cinematography, get a sense of what good "coverage" in filmmaking means, and develop an understanding of how to express idea, emotion, and narrative through stylistic choices.
- In- Class Exercise: Seeing and Listening
- *Assign project #1: Keyframes*: Using your phone, produce **3 shots** that communicate a particular emotion assigned to you in class. Be prepared to present your images and discuss your visual choices.
- Assign: [Premiere Pro Tutorial](#) (self-paced - Premiere Pro Fundamentals & Media Management due July 17th)

Week 2

Monday, July 1st - Intro to Exposure

- DUE: *Assignment Project 1: Key Frames* (email to haugheyc@stanford.edu before class)

- Keyframes Critique
- Intro to Manual Exposure: We will discuss the basics of manual exposure for video.
- *Assign Project 2: Lumiere Minutes:* Choose a location or subject you would like to film for continuous 60 seconds, as if you will only have a 60 second reel of film. Think carefully about your composition and the timing of your shot. What will unfold within the frame and how much can you communicate over the course of a single shot?
- *Assignment:* Watch at least 2 films from [this](#) list. Send a reflection (one paragraph per film) to haugheyc@stanford.edu before class on Mondays July 8th. Consider what interests you about the film, not only content/theme, but also the film's aesthetic and visual choices.

Wednesday, July 3rd (Additional class time) - 11:00 - 1:00 Gear check out

- Each group will spend 30 min checking out gear with Emile
 - 11:00 - Risa and Parker
 - 11:30 - Jeffrey & Helen
 - 12:00 - Cathy & Jameson
 - 12:30 Mike & Hansong

Wednesday, July 3rd - Technical Workshop: Operation of the Sony A7

Week 3

Monday, July 8th - Storytelling Structure

- Due: Reflection on two short documentaries
- We will explore what makes a compelling documentary portrait, asking how one can capture the essence of a person through images. How does a filmmaker communicate who a person or place through imagery? Through sound? What stylistic choices can contribute to the audience's understanding of the environment or character? Finally, we will discuss the creation of a narrative arc through images, investigating how to structure an engaging journey for the audience.
- *Assign Project 3: Silent Documentary Portrait* - Create a SILENT visual portrait of a person that captures the essence of your subject. All "cuts" must be made by stopping and starting the camera. (Will be redited later)
- **READ:** The Photographer's Guide To Inclusive Photography (email response to haugheyc@stanford.edu by Wednesday)

Wednesday, July 10th - Lighting

- DUE: Project 2 Lumiere Minutes
- Technical Workshop / Lab: (No specialized lighting equipment will be used in this class.) We will have a group discussion about how to work with natural lighting to create aesthetically strong images, and students will then work in groups to find and capture particular lighting situations. (We will demo natural lighting situations, then students go out and capture “good” natural lighting scenarios).

Monday July 15th - Audio and Sound Recording

- DUE: *Project 3: Silent Portrait*
- Screening and Critique
- While sound is a key element in most films, audiences are rarely aware of the role of sound in film. We will discuss the elements and functions of sound design within films, and watch examples of films that deploy sound in interesting ways. We will discuss the power of sound as an element separate from, but also parallel to, visuals, and the ways in which sound can either underscore or provide a counterpoint to images.
- Assign *Project 4: Location Soundscapes*: Create a soundscape of a real or imaginary place through field recordings and sound effects. They should be 3-5 minutes in length.
- **READ:** Michael Chion: Excerpts from *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*

Wednesday, July 17th (Additional class time) - 11:00 - 1:00 Gear check in

- Each group will spend 30 min checking in gear with Jake
 - 11:00 - Risa and Parker
 - 11:30 - Jeffrey & Helen
 - 12:00 - Cathy & Jameson
 - 12:30 - Mike & Hansong
 - 1:00 - Tess and Shay

Wednesday July 17th - Premiere Pro Demo

- Premiere Pro hands-on demo. We will explore Premiere Pro, learning about the program’s media management, as well as the tools, interface, and functions of the editing program.
- Check out sound equipment
- **READ:** Reading : Excerpts from Walter Murch, In the Blink of an Eye

Week 5

Monday July 22nd - Working with Archival

- DUE: *Project 4: Location Soundscapes*
- Screening and Crit
- We exist in a world saturated with images, and the proliferation of digital images and media-sharing platforms (from archive.org to YouTube) are making footage and photographs accessible in an unprecedented way. In this class, we will look at projects that make use of archival materials; in particular, we will examine projects that repurpose images from their original context. How can one transform the meaning of a provocative photograph/shot? What is the impact of such acts of repurposing? We will discuss the possibilities for contemporary media production offered by an ever-expanding digital archive.
- Assignment: Watch Archival/Remix Film on your own and email reflection to haugheyc@stanford.edu
- Assign *Project 5: Archival Remix (Found footage)*. Edit a short film using found images (sourced from archive.org). Students can discuss with me about sourcing images from other locations.
-

Wednesday, July 24th (Additional class time) - 12:00 - 1:30 Audio equipment check in

- Each group will spend 15 min checking in gear with Jake
 - 12:15 -
 - 12:30 -
 - 12:45 -
 - 1:00 -
 - 1:15 -

Wednesday, July 24th

- TBD
- Read: Solnit, R. (2003). *River of shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the technological wild west*. Chapter 1: The annihilation of space and time. Viking.

Week 6

Monday July 29 - New Media

- Digital Media Today and Moving into the Future. In class, we will explore various examples of new media such AR and VR and discuss storytelling in an era of AI generated images and sound.
- Introduce Final Project and assign production groups
 - Final Project: an expansion of one of your previous assignments into a 3-4 min edited film co-created either solo or with a partner
- Assign: *Final Project Proposal/Plan* (Email me by Wed at noon)

Wednesday, July 31st (Additional class time) - 11:00 - 1:00 Gear check out

- Each group will spend 30 min checking in gear with Jake
 - 11:00 -
 - 11:30 -
 - 12:00 -
 - 12:30 -
 - 1:00 -

Wednesday July 31 - Constructing a Scene

- DUE: Proposals for final project emailed to me by Wed at noon
- How do we plan for, prepare, and execute a successful shoot? Despite our best efforts to be prepared, documentary film is never perfectly predictable. How can we not only pivot, but see those pivot's as a vital part of the creative process.
- In class exercise: Pre-visualizing a scene
- Assignment: *Project 6a Constructing a Scene*: Utilizing your previsualized scene that you constructed in class, film a scene for your final project. You will be submitting unedited "rushes" in class on Monday.

Week 7

Monday, August 5

- DUE: Unedited "rushes" from *Project 6a Constructing a Scene*
- In-class reflection on the "gap" between pre-production expectations and post-production reality
- Lecture: Creative approaches and tools for editing
- Assign: *Project 6b Constructing a Scene*: Edit your scene.

Wednesday, August 17th (Additional class time) - 11:00 - 1:00 Gear check out

- Each group will spend 30 min checking in gear with Jake
 - 11:00 -
 - 11:30 -
 - 12:00 -
 - 12:30 -
 - 1:00 -

Wednesday, August 7th

- DUE: *Project 6b Constructing a Scene*
- Screening and Critique
- Assign: *Final Project TBD (Based on interests of students)*

Week 8

Monday, August 12

- TBD

Additional Class time: Monday August 12th: Check-in Equipment

- 3:30
- 3:45
- 4:00
- 4:15
- 4:30

Wednesday, August 14th

- TBD

6. COURSE POLICIES

6.1 Criteria for Grading and Evaluation :

Grade Distribution:

- 40% Attendance & Participation (including class discussions and critiques)
- 40% Class projects :
 - 5% Project 1 – Key Frames
 - 5% Project 2 – Lumiere Minutes
 - 5% Project 3 – Silent Portrait

- 5% Project 4 – Location-based Audioscape
- 5% Project 5 – Archival Remix (Found footage)
- 5% Project 6 Constructing a Scene
- 10% Final Project
- 10% Reading Responses
- 10% Reflection Papers

Turning in Assignments : All assignments should be uploaded to [this google drive folder](#) BEFORE class begins. Anything output after class begins will be considered late. All assignments should be turned in via your hard drive. Late assignments will be downgraded.

6.2 Expectations

Students must adhere to all deadlines and present work in class on the assigned dates. Attendance is mandatory. Active participation in class discussion and critique sessions and a professional, collaborative attitude towards crew responsibilities is expected. Texting, emailing, and web surfing during class are not permitted. Computers and tablets can be used with my permission only for taking notes, and with WiFi turned off. Creative work should reflect originality, technical competence, and a spirit of exploration. All course work must be completed by the end of the quarter as access to equipment and facilities will end June 12th.

6.3 Licensing and Release Requirements

All subject and location releases must be provided to the instructor for each production class. All copyrighted archival footage, archival stills, and music must be cleared for use unless an attorney has provided a “fair use” letter for any of the material. The minimum rights acceptable for completion of the course are Internet and worldwide festival rights for a period of no less than 3 years.

6.4 Communication & Getting Help

We are available during office hours for any questions or concerns regarding the course, e.g. if you need clarification of an assignment or a concept discussed in class. Please email us to book a time to meet.

6.5 Academic Accommodations

Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class.

If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable

accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oea.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

Students who are immunocompromised should register with the OAE as soon as possible.

7. GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

7.1 Researching Your Film

Use the lectures, films you see and other bits of your learning experience not only as inspiration for the form of the film you want to make, but also its content. If something touches you, note it down and ask yourself - why did it? Often by pondering this question you will find both the energy to make a film and pointers for researching sources for it. I highly encourage you to look beyond the Stanford campus for stories and ideas.

7.2 Sound FX and Music

While I recommend limiting yourself to sound you recorded as much as possible in your projects, if you know what to look for, you can find some wonderful high-quality field recordings, sound FX, and even music that you can use in your projects. Make sure you check the particular type of CC license allows you to use the sound in your work, obtain permission if necessary, and credit the author properly. It's also nice, even when not required, to send a link to your finished piece to them.

- FreeSound.Org is a good source of Creative Commons-licensed audio, mostly field recordings and FX. URL: <http://freesound.org>
- The Legal Music for Videos section of the Creative Commons website offers a quick guide to "free" music on the web. Note that not all CC licensed music can be used in derivative works (such as your film), and if it can, it may not be free for all uses. URL: <http://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos>
- The Creative Commons site also offers a way to search multiple media databases for CC licensed material. URL: <https://search.creativecommons.org/>