COMM 299: Themes in Film & Digital Media: Filmmaking in Rome

John Felice Rome Center
Spring 2024
Wednesdays | 2:30-5:30 pm
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Office Hours: Wed. 10:00-12:00pm

Course Description

COMM 299: Themes in Film & Digital Media: Filmmaking in Rome is a hands-on introduction to writing, directing and editing the short film. Students participate in the development, production, direction and post-production of a short subject up to ten minutes in length.
The class has no prerequisites, and includes a field trip to Rome's famed Cinecittà film studios.
By conceiving, planning and executing a short narrative film or documentary, students explore how to choose an appropriate subject, how to develop that idea into the classic three act structure, and how to edit, polish and ultimately bring to market that finished product. Students will work in groups to develop, produce, direct and do post-production of a story up to ten minutes in length. This short film subject will be chosen via class participation prior to shooting. We will also engage in analysis and critique, and consider the potential marketing and distribution of short films through the Internet. There are no prerequisites for this class, enrollment is for anyone - it's recommended the student be familiar with the basics of shooting and editing a short film, whether reading up on it, or making short films.

Students are required to read a film script for class discussion.

Objectives

To provide students with practical experience in television/video production of short films.

Students will work in teams, films will be shot on video. Number of films will depend on the number of students enrolled. **Maximum length: 10 minutes**. If two or more students co-direct a piece, **Maximum length is 15 minutes**.

    *Learn the basic principles of narrative storytelling for film.
    *Develop skills while expressing creativity through video production.
    *Gain an understanding of general video practices, across various contexts.
    *Learn to work collaboratively

Recommended that students have a background in editing, and/or digital video production, but not required. Recommended that students bring their own cameras/DSLRs and laptop editing equipment, also not required. Those students who bring their own equipment are welcome to work on their own, otherwise, students will work in teams and share directing, editing duties.

Assessment Components

60% - YOUR OVERALL INVOLVEMENT WITH FINAL VIDEO

20% - ATTENDANCE AND/OR COOPERATIVE PARTICIPATION WITH OTHERS

20% - PAPERWORK AND MEETING DEADLINES

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

67-69: D+

60-66: D

59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. **As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.**

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.

This course meets once a week, thus a total of 1 unexcused absence(s) will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the "approved limit".** The collective health of the JFRC is everyone's responsibility. DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1 – Introduction. General discussion of student projects. Assignment of short films to be watched and critiqued. Getting familiar with scriptwriting. General discussion of story ideas. Marketing and distribution of the short film, via the marketplace, or online DIY distribution. Viewing previous student pieces for evaluation. Students will learn to write the short script (bringing a script and/or short story in public domain that can be adapted is advisable) and direct actors, which will either be other students or actors from Rome, depending on availability. We will discuss visual style, using locations and elements that are easily accessible. Students will pair up into teams.

Week 2-3-4 – From the idea to the final script. Students will work in groups on the storyline and script. Student presentations of their projects/works in progress/Treatments or outlines of individual projects due. Each student will make a presentation, and via review, films will be chosen from those treatments/scripts.

Week 5-6 Script breakdown and analysis. All final scripts will be analyzed to produce a production schedule and a budget. Review documentation; talent releases, insurance, safety, etc. Possible script breakdown or lighting and camera class. **Class presentations – pre-production (production schedule, budgets due) Shooting period begins.**

Week 7-8-9 Shooting period - screen dailies in class. Rough cuts in process – Class discussion about rough cuts. Every film team is required to show 3-5 minutes of edited footage in class. Each student is required to present some of the work they've done, whether directing, shooting, or editing.

Week 10-13. Editing. Shooting period, and then **individual Rough Cut sessions with students or teams. Sign up for one hour individual evaluations of your progress.** Important to add music and work on your sound mix during this period, as your sound work will be included in your final grade.
Fine cuts due – no picture changes without permission from instructor
Final project with final sound mix due. Minor tweaking allowed until the final day to turn in projects. Final edits will require a finished picture and mixed soundtrack.

Week 14
Final screening date TBD.

Expenses
A standard **stereo headset**, with a mini-plug, is required per student to check on sound levels while recording, and should be brought with. Ticket price for the Cinecittà Studios guided trip will be communicated shortly after class starts.

Students should prepare a checklist before coming, and the following items should be considered:
A laptop with editing software loaded, preferably one of the following: Adobe Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro/X, Avid Media Composer or Da Vinci Resolve (this one can be downloaded freely from the website). If you have no laptop, then faculty computer time will be provided, when available. Campus computers are equipped with Adobe Premiere.
A digital camera. If you have no camera, you'll be required to work in teams, and schedule time for camera use.

The final video will be graded on technical achievement, communication, creativity and overall effort per person. Consistency in attendance and assistance on other projects constitutes the second area of evaluation. **Note: it is**

mandatory you turn in all the paperwork, attend classes regularly and turn in a finished film. This will result in an average grade. In order to get an above average grade, students are required to stretch their talents as filmmakers, to present their idea in a fresh, new perspective, putting their hearts and soul into the project, and doing their best to make a compelling film about a subject matter that is equally compelling, comedic or sheds new light on a subject.

PAPERWORK:

The requirements in the third area of evaluation consists of a **PRODUCTION NOTEBOOK** containing:

1. **Critiques of short films.**
A number of films will be made available for viewing and will be discussed. Students are required to write a few paragraphs about the content and delivery of the short, and why the filmmakers were or weren't successful in making their film.

2. **Project description:**
Includes a description of your individual class project, a working title, your name, and contact details. Also how you plan to shoot this story - where you plan to shoot, how you will obtain permits, etc. if necessary.

3. **Production Diary**
A compilation of all the notes, production schedules, changes or fixes that are made on a daily basis through production. This could be in a tabulated folder, or a production folder - but basically a visual record of everything you've put into the project - names and numbers of crew, actors, permission from the actors or locations, insurance, permits, etc.

<u>**SAFETY**</u>
Loyola is fully committed to safety and sensible risk management; every student will be required to adhere to all safety and risk management policies. Any footage that violates safety policies, or local rules and regulations, will be disallowed from final projects and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Any footage acquired or produced during a violation of these policies will not be accepted for, and is ineligible for, a grade. **DO NOT DOWNLOAD VIDEO CLIPS OR PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE INTERNET UNLESS YOU HAVE WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE CREATOR OF THE WORK OR PROOF IT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.**