

**FLM 101: Introduction to Filmmaking: Visual Storytelling
S01 (53195)
M/W 6:05-7:25PM**

David Brett

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Office Hours (remote): Tu/Th 2-4PM or by appointment

Course Description

A hands-on introduction to the art of narrative filmmaking. Students will become familiar with the ideas, materials and technical skills needed for creative expression in this medium. Participants will learn how to use images in conjunction with sound, text and narrative structure as a basis for communicating ideas on film. Specific visual communication skills include: clarifying a subject, defining a goal, defining an audience, exploring the tools and resources available, and crafting ideas into short films using Smartphones or comparable devices.

DEC: D

SBC: ARTS

3 credits

The goal of this course is to instill the basic skills of filmmaking and teach students the artistry of visual narratives. Topics will span the production cycle, including working with a screenplay, shooting scenes, and editing. The core of the course is directing and cinematography—that is, how filmmakers tell stories visually. We will explore questions such as:

- What does it mean to tell a story visually?
- How do the techniques of filmmaking affect the ways we interact with the world?
- How do we shape a scene so as to bring out the most important elements of the script?
- How do each of the choices directors make create the emotional impact of a moment?

Course Objectives

Students will learn to shape stories visually; to learn about a director's shot choices; to effectively create and utilize shot lists; to analyze the structure of a screenplay; to understand filmmaking terminology; to be able to frame characters and subjects; and students will master the elements of film to create emotional impact. By the end of the course students will write and direct their own short film. Where quarantine makes the shooting films difficult or impossible, alternatives will be found. No one will be penalized for such obstacles.

Zoom Meetings: This course will primarily be conducted via Zoom meetings. Attendance will be noted. The following link should function throughout the semester:

<https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/93313743904?pwd=KzllbndRS1k2dFVJcUtGYS9iTVJzUT09>

Meeting ID: 933 1374 3904

Passcode: 323070

Texts

Beasts of the Southern Wild (dir. Benh Zeitlin, 2012)

Other films will be required throughout the semester.

Note: Creative work can often lead to emotional and intense experiences. We will always be sensitive to and cognizant of these issues, but if anyone feels uncomfortable with discussion or a classmate's work, please do not hesitate to approach me or school counseling services.

http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/caps/clinical_services/capsafterhours.html

Assignments:

Weekly Assignments

Due to the remote nature of this semester's class, students will complete regular small assignments related to each week's topic. These will be assigned ad hoc and may include tasks such as still photographs, short written responses, brief filming exercises, or prep work for the larger projects. Although these will be graded as part of the class participation component, one is not a substitute for the other; students must both participate in class discussion and complete these assignments.

Written Analysis 1 - Due 2/10/21

Having watched and read *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, students will choose one scene that they feel is one of the "nine essential scenes." In a paper of about two pages, describe why the scene fulfills the role you are claiming and why it is important to the narrative as a whole.

Filming Exercise 1 - Due 3/01/21: For their first filming assignment, students will create short scenes filmed in one continuous shot, with no cuts or edits. These films will be about two minutes in length and can be silent or contain dialogue. However, the goal here is not to tell an elaborate story, but to put into practice what we have learned about shot types and sizes.

Filming Exercise 2 - Due 3/22/21: For your next filming exercise, everyone will film the same short scene using their smartphone. In addition to the questions we asked in exercise 1, consider how your decisions play out. Do you conceive of the scene visually when you read the script? Do things come out the way they look in your head? What unforeseen factors come into play? You should continue to focus on shot choices that express the important elements of the scene. An emotional arc is more important than a creative interpretation.

Filming Exercise 3 - Due 4/1/21: TBD

Final Project Part I - Due 4/12/21: Your final exercise will be to film a short script you have written yourself. This first part of the assignment is the script itself. Write a short script of around 5-7 pages containing no more than two main characters. This should be a script that you are able to realize fully (i.e. no symbolic staging such as four chairs representing a car). In addition to the script, please provide a shot list or storyboards.

Final Project Part II - Due 5/3/21: Your final project is to film your script using your smartphone. We will discuss this process in depth throughout the semester.

Safety Notice: All course work should be done observing all possible COVID-19 precautions. Social distancing and PPE are encouraged. Everyone's safety is our top priority.

Grading

Grading will be based primarily on the creative exercises and written analyses. Due to the hands-on nature of the class, participation includes attendance and participation, as well as working in crews to help each other complete assignments.

Written Analysis 1 – 10%
Filming Exercise 1 – 20%
Filming Exercise 2 – 20%
Final Project – 25%
Class Participation – 35%

Student Accessibility Support Center Statement

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, 128 ECC Building, (631) 632-6748, or at sasc@stonybrook.edu. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html

Critical Incident Management

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of University Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.

Face Masks/Coverings

For face to face classes, every syllabus should include a statement regarding face masks/coverings. Everyone participating in this class, must wear a mask/face covering at all times. Any student not in compliance with this will be asked to leave the class.

Weekly Schedule

(Subject to change)

2/1

Introduction, Syllabus, and film basics

2/3

Story structure and analysis

2/8

Telling stories visually and the basics of filming on your smartphone

2/10

Directing Choices Part 1: Basics of Cinematography

2/15

Different types of shots, what they mean, and why they matter

2/17

In-class Exercise

2/22

Shot choices continued

2/24

Film discussion

3/1

Filming Exercise 1 due

3/3

From page to screen: translating a written script into a visual narrative

3/8

Working with a Script continued

3/10

Working with a Script continued

3/15

Basics of Editing

3/17

Basics of Editing

3/22

Filming Exercise 2 Due

3/24

Creating stories from scratch

3/29

Shaping characters narratively and visually

3/31

Film discussion

4/5

Scriptwriting continued

4/7

Filming Exercise 3 Due

4/12

TBD

4/14

Workshopping Students' scripts

4/19

Workshopping Students' scripts

4/21

Final exercise production concerns and planning

4/26

Film Discussion

4/28

Individual Meetings

5/3

Final Films Due