Preproduction (NMC 380) Fall 2016

Class meeting time & location: Tues. 10:00-11:20 Kidder 028. This is a hybrid class.

Instructor: Todd Kesterson

e-mail: kesterson@oregonstate.edu
Office: 426 Bexell
Office hrs: Thurs, 2:30-4:30

Course Overview

The focus of this course is on preproduction, or the planning phase of media production. Topics include story development and visualization for linear narrative, incorporating the languages of graphic design and cinema. Project planning and budgeting will also be addressed. Students will apply these principles toward the creation of sequential images (storyboards) for the purpose of visual storytelling. Projects will emphasize brainstorming, story concept & development, storyboards and animatics / pre-visualizations, edited with sound FX, dialogue and music.

Course Credits

The course combines approximately 90 hours of instruction, activities, project work and project reviews, for 3 credits. The workload is significant. (Plan to spend at least 6 hours outside of class per week.) Half of the class time is replaced with online activities.

Required Technical Skills

You are expected to have intermediate level computer skills on the Macintosh. Familiarity with Final Cut Pro is recommended but not required. Basic training in the use of Final Cut will be provided. NOTE: Based on instructor approval you may use video editing software other than Final Cut Pro. Learning Final Cut will be advantageous if you’re planning to take Field Production. FrameForge Previz 3D Studio (version 3.5) will also be used extensively. You are not expected to have any experience with this software.

Required Learning Resources

• Preproduction Fundamentals by Osgood, Hinshaw, Schenk, Long, Tumminello.
  NOTE: This book is a custom text composed of chapters from three different books. There are also online resources that come with new copies. Text can only be purchased at the OSU bookstore.
  It is also available on reserve in the library (VR 319)
• Course packet (contains assignment materials)
• FrameForge Previz Studio 3.5 (Details provided at end of syllabus)

Prerequisites

• Required: NMC 101 (Intro to New Media Communications)
• Recommended: NMC 351 (New Media Visualization)
Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Successfully brainstorm story ideas, avoiding judgment or evaluation during the process.
• Develop and refine an original short story concept based on brainstorming and structured around the elements of COLSAT.
• Draw storyboard sketches to communicate shot to shot composition and continuity. The images will demonstrate an understanding of cinematic language and the principles of graphic design.
• Based on those sketches create 3D sets with proper camera positioning / framing using FrameForge Previz 3D Studio.
• Create video animatics that effectively tell stories using still images and animation* along with a variety of audio sources. (*NOTE: This is not an animation course. Animation is primarily used to indicate character blocking/staging and complex camera movement.)
• Assess general budgetary requirements planning associated with film/video productions.

Lectures and assignments will address the following topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Topic</th>
<th>Underlying Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research, brainstorming &amp; story concept creation</td>
<td>Intention / purpose &amp; audience (what you intend to say &amp; why)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story structure &amp; character development</td>
<td>Narrative structure and character back story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence &amp; shot analysis</td>
<td>Analysis and re-creation of timing and shot composition from professionally produced film/video productions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboards (first from sketches then from digitally created sets)</td>
<td>Visual design (layout/composition, style, color, lighting etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language of cinema (narrative structure, shot composition, spatial/directional continuity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animatics / pre-viz</td>
<td>Timing and transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audio layering (music, ambient sound, narration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting and planning</td>
<td>Consideration of schedules, costs and other planning issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Work created in this class may be posted on the NMC YouTube channel. If you prefer not to have your work posted please let me know in writing and I will honor that request.
Evaluation of Student Performance

Review of work
Due to the complex nature of project work in this class, feedback will usually be provided verbally rather than in writing. This will be done through class reviews, individual meetings or audio recordings. Office hours or scheduled meetings are the best time to receive detailed reviews given the limited class time.

Assignments

- Most assignments are comprised of several parts. Each full assignment is evaluated as a letter grade only. This is because the assessment of all of your assignment grades, attendance and progress throughout the term* will determine the final grade. This cannot be calculated by a simple point total. (*You cannot make up for poor performance or missing assignments simply by doing well on the final project. You must do consistently good work and show continual growth in your technical and conceptual skills.)

- You are expected to apply lecture and text concepts in all of your assignments.

- Printed or drawn assignments are due at the START of class on the due date. Digital files must be posted on the class server BEFORE the start of class. Your work must be submitted on time even if you are absent. Late work will receive a significantly reduced grade (at least 1 letter for each week day (not class day) late). Work will not be accepted more than TWO WEEK DAYS beyond due date. (E.g., work due Wed will only be accepted through Fri, 10 am for partial credit).

- Grading will be based on your individual effort and progress throughout the term, your application of the lecture and text topics in your work, as well as participation in class activities. This means that you will be expected to push yourself technically and artistically on all projects.

- The class is designed to guide you through each step of this process. If you keep up with assignments and reading*, you will be able to complete all of the work and will have grown as a visual storyteller through this process.

  *NOTE: it will be obvious who has and has not done the reading or paying attention. Any work that does not demonstrate an understanding of concepts covered in class and in assigned readings will be considered inadequate and may receive a failing grade unless redone.

- Assignment instructions include detailed information about naming convention, file export process, etc. Work that doesn’t follow these conventions will receive a lower grade, particularly in cases of extremely large video files or incomplete file names.
Final exam

There is no final exam for this class. Final reviews of class projects will take place during week 10.

Attendance

If you have another class or commitment at this time, you should drop this class.

Attendance will be checked throughout the term along with the participation activities and pop quizzes. **If you have 2 unexcused absences your term grade may drop one letter. 3 or more unexcused absences may result in an F for the term.** In other words, if you miss class, you will not only lose participation and pop-quiz points, but you may also drop a letter grade or fail the course.

Class discussions, presentations, and feedback from peers are key components of this class. Regular **punctual attendance** is expected at all class sessions and is particularly important on class review days. I do not repeat lectures (though I will assist you in the case of documented absences). **If you miss class for any reason (excused or not) it is YOUR responsibility to learn what was covered** (by borrowing notes, reading the text, or reading on-line documentation in the case of software training). Do not ask for instructor help until you have done your homework and attempted to find the information on your own. Once you have done this I will be happy to work with you.

**All absences must be discussed in person rather than e-mail or phone calls.**

Computer, phone, and headphone use during class

One temptation in a computer lab class is to ignore the material being presented and instead focus on your computer screen, whether for work in this class, another class, or personal play. Other distractions include phones and headphones. If you are listening to music, texting, or working on anything (including class projects) during instructor presentations you will miss key concepts and demonstrations. That almost always results in low or failing assignment grades. **IF YOU ARE SEEN WORKING ON ANY NON-CLASS RELATED MATERIAL, TEXTING, OR WEARING HEADPHONES DURING CLASS * YOU MAY BE CONSIDERED ABSENT AND LOSE ALL ATTENDANCE POINTS FOR THAT DAY.** (*The exception to the no-headphones policy will be during specified audio work sessions.*)

Contacting Instructor

The best way to contact me is via e-mail. I will do my best to respond in a timely manner. However, **do not expect a response from me during evenings or weekends.** You won’t need to contact me during those times if you start early and don’t procrastinate on assignments. It should go without saying that I expect you to be respectful to me in your communications. You can expect the same from me.

Remember to **include your name and “NMC 380” in the subject line and body of e-mails.**
Key assignment and attendance reminders

1. Assignments are due by the deadline, even if you are not in class.

2. Work will not be accepted more than TWO WEEK DAYS beyond due date.

3. If you know you are going to be absent, see instructor in advance. Bring documentation if possible. (Written notice is required for all school related events.)

4. If you are sick, e-mail instructor before class.
   When you return, see instructor and provide documentation if possible.

5. 2 absences may result in a letter grade reduction for the term.
   3 absences may result in failure of the class.

6. When e-mailing instructor, include your name and “NMC 380” in the subject and body of message.

7. Do not use your computers during class except in designated work time.

8. Do not use headphones unless we are working on an audio-related assignment.

9. Read assignment instructions carefully; particularly file format and naming conventions.

10. Start your FrameForge projects early, save frequently, and backup your data.

11. Submit your readings and animatics to the class server dropbox, not your personal folder.

Milne Computing Lab Hours  http://oregonstate.edu/is/mediaservices/scf/main-computer-facility
Academic Year: Mon-Thurs: 7 AM - 2 AM, Fri: 7 AM - 9 PM, Sat: 10 AM - 9 PM, Sun: 10 AM - 2 AM
Schedules vary on holiday weekends, and the web site often doesn’t show those hours. Check with lab.

Students with Disabilities
Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098.

Statement of Expectations for Student Conduct, i.e., cheating policies
http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/offenses-0