

# Advanced Cinematography and Sound

(FILM 430)

**Instructor:** Cesare Wright

**Location:** MED 100

**Time:** 6:00PM - 9:00PM MT

**Telephone:** 713-614-7392

**E-mail:** [cesare@kinoeyecenter.com](mailto:cesare@kinoeyecenter.com)



## Description:

The course will explore advanced production techniques and theory relating to cinematography and sound in film and video, with an emphasis on controlling and constructing the cinematic experience. Students will gain both hands-on experience and a deeper artistic understanding of the use of image and sound as narrative devices in both fiction and documentary films. Topics to be addressed include visual theory, cinematic lighting, camera, sound production and design, production planning, and understanding exhibition. The course will culminate in a crew experience, through which students will conceptualize, plan, and produce a short scene.

Course Requirements:	% of Course Grade
Participation -	5%
Final Project -	35%
Sound and Image presentation -	10%
Screening Journal -	10%
Production Exercises	20%
Non-Dialogue Short Films	20%

## Assignments:

**Sound and Image Presentation: (10%)** Students will write a 3-5pg analysis of a film or audio/visual work that exhibits a particularly strong use of cinematography and sound as narrative devices. The written analysis will be supplemented by a 15-20min in-class presentation, which may include a 5-10min excerpt of the work for reference. The analysis should consider the artistic use of lighting, composition, production design, contrast and saturation, sound design, and other key audio-visual techniques discussed in class.

Physical copy must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day of the scheduled presentation.

### **Final Project: (35%)**

Students will collaborate in groups of 3-5 to produce a 5-10min final film. The film may be either fiction or doc, and may be of any style. The film will be graded according to the effectiveness of the use of visual and audio techniques as story telling mechanisms. Please be creative and look for story ideas that lend well to the strong use of image and sound.

Each student will write and present a short story synopsis for the consideration for of the class. Students may team up voluntarily and select films from those presented. If a consensus is not reached, the class will vote to select 2 films, and students may crew up or be assigned to a specific film. Crew roles will be decided within the group. If conflicts arise or students are unable to work out a crew and production plan, the professor may assign roles.

Physical copy must be turned in by 5pm on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Production exercises: (20%)**

Each of the production exercises will be discussed collaboratively in class.

1) Visual atmosphere exercise – Student will spend 10-15min in 3 distinct atmospheric locations and record written observations of the visualscape. Pay close attention to dynamics of lighting and composition. Is the space predominantly deep or flat? Is their strong visual contrast (hue, saturation, tint/shade). (DUE JAN 16<sup>th</sup>)

2) Sound atmosphere exercise – Student will spend 10-15min in 3 distinct atmospheric locations (store, restaurant, park, library, beach, etc.) and record written observations of the soundscape. Pay close attention. Which sounds stand out as obvious? Which sounds are more subtle? Do you become acclimated to certain sounds (such as traffic or conversation noise)? Also document any emotional or visceral response you have to specific sounds. (DUE JAN 21<sup>th</sup>)

3) Interview setup – Student will stage and record an individual interview scene. (DUE JAN 30<sup>h</sup>)

4) Group interaction sequence (fiction or doc) – Student will film a short scene featuring group interaction. (DUE FEB 13<sup>th</sup>)

5) Natural lighting sequence – Student will film a 3-5min sequence using natural light. (DUE MARCH 6<sup>th</sup>)

6) Stylized visual sequence using artificial lighting – Student will create and film a 3-5min stylized visual sequence (noir, high-key, horror, docu-realism, etc.) (DUE MARCH 20<sup>th</sup>)

### **Non-dialogue short films: (20%)**

Student will produce and direct 2 non-dialogue short films (5min maximum). The film must relate a clear and understandable narrative. Student may (and is encouraged to) work collaboratively with others, but each student must work in the capacity of cinematographer on at least 1 film and sound recordist on at least 1 film. In addition, the student is solely responsible for the producing and directing of both films. If students choose to work collaboratively on these projects, it may be acceptable (with professor permission) for the student to work fulfill the cinematographer and sound recordist role requirement by working on another student's film.

Students may not fulfill the cinematographer and sound recordist role requirement by working on films for other courses or from external productions.

We will screen these films in class, and each student will take notes and provide a written feedback sheet to the filmmaker by the end of the class session of the screening.

**Screening Journal: (10%)**

Students will write 5 reflections on films or other audio-visual works that they watch over the course of the semester. Each reflection will be 1-2pp. and will include artistic and technical analysis of the work, as well as personal impressions of the effectiveness of the use of sound and cinematography to achieve the desired narrative and aesthetic goals. This IS NOT to be a summary of the film or story. The reflection may include key points and synopsis of story elements, as long as this is in the service of discussing how the visual and audio elements contribute to or detract from the story. There will be one screening journal due approximately every 3 weeks. Journals will be posted online.

Journal entries must be posted online by the next class period after the topic date.

**Participation: (5%)**

Participation is important in this course. We will be engaging in frequent in-class production exercises, and there will be no opportunity to make up missed activities, so attendance and participation are critical.

**Readings:**

The course readings provide technical and artistic information to support the in-class production exercises, so all course readings are to be completed BY the indicated class date.

Required texts (available at Rice Bookstore) –

Holman, T. (2010). *Sound for Film and Video*

Brown. (2011). *Cinematography – Theory and Practice*

**Screenings:**

*Touch of Evil*, (1958, Dir. Orson Welles)

*The Company of Wolves* (1985, Dir. Neil Jordon)

*The Haunting* (1963, Dir. Robert Wise)

*Evil Dead* (1983, Dir. Sam Raimi)

*Spellbound* (2003, Dir. Jeff Blitz)

*Suckerpunch* (2011, Zack Snyder)

*Rise Up* (2007, Dir. Luciano Blotta)

*Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, Dir. George Lucas)

*Let the Right One In* (2008, Dir. Tomas Alfredson)

*The Shining* (1980, Dir. Stanley Kubrick)

*Dracula* (1931, Dir. Tod Browning)

**Jan 9**

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>The Visual Story:</b>  Visual composition and theory – visual aesthetics		<i>Touch of Evil</i> , (1958, Dir. Orson Welles)	

as narrative device			
Flat/deep space, contrast, hue, shade, etc.			

### Jan 10

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>The Visual Story cont:</b> Representation theory and “ecstatic truth” Indexicality vs. poetics in Representation Metaphor and visual storytelling	Pp 2-12 The Visual Story ONLINE	<i>The Company of Wolves</i> (1985, Dir. Neil Jordon)  Supplemental: <i>Witness</i> (1985, Dir. Peter Weir)	Bring in quick clips that demonstrate visual storytelling... particularly through contrast and space..

### Jan 16

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments

### Jan 17

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>The Power of SOUND:</b> Psycho-acoustics and the use of sound as a narrative construct. <b>The Logistics of Film Image:</b> Mechanics of the camera - focus, exposure, and understanding the camera In-class camera familiarization exercises	pp. 12-27 The Visual Story ONLINE Introduction XVII-XX, Sound for Film and Television (Holman) Introduction, Brown Optics, pp. 176-192, Brown	<i>The Haunting</i> (1963, Dir. Robert Wise)	Exercise 1 Due

### Jan 23

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments

<b>The Logistics of Film Image cont.:</b>  Camera movement, composition, and visual framing	Visual Language, pp. 29-78, Brown  pp. 28-42 The Visual Story (ONLINE)	<i>Evil Dead</i> (1983, Dir Sam Raimi)	<b>Exercise 2 Due</b>
---	--	--	-----------------------

## Jan 24

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
In-class exercises - Camera movement, composition, and visual framing	Cinematic Continuity, pp. 79-102, Brown		<b>Journal 1 Due</b>

## Jan 30

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>The Logistics of Film Sound:</b>  Principles of good sound – Mics, recording, methodologies, and basic sound technology	pp. 49-67 Holman	<i>Spellbound</i> (2003, Dir. Jeff Blitz)	<b>Group Interaction exercise due</b>

## Jan 31

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>The Logistics of Film Sound cont.:</b>  Sound production exercises: Mic position, camera/sound setup, troubleshooting	pp. 73-99 Holman (skip or read 68-72 as you like)		

## Feb 6

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Artificial Light:</b>  Discussion of the film	The Tools of Lighting, pp. 141-166, Brown	<i>Suckerpunch</i> (2011, Zack Snyder)	

Subject and scene lighting, controlling the atmosphere of the set/scene with artificial lighting			
--	--	--	--

## Feb 7

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Artificial Light cont.:</b>  In-class exercises	Controlling Color, pp. 167-176, Brown		

## Feb 13

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Natural Light:</b>  Dailies – Artificial lighting exercises  Understanding and working with natural lighting conditions.  Discussion of the film	Set Operations, 241-256, Brown	<i>Rise Up</i> (2007, Dir. Luciano Blotta)  Luciano Blotta Skype	Interview exercise due

## Feb 14

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Natural Light:</b>  Natural lighting exercises			Presentations Begin (1-2) per week

## Feb 20

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Techniques in Sound:</b>  Dailies – Natural lighting exercises	pp. 29-48 Holman	<i>Indiana Jones Raiders of the Lost Ark</i> (1981, Dir. George Lucas)	Journal 2 Due

Psychoacoustics and working with subjective sound			
FX, ADR, innovative constructed sound			

## Feb 21

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Techniques in Sound cont.:</b>	pp. 115-127 Holman		
Recording technologies			
FX recording exercises			
Dailies of FX exercises			

## SPRING BREAK! - (Feb 25 - March 4)

## March 6

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Techniques in Sound cont.:</b>	pp. 173-198 Holman	<i>Let the Right One In</i> (2008, Dir. Tomas Alfredson)	<b>Non-dialogue Film</b> 1 screenings
Anticipating sound design, production sound, and post-production			<b>Natural lighting exercise due</b>
Problems and solutions in sound: cocktail effect, frequency masking, noise to sound ratio, etc.			<b>Presentations</b> Begin (1-2) per week
Class in-field research and anticipation exercises			

## March 7

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Techniques in Image:</b>		<i>The Shining</i> (1980, Dir. Stanley Kubrick)	<b>Scene ideas for class exercises for next week</b>

Production design and controlling the shooting environment			
--	--	--	--

### March 13

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Methods in Image and Sound as Narrative Devices:</b>  Thinking about image, sound, and style for genre and story.  Outer elements and audio/visual associations  Sound and image as artistic metaphor		<i>Dracula</i> (1931, Dir. Tod Browning)	<b>Journal 3 Due</b>

### March 14

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Advanced Methods in Image and Sound as Narrative Devices cont.:</b>  Converging visual modes: Docu-fiction and Cinematic		<b>SWITCH MOVIE ORDER FOR SHORT CLASS</b>  <i>City of God</i> (2002, Dir. Fernando Meirelles)  Trescher Chambers Skype	

### March 20

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Sound Practice for Controlled Environments:</b>  In-class production exercises			<b>Final Project pitches</b>  <b>Stylized sequence exercise due</b>

### March 21

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Sound Practice for Controlled Environments cont.:</b>		<b>Society for Media Studies Conference 21-25</b>	<b>Final Project and crews selected</b>  <b>Scene ideas for location exercises for</b>

Critical discussion of final film project ideas.			next week
In-class production exercises			

## March 26

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Sound Practice for Location Shoots:</b>  Small group production plan workshops for final projects  Location production exercises  Review in-class exercise dailies  Production planning discussions with Final Project groups			Non-dialogue Film 2 screenings

## March 27

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Cinematography and Sound Practice for Location Shoots cont.:</b>  Location production exercises			Journal 4 Due

## April 2

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Critical Analysis of Sound and Image:</b>  Review location exercise dailies		Student contributed excerpts	Students bring 10-15minute sample excerpts from films, TV, and visual media to discuss in class

<p>Critical analysis and breakdown of student selected clips.</p> <p>Breakaway group discussions of excerpts</p> <p>Re-watch and class breakdown</p> <p>Final Project groups present on status</p>			
--	--	--	--

### April 3

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<p><b>Final Project Consultation and Big Budget Look on a Student Film Budget:</b></p> <p>Themed exercises based on student requests, problems, and final project issues.</p> <p>Low budget – High production value: How to create feature film production values on student film budgets.</p>			<p>Each group presents for 10-15min.</p>

### April 9

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<p><b>Understanding Story and Exhibition:</b></p> <p>Strategic use of tech to achieve artistic goals – Cameras, tech specs, formats, etc.</p> <p>Image and sound targeted to release format</p> <p>Final Film project dailies and consultation</p> <p>Themed exercises based on student requests, problems, and final project issues.</p>	<p>Video and High-Def, 193-219, Brown</p>	<p>Javier Solis Skype</p>	

## April 10

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Final Project Consultation:</b>  Final Film project dailies and consultation  Themed exercises based on student requests, problems, and final project issues.			Journal 4 Due

## April 16

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
<b>Final Project Consultation:</b>  Project dailies and consultation			

## April 17

Themes	Focus Text	Screening	Assignments
Final Project Screening party and student selected closing film		Student choice 😊	Journal 5 Due  Final Film Screenings

### **Course Policies:**

*Attendance:* Attend class. Attendance is mandatory. Class absences will count against your participation grade. If you must miss a class, please contact me by phone or email before the absence and it will not count against you. Remember you are responsible for the material in the classes you miss.

*Late Assignments:* Will not be accepted. Documented emergencies will be considered on a per case basis.

*Academic Honesty Policy:* Do not cheat. Plagiarism involves using another person's writing and/or research without proper citation. University policy forbids and punishes plagiarism severely.

*Disabilities:* Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

*Incompletes:* A grade of "I" (for "Incomplete") will be given only in cases of documented emergency late in the semester. An Incomplete Grade Contract must be completed.

*Screenings:* The screenings are an essential part of the course. As such you are required to watch ALL of the films. If you are unable to attend a particular screening, you may request a reserve copy of the film, but you must watch it by the next class meeting.

*Internet/Email:* If you need to reach me, the best way to do so is via email. Please put ARTS/FILM 280 in the subject line of your message. Papers and assignments will *not* be relayed through email. They must be received and handed back in class. The Internet may be used for research, but it cannot be the sole source of material in any paper.

*NO EXCUSES Policy:* This class is designed to provide advanced production skills that will allow you to function in the 'real world' of media and production. Accordingly, you will be treated as professionals for the purposes of production exercises and out-of-class productions. You are SOLELY responsible for the performance of YOUR role. On a professional set, excuses will get you fired. If your editing system crashes the night before a rough cut is due, you find a backup. If you are the producer and have not heard back from every member of the crew for confirmation of a scheduled shoot, then you get on the phone, internet, car, plane, boat, or donkey and physically find them.