

## **ENG 4136: Introduction to Filmmaking (Spring 2024)**

**Prof. Trevor Mowchun**

Class (ROL 115): Friday Periods 8 - 10 (3 PM - 6 PM)

Screening (TUR 2334): Thursday Periods E1 - E3 (7:20 PM - 10:10 PM); Projectionist: Owen Ward (owen.ward@ufl.edu)

Course website (Canvas): elearning.ufl.edu

Office hours (TUR 4364): Wednesday 4-6pm, or by appointment.

Email: [tmowchun@ufl.edu](mailto:tmowchun@ufl.edu)

Film lab technician: Owen Ward (TUR 4303)

Email: owen.ward@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-672-8459

Lab hours (with Owen):

- Monday: periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50)
- Tuesday: periods 8-9 (3:00-4:55)
- Wednesday: periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50)
- Thursday: periods 9-10 (4:05-6:00)
- Friday: periods 7 and 11, before and after class

\*Students will have access to the editing suites outside of Owen's lab hours.

### **Course Description:**

Cinema is a unique, complex, evolving, and visionary artform with great individual and social impact. Cinema is also a language, and speaking it with conviction requires far more than mastering its technical equipment. To learn to "speak" cinema clearly and evocatively, the student filmmaker working within an independent DIY production model must develop a wide array of skills, such as conceptualization, visual thinking, dramatic construction, acting, continuity, cinematography, stylistic expression, spatial and temporal manipulation, to name but a few. This course explores both the artistic and technical aspects of filmmaking in tandem, considering the varied and inexhaustible ways that the medium of film activates the synergy of these aspects and leads the imagination into free, perhaps uncharted territory. Throughout the semester we will open a window into the inner workings of the creative cinematic process, analyze films from the perspective of their own making, and continually search for ways to enrich, stimulate and guide creativity throughout the entire filmmaking process from concept to screen.

Students will discover the expressive potential of cinema through the creation of a series of short "micro-films" based on concrete themes, concepts, forms, or poetic/narrative structures. These micro-films are an opportunity to explore the medium's inherent aesthetic characteristics or "grammar" (i.e., image, movement, silence, sound, time, space, montage, the frame, the face) without one's attention being diverted or burdened by the demands of an overly complex storyline or cluster of themes. Students will then have an opportunity to make a short film based on an original idea or work of fiction/poetry. The instructor will advise on the content, style, and logistics of this film. Finally, with direction from the instructor, the class as a whole will collaborate on a film throughout the semester. This endeavor will expose students to the various and interrelated

moving parts of the filmmaking process. All workshop participants should be willing to perform and/or appear on camera. Enthusiastic participation and openminded collaboration are essential. (Some of the screening sessions may be allocated to the filmmaking workshop as needed.)

Students will be given access to the English Department's film lab, fit with ample production and post-production equipment to make films. Our lab technician will hold weekly office hours to provide workshops with the equipment and answer any technical questions that come up. Students are allowed to borrow equipment and use the editing suites upon completion of tutorials instructed by the technician.

### **Books**

\*For purchase at the bookstore or another vendor.

- Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Plume 2019).
- Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York Review of Books, 2016).
- Paul Klee, *On Modern Art* (Faber & Faber, 1966). \*Available free online
- Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (Faber & Faber, 1953).
- Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, ed. Paul Cronin (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

\* The rest of the readings will be available on Course Reserves (ARES), which you can access via Canvas.

### **Equipment, Technical Assistance, and Proficiency**

- Basic proficiency must be met before checking out equipment for the first time, particularly the department's cameras/lenses.

- Our film lab technician, Owen Ward, will be available in the equipment room (TUR 4303) during scheduled lab hours (see above) to conduct basic proficiency tests and provide demonstrations of production and postproduction equipment, in addition to assisting with any technical questions you may have. Owen will also be available to answer questions via phone, email, and text message. Please be aware that technical support is restricted to the department's onsite resources.

- In order to record, store, transfer and regularly back up your work you may need all or some of the following equipment:

- SD card for video recording (recommended: SanDisk 32-128 GB)
- SD card for audio recording (recommended: SanDisk 16-32 GB)
- External hard drive for project storage (recommended: 500GB-1TB)
- SD card reader \*The department's Mac computers have SD slots.

### **Equipment and Lab Policies**

- The department media lab is located in TUR 4303. The key code will be provided. Throughout the semester you will have access to the lab and will be given a key to one of the editing suites.

**A \$50 replacement fee will be charged for lost keys.** To sign out keys please consult with the technician during scheduled office hours in TUR 4303. Be sure to return your keys at the end of the semester.

- When checking out equipment, the technician will manage all equipment sign-ins and sign-outs, support all computer platforms and deal with any equipment problems, exchanges, repairs etc. He will provide a schedule and forms for requesting equipment for all projects and determine return dates in accordance with the syllabus and the course deadlines. **You are fully responsible for all equipment that you have signed out, including any mishandling, damage or loss of gear. Treat our equipment as if it were your own and think of future filmmaking classes that will depend on the equipment being in good condition.**

**Schedule:**

\*Subject to change.

Week 1 (Jan. 11-12): Orientation

- Orientation in the film lab with class technician, Owen Ward.
- No screening.

Week 2 (Jan. 18-19): The Creative Process

- Reading: Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*.
- Film: *The Mystery of Picasso* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, France, 1956, 75 min)
- Short film: *The Wold Shadow* (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1972, 2.5 minutes) \*silent
- Short film: *Dog Star Man: Prelude* (Stan Brakhage, USA, 1961, 25 min) \*silent

Week 3 (Jan. 25-26): Principles of Composition

- Reading: Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*.
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 3: "Introduction to Digital Systems"), pp. 78-146.
- Film: *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, USA, 1967, 134 min)

Week 4 (Feb. 1-2): Conceptualization and Visualization

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 1-43.
- Reading: Steven D. Katz, "Chapter 3: Storyboards," in *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen* (Focal Press, 1991), pp. 23-84. \*Course Reserves \*\*Chapter consists mostly of images
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 4: "The Video Camcorder"), pp. 147-195.
- Film: *Lumière and Company* (various directors, concept by Phillippe Poullet, France, 1995, 88 minutes)
- Short film: *Blues* (Larry Gottheim, USA, 1970, 9 min)
- Short film: *World of Glory* (Roy Andersson, Sweden, 1991, 14 minutes)

Week 5 (Feb. 8-9): Dramatic Construction

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 44-91.
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 5: "The Lens"), pp. 196-245.

- Film: *The Phantom Thread* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 2017, 130 min)
- Short film: *Lifeline* (Victor Erice, Spain, 2002, 11 min)

Week 6 (Feb. 15-16): Mackendrick and Ascher (cont'd)

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 92-115.
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (and Chapter 6: "The Digital Image"), pp. 246-355.
- Recommended reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 7: "Film Systems and Cameras" and Chapter 8: "The Film Image"), pp. 356-421.
- Film: *The Ladykillers* (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1955, 91 min)

Week 7 (Feb. 22-23): Mackendrick and Ascher (cont'd)

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 116-159.
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 9: "Shooting the Movie"), pp. 422-495.
- Film: *The Sweet Smell of Success* (Alexander Mackendrick, USA, 1957, 96 min)

Week 8 (Feb. 29 - Mar. 1): Alternative Approaches to Screenwriting

- Script: James Agee, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) (excerpt). \*Course Reserves
- Script: James Agee, "Notes for a moving picture: *The House*" (1937). \*Course Reserves
- Script: Hollis Frampton, "*Zorns Lemma: Script and Notations*" (1970). \*Course Reserves
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 10: "Sound Recording Systems" and Chapter 11: "Sound Recording Techniques"), pp. 496-569.
- Short film: *Critical Mass* (Hollis Frampton, USA, 1971, 25 min)
- Film: *The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, USA, 1955, 92 min)

Week 9 (Mar. 7-8): Alternative Approaches to Filmmaking

- Reading: Stan Brakhage, "Selections from *Metaphors on Vision*," in *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking*, ed. Bruce R. McPherson. \*Course Reserves
- Reading: Maya Deren, *Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film* (Documentext, 2005) (excerpt). \*Course Reserves
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 12: "Lighting" and Chapter 13: "Picture and Dialogue Editing"), pp. 570-647.
- Short films by Stan Brakhage and Maya Deren
- Short film: *Springtime in Greenland* (John Paizs, Canada, 1981, 24 min)

**\*Spring Break\***

Week 10 (Mar. 21-22): Mackendrick and Ascher (cont'd)

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 160-196.

- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 14: "Editing Digital Video"), pp. 648-742.
- Film: *The Tenant* (Roman Polanski, France, 1976, 126 min)

#### Week 11 (Mar. 28-29): Mackendrick and Ascher (cont'd)

- Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, pp. 197-end.
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 15: "Sound Editing and Mixing"), pp. 743-787.
- Film: *The Master* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 2012, 137 min)

#### Week 12 (Apr. 4-5): Myth

- Reading: Andrei Tarkovsky, "Time, Rhythm and Editing," in *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (University of Texas Press, 2000), pp. 113-124. \*Course Reserves
- Hollis Frampton, "A Pentagram for Conjuring the Narrative," pp. 140-148. \*Course Reserves
- Reading: Steven Ascher (with Edward Pincus), *The Filmmaker's Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Chapter 16: "Producing and Distributing the Movie," and "Appendix A + B"), pp. 788-849.
- Film: *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, USSR, 1979, 161 min)

#### Week 13 (Apr. 11-12): "Directing Oneself..." (Bresson on Filmmaking)

- Reading: Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*.
- Film: *Pickpocket* (Bresson, France, 1959, 75 min)

#### Week 14 (Apr. 18-19): Rough Cuts

- Everyone will screen a rough cut of their final film, followed by feedback.
- \*Rough cuts will be screened in both the class and screening session.

### Coursework:

- **Concept/Scenario/Visualization: 4 ideas for microfilms, 1/2 page each, include a storyboard image for each one (10%, Due Monday Jan. 29, 10am, via Canvas)**
  - Begin exploring the creative possibilities of cinema through a series of short microfilms of approximately 1-3 minutes each.
  - Write 4 conceptualizations/scenarios for these microfilms (1/2 page each). Include details about the main idea/emotion, setting, structure, characters (if applicable), mood, style, techniques, etc.
  - \*One must be an adaptation of a short poem (10 lines or less).
  - On a separate page, draw (preferably by hand) one storyboard image for each idea that captures a key moment from the film or the essence of its subject matter and style.
  - These are films you will make in the class, one of which will be cut upon my recommendation.
- **Three Microfilms (25%, Due Monday Feb. 26, 10am, via Canvas)**
  - Using your written ideas above, create 3 microfilms (approximately 1-3 minutes each).
  - Keep it simple so you can maintain your focus on the ideas, images, and artistic execution.
  - Films can be exported separately or arranged into a single timeline.
  - Title each film and include your name/year.

Rules:

- One of these films must be silent. \*This film will be used for the sound exercise below.
- One of these films must be an adaptation of a short poem (10 lines or less).
- Only one of these films can feature music, but not at the expense of sound.
- One of these films must contain at least one line of spoken dialogue.

- **Sound Exercise (8%, Due Monday March 18, 10am, via Canvas)**

- Create a soundtrack for your micro-silent film above.
- Record sounds using one of our H4N audio recorders.
- Music can be used but only in a minimal way (not as a crutch).
- The title of this film may change after creating a soundtrack.

- **Final Short Film (Pitch, Research Notes, Script, Shot List, Storyboards, Film)**

- This film can be an adaptation of a short story, piece of micro-fiction, or poem, or it can be based on an original idea.
  - **Pitch (2%, Due Monday March 4, 10am, via Canvas):**
    - Propose/pitch two ideas: an adaptation (include source material) **and** something of your own creation. I will advise on which project to pursue. **(1/2 page each)**
  - **Written Material (research notes, script, shot list, storyboards) (15%, Due Friday March 22, midnight, via Canvas):**
    - Research the subject matter and aesthetics of your film. Include notes on relevant readings, films, artworks, and other sources of inspiration/instruction. Include your own musings and plans for the film. **(3-page minimum)**
    - Write the script using methods and formatting suited to the film.
    - Write a shot list—a numerical and descriptive list of all the planned shots in the film.
    - Draw (preferably by hand) **at least 5 storyboards** for key moments in the film.
  - **Film (25%, Due Friday Apr. 26, midnight, via Canvas) \*Rough cuts are due Apr. 18-19 to be screened in class. Final film submissions on the 26<sup>th</sup> must demonstrate serious engagement with feedback.**
    - Create a short film maximum 10 minutes long. Be sure to give your film a title and include credits.

- **Participation: 15%**

- In-class discussion, workshops, and class film project.

**Grade Scale**

<b>A</b> 4.0 94-100%	<b>C</b> 2.0 73-76%
<b>A-</b> 3.67 90-93%	<b>C-</b> 1.67 70-72%
<b>B+</b> 3.33 87-89%	<b>D+</b> 1.33 67-69%
<b>B</b> 3.0 83-86%	<b>D</b> 1.0 63-66%
<b>B-</b> 2.67 80-82%	<b>D-</b> 0.67 60-62%
<b>C+</b> 2.33 77-79%	<b>E</b> 0.00 0-59%

## **Policies and Services**

- Written work should be 1.5 or double-spaced with standard-sized margins.
- For written work, Word or PDF files are acceptable.
- Films can be uploaded onto Canvas. If the size is too large or if you experience technical difficulties, use a free file-sharing service called WeTransfer.
- Late submissions without approval will be penalized. Discuss with me ahead of time if you need an extension.
- Regular attendance is essential. If I see that you are consistently absent then your grade will be adversely affected. Communication with the instructor is crucial to avoid misunderstandings related to absences. These policies are consistent with the UF's attendance policies. For more information on these policies, please visit:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
- The use of cell phones and internet browsing during class are prohibited.
- Please do not record any class without permission from me.
- Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code:  
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>
- Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>).
- For information on UF Grading policies:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>
- For counseling or urgent help you may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/individual/>
- UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:  
<https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>