

Course name: Intensive Hands-On Narrative Film Course L1/L2

Code: EF20

Level: L1 – Basic to intermediate (Previous filmmaking experience recommended, but not required)
L2 – Intermediate to advanced (Previous filmmaking experience required and part of the entry evaluation)

Language of instruction: English

U.S. Semester Credits: 12 + 3

Contact Hours: 200

Term: Fall 2020

Course meeting place: Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, FAMU Studio. Prague, Czech Republic

Participants: 6 (minimum) – 18 (maximum) in each level group (L1/L2)

Professor: Pavel Marek (Directing)
Mary Angiolillo (Working with actors)
Michael Gahut (Cinematography)
Eva Papoušková (Screenwriting)
Priit Pohahla/Valerio Mendoza (Technical Screenplay)
Dimitris PoLyzos/Rolando Garduno (Editing)
George Cremaschi (Sound)
Donika Zanova (Production Knowhow)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This multi-faceted course is offering its participants a combination of lectures and hands-on exercises to introduce students to the theory and techniques of filmmaking. The course includes one collaborative production of a short film exercise (digital), one individual production of a short 16 mm film (Bolex) exercise and the development and production of a 5-8 minutes short film for each student (digital). During production, each student will practice working both as a director and a cinematographer. The production and post-production costs are included in the tuition.

The course is based on an academy approach that involves intensive mentoring by a team of expert faculty from the departments of Directing, Cinematography, Screenwriting, and Editing. During production, students collaborate with a professional production manager, camera assistant, sound designer, and color grader, and practice the art of talent selection by working with a dedicated mentor. Through a set of hands-on modules, students get to experience working with the 16 mm film stock, including development and flat-bed editing, practice lighting for both interior and exterior productions, elementary principles of film sound and the process of short film project preparation, including

storyboarding. During the post-production process, which takes place in a professional post-production studio, the emphasis is placed on the importance of color grading and color correction, graphics, special effects, and sound mixing and design.

FAMU instruction follows an academy approach, where students work closely with faculty mentors and workshop their ideas in a collaborative process. Artistic success is celebrated but the FAMU pedagogical approach also values failure, as making mistakes is an inevitable part of any creative process and understanding them is an essential part of learning. Students are expected to approach the course and the filmmaking process with a willingness to learn both from successes and failures.

The final product, a 5-8 minutes film, will have a formal screening with a jury review.

Participants will receive an evaluation by the FAMU Faculty. Submission of the project for evaluation is not compulsory, but without the submission no credits may be awarded to the students for the practical part of the course.

Upon request, participants can receive the final grade from FAMU. The evaluation method is outlined at the end of this document.

CREDIT STRUCTURE

Course is formally structured as the 12 US credit course (one US credit equaling 2 ECTS credit used by FAMU within the European credit system. Students may gain additional 3 credits for elective theory classes.

Filmmaking – Core Classes. **Credits: 3**

Script Lab, Cinematography and Directing: 72 contact hours + consultations and homework

Filmmaking – techniques and technology modules. **3 Credits**

Introduction, Working with Actors, Practical Production Skills Modules (Sound, Editing, Elementary Production Skills, Directing Bootcamp): 72 contact hours + consultation and homework.

Filmmaking - Practical production. **6 Credits**

Projects production, post-production and the final results presentation – 96 hours Prague Project, Bolex Project and Final project: min. 144 hours of practical production + consultation.

Filmmaking in theory. **Credits: up to 3 credits (optional)**

From the official FAMU semester start, students may choose to attend also FAMU theoretical elective classes in English language, such as Script Analysis, Short Film Practical Analysis, Realm of Montage, Soundtrack Aesthetics, Central European Cinemas Within the Context of the World Cinema and Cinematographer's Influence. The elective classes have typically value of 2 or 3 ECTS credits (ie. 1,5 or 2 US credits). To achieve 3 credits, students usually need to enroll in two elective classes.

FAMU provides the participants with the formal transcript of records, confirming the courses passed, credits received and the evaluation results, if applicable.

COURSE OUTLINE:**Week 1 and 2. Online.****The introduction and arrival. 24 contact hours.**

Students start with 8 days of online introduction with FAMU instructors, covering the basics of filmmaking in theory. Students meet their mentors and each other, get to know each other through a series of short exercises, and learn about the parameters of the upcoming hands-on courses and exercises.

Milestone: Getting ready and to know each other

Week 3**Orientation and “96 Hours Prague Project”**

After arrival, students undergo a production, sound and camera equipment orientation module. They are introduced to the first assignment, the “96 Hours Prague Project” – a 4-minute collaborative film project based on the set topic and produced as teamwork of the production teams consisting of 3-4 students. The film is shot, produced, post-produced and presented in 4 days. The introduction to the post-production workflow and editing is part of the process.

In the Script Lab Class, students start working on the story of their final project.

Milestone: Getting familiar with Prague locations and the exercise production processes.

Week 4 –5**Bolex project and Script Lab**

In the Script Lab Class, student continue working on the story of their final project.

The Cinematography Class starts.

The Sound Module starts.

The Working with Actors Module starts.

Each student completes a 16mm Bolex camera exercise with a set theme and parameters. Students get to experience working with film stock and will go through the procedure of film stock development and flatbed editing.

Starting from week 5 (October 1st), students may also attend the elective classes of their choice.

Milestone: Work on the final project begins.

Week 6**Bolex project presentations, classes continue, Script Lab – Story presentation**

The Bolex project results are presented at the collective screening. At the end of the week, students pitch the treatment of the project they developed to the course faculty for a green light.

Milestone: Final project story is approved for script development.

Week 7-8**Module: storyboarding module, Introduction to Film Production, the Directing class starts.**

Students get to work on the script for their final project. Students start working with the production manager on immediate production tasks related to their project (search for locations, props and actors – students are encouraged to act in the projects of their colleagues).

Students are introduced into the elementary skills of storyboarding and the shotlist preparation.

Location scouting begins.

Milestone: First draft script is completed

Week 9

Preproduction, Directing Bootcamp module

At the beginning of the week, students present their film projects for the final approval and they are assigned the cinematography and directing mentor. Through the intensive hands-on module (Directing Bootcamp) and using scenes of their script in preparation, students practice the skills of blocking, framing and other elements of film language.

Students work with their mentors and the production manager on the final script, shotlist, storyboard, locations, cast and production schedule.

Milestone: The final film is approved for production.

Week 10

Preproduction and equipment orientation. Set orientation. Lighting exercise.

Preproduction is finalized in week 10. Students attend equipment orientation sessions, production sessions focused on on-set workflow and learn the rules of cooperating in practice. In a dedicated hands-on module, students practice both exterior and interior lighting.

Milestone: Location, casting and script is locked.

Week 11–13

Production and post-production.

In week 11, students are shooting their projects. Students are required to participate in each other's projects in different crew positions to experience filmmaking from various perspectives.

In the process of production, students consult their directing and cinematography mentors.

In the process of post-production, students consult their directing mentor and the editing mentor.

Students attend the whole process of color grading and the sound mix, both done by professionals.

Milestone: Production is completed, post-production begins.

Week 14

Post-production and final screening

Film experience culminates in the final screening where all mentors and teachers are present to give a final feedback.

Milestone: Final project is completed.

TEACHING UNIT DESCRIPTIONS:

Core Classes

Script Lab Class:

The course explains the narrative and dramaturgical perspective of the film project, teaches understanding the diverse narrative techniques, dramatic structures and genre forms and examines the craft of screenwriting. Each student writes a script of his/her own film and debates it with his/her mentor and peers in the course of the workshop.

Objectives:

The aim of the workshop is to create a collaborative space which invokes creativity and inspiration. After introducing students to the dramatic principles of the short form, specific exercises are given to help the students find and develop their story ideas. The instructor guides students toward preparing stories to pitch and toward incorporating feedback from the pitch into their stories.

Through intensive film analysis, students learn to examine and explain the following elements of screenwriting: three-act story structure, plot points, turning points, the function of exposition, the catalyst, rising action, crisis, climax, culmination, resolution, main tension, theme, scenes and sequences, sub-plots, double-plots, multi-plots and internal scene structure. Analysis also covers the role of the protagonist, the creation of empathy, the journey of protagonist (spine), active and passive characters, supporting characters, “string characters”, character arcs and motivation, the role of the antagonist, the use of conflict and obstacles, and comparison of objective vs. subjective conflict, action vs. activity.

Contact hours: 24 (4 hours x 6 weeks) + consultations

Directing:

The course and the related modules focus on mastering the fundamentals of film language and its grammar. Students establish a theoretical knowledge of the craft by developing their own projects and discussing the process and results with the instructor and fellow students. The course explores interpretations of film as a temporal-spatial art by examining pacing, rhythm, accelerating action, and the handling of time and space, montage, transitions, sound, and music. Dialogue, the dramatic use of props and costumes, staging and the creation of atmosphere as employed in the screenplay are also covered. Students are expected to recognize and begin to master these dramatic and narrative elements.

Objectives: Through their final projects, students practice and explore filmmaking in three organically overlapping parts:

Narrating a story: the role of the author

The fundamental elements of film production such as film narration, the creation of film time and space in the editing room, mise en scene, framing and blocking

The role of the director: visualizing and composing shots, staging dialogue sequences with two or more actors, mobile staging and frame depth.

In the related practical hands-on module, students learn how to transfer their script into the storyboard and the shotlist.

Contact hours: 24 (4 hours x 6 weeks) + consultations

Cinematography:

This component provides a comprehensive study into the tools and craft of the cinematographer, with particular emphasis on those tools and techniques needed to prepare the students for their upcoming shoot. Elements such as shot size, axis rules, and angles of view – technical tools that serve a dramatic purpose in film – are examined in depth. Several styles of cinematography are considered in order to understand how to develop a story and cultivate a style using film language. Movement as a fundamental tool of cinematography is emphasized. After discussing the relationship of the cinematographer to his crew, director and actors, the course focuses on the practical implementation of the essential elements of cinematography.

Objectives and topics: the roles of natural and artificial light and the practicalities of lighting a scene, studio lighting theory, lamps, filters and gobos for special effects, exponometry and the tools for setting exposure, color temperature. By the end of the course, students have the groundwork to conceive and photograph their final project and the experience to develop their own individual style and poetic.

The professor also works with the students during the process of making of the final film.

Contact hours: 24 (4 hours x 6 weeks) + consultations

Filmmaking – techniques and technology modules

Introduction:

8 days of online introduction with FAMU instructors, covering the basics of filmmaking in theory. Students meet their mentors and each other, get to know each other through a series of short exercises, and learn about the parameters of the upcoming hands-on courses and exercises.

Contact hours: 24

Working with actors:

The course introduces the students to basic principles of acting, namely Goal/Obstacle, Other, Tactics and Expectations. Each principle is exercised separately and students engage in short scenes and improvisations to combine the principles and work on additional techniques related to character portrayal and building a scene. In some exercises, students gain practice directing each other, and specific problems, such as casting or work with non-actors are addressed to prepare them for their upcoming shoot.

Objectives: learning the basics of the actor's craft: the thought process that shapes the action from "game to drama" so that students can both work with their actors and perform in the films of their peers. Learning how to shape one's own film through workshopping scripts with actors. The art of casting the actors.

Contact hours: 8 (2 hours x 4 weeks) + consultations

Practical production skills modules.

This course consists of several practical, hands-on modules oriented on the topics of practical production and post-production of short film projects.

Objectives: students gain the knowledge of the essential elements of short film production through the process practical preparation for the production and post-production of their film projects.

Total contact hours: 44 + consultations

Modules included:

Production Know-how: Students are exposed to basic practices related to production knowhow and workflow. Students review the roles of crew members, finalize their own crews, understand how to create a call sheet and shooting plan and prepare a safe efficient environment on set. Budget, equipment care, continuity factors, time management, communication, transport, set-up and break-down, and other production details are considered to prepare the students for their upcoming shoots.

Contact hours: 10

Storyboarding and Directing Bootcamp: In the hands-on module, students learn how to transfer their

script into the storyboard and the shotlist and use scenes of their script in preparation, as well as practicing the skills of blocking and framing and other elements of film language.

Contact hours: 18 (6 hours x 3 days) + consultations

Sound: Theoretical and practical crash course for creating digital sound space, effectively designing sound to create and enhance meaning. Attention is paid to sound in the narrative, with a mention of using it for documentary and abstract works. Students are quickly introduced to production matters: tips and tricks from conceiving to creating a soundtrack built up through dialogue, narration, music, and ambient sound.

Contact hours: 8

Editing: Editing is approached from a theoretical and practical perspective, focusing on making and organizing rhythm. Several approaches to editing are presented to the students in short segments.

Contact hours: 8

APPENDIX

Evaluation method

The final grade, if requested, is calculated according to the following percentage:

- Production and Pre-Production: 60%

The grades for each of these modules are determined by the faculty teaching them, based on exams, scripts or projects.

- Directing & Script: 30%
- Cinematography: 15%
- Working with actors: 15%
- Post-Production and Final Film: 30%

The grade is determined after the final screening, according to the extent to which students successfully incorporate each module into their final film. The film is graded based on 3 criteria:

- Editing: 10% (evaluated by the faculty who teach the editing and directing modules)
- Visual Composition: 10% (evaluated by the faculty who teach cinematography)
- Artistic Success (Jury Review): 10% (evaluated by a panel of FAMU faculty, consisting of the above and others)
- Professionalism and Participation: 10%

This includes active and thoughtful participation, punctuality, and respectful and collegial attitude to fellow students, crew members, and faculty.