



FS200 – LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: MAKING A FICTION FILM IN ROME
IES Abroad Rome

DESCRIPTION:

“Making a Fiction Film in Rome” is a hands-on introduction to writing, directing and editing short narrative films. Students participate in the development, production, direction and post-production of a short film from ten to fifteen minutes in length.

This course introduces students to the technical, conceptual, and aesthetic skills involved in video production through the single camera mode of production. Still the most dominant mode of film and video production, the single camera mode places an emphasis on using the camera to fullest capacity of artistic expression. In addition to the multiple skills and concepts involved with using a camera and directing crew and actors, the course introduces students to the principles and new technologies of lighting, audio recording and non-linear digital video editing. Special focus is given to producing content for successful web distribution.

The class will be divided into groups: each group will produce a short film using Rome as the main set with its distinctive outdoor and indoor locations. Students will shoot and edit the short films under the supervision of the instructor and a technical assistant specialized in new media production and postproduction. This course will teach students an independent creative approach to the digital movie making process.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: none

ADDITIONAL COST: \$55.00 (Editing and technical support and materials)

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, discussions, film screenings in class, hands-on exercises with camera equipment and editing system

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation – 10%
- Written and oral presentation of script and production schedule developed by each group – 30%
- Participation in the filming and editing process – 30%
- Final short film – 30%

Grading Rubric for course participation:

A	Excellent participation The student’s contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates’ opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation

	The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Communicate ideas, concepts and stories using the art form of video making
- Understand the different phases of the entire filmmaking and digital media production process
- Write, produce, direct and edit a short narrative film for DVD and web distribution

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is mandatory for all IES classes, including field studies. If a student misses more than two classes, 2 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical emergencies or family emergencies. IES will only consider extreme emergency cases and will strictly adhere to this policy.

Please note: 4 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade in case of an absence on a scheduled Course-Related Trip.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1	Film genres and original ideas for film 1. Course introduction. Overview of different film genres. Viewing short student films for evaluation criteria and quality standards. 2. Presentation of possible visual styles, locations and elements easily accessible in Rome. Brainstorming of story ideas. Students' presentations of individual project ideas. Professor will pair students into teams.	• Field, <i>Sid Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting</i>, ch.1 ('What is a Screenplay?'); ch. 2 ('The Subject'); ch.3 ('The Creation of Character'); ch.4 ('Building a Character'); ch.5 ('Story and Character'); ('Endings and Beginnings') pp. 1-105
Week 2	From the idea to the story line 1. Explanation of how to write a storyline and the three-acts paradigm. 2. Students work in groups on the project storyline and character's development,	• Field, <i>Sid Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting</i>, ch.7 ('Setting up the Story?'); ch.8 ('Two Incidents'); ch.9 ('Plot Points'); ch.10 ('The Scene'); ch.11 ('The Sequence'); ch.12 ('Building the Storyline'); pp. 106-214

	applying the main elements of the chosen film genres	
Week 3	Cinema language and Course-Related trip to Cinecittà Studios 1. Overview of basic elements of film grammar: shot types, angles, and camera movements 2. Course-Related trip to Cinecittà Studios and its permanent museum	Groups finalize the storyline for their short films
Week 4	Class presentation of group projects 1. Class Presentation of group projects: storylines due. Each group will show examples of films chosen on the Internet as reference models for their project. Professor and class give feedback on group projects. 2. Overview of main directing styles and shooting techniques. Discussion on the evolution of audiovisual language and the contemporary prevalent esthetics in mainstream cinema.	• Field, <i>Sid Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting</i>, ch.13 ('Screenplay form'); ch.14 ('Writing the screenplay'); ch.15 ('Adaptation'); ch.16 ('On collaboration') pp. 215-288
Week 5	From the Storyline to the Screenplay 1. Getting familiar with the fundamentals of scriptwriting, learn how to build a screenplay. Script breakdown and analysis: students learn how to create production schedules and shooting lists. 2. Overview of release forms and production documents. Explanation of the different and complementary professional roles in a film crew.	Groups write the screenplay for their short films
Week 6	Directing and Shooting Styles 1. Hands-on exercises using mobile devices and new media applications. Students learn how to shoot scenes and sequences. 2. Class presentations of each group's screenplay and preproduction package. Final feedback.	• Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward, <i>The Filmmaker's Handbook: a comprehensive guide for the digital age</i>, ch.1 ('Introduction to Film and Video Systems') pp. 1-44; ch.8 ('Shooting') pp.208-244
Week 7	Preparing for the film shooting 1. How to direct actors and "The Method" by Lee Strasberg 2. Casting sessions and rehearsals in class with talents and crew	• Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward, <i>The Filmmaker's Handbook: a comprehensive guide for the digital age</i>, ch.10 ('Sound Recording Techniques') pp.274-303; ch.11 ('Lighting') pp.304-345
Week 8	Location Scouting and Shot-List	Groups organize production according to their shooting schedule

	1. Location scouting and rehearsal on-set with chosen talents supervised by professor and technical assistant. 2. Definition of shot-lists or storyboards in class	
Week 9	Production Phase I 1. Groups shoot on location with talents using student's own cameras, iPad, or mobile phones	Groups watch the material they shot and check quality standards
Week 10	Production Phase II 1. Groups will complete the shooting on location with talents using student's own cameras, iPads, or mobile phones 2. Each group will screen in class the material shot. Feedback will be given by Professor and Technical Assistant on each group project	
Week 11	Prepare for the editing 1. Download of the video files on student's computers or Ipads. Learn to log production material. 2. Overview of the basic editing techniques and the tools offered by non-linear editing programs and applications	
Week 12	Editing 1. Students work on the editing of the short narrative films using their laptops, phones, or iPads under the supervision of Professor and Technical Assistant	
Week 13	Final Editing and Evaluation of the student's work Groups work on the final editing (sound, color correction, titles, and credits). Class screening of group's short films. Professor's feedback on final projects.	

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Field, Sid *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. Published by Delta 2005
- Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward *The Filmmaker's Handbook: a comprehensive guide for the digital age*. Published by Plume 2013.