



SCHOOL OF MEDIA ARTS

SOMA 1603

DIGITAL VIDEO 1

S1 2009

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COURSE STAFF

Course Coordinator: Tom Ellard
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COURSE INFORMATION

a) **Units of Credit: 6**

b) **Teaching Times and Locations:**

Lecture: Monday EGO2 @ COFA at 16:00-18:00 and online

| Day | Class Number | Time | Location |
|-----------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| Monday | 8828 | 10:00 | Webster 136c |
| Tuesday | 8831 | 12:00 | Webster 136c |
| | 8834 | 10:00 | Webster 136c |
| Wednesday | 5027 | 12:00 | COFA F106 |
| | 5028 | 11:00 | COFA F115 |
| | 5029 | 14:00 | COFA F106 |
| | 5030 | 16:00 | COFA F106 |
| | 5031 | 16:00 | COFA F115 |

c) **Contact hours per week: 4***

The expectation of time in this course is more than contact hours. The University has expectations of a total load of 25 – 30 hours per unit of credit. This means that you should spend no less than 8-9 hours per week on average on class work in addition to your timetabled hours.

e) **Course Aims:**

Digital Video One is a studio based course where students develop detailed skills in the use of digital video technologies for production. Students work in groups to plan, pitch, and formally present in class **two projects** during the semester. Each project will be based on a brief and concepts for each assignment will be presented to the class during development.

g) **Student learning outcomes:**

There are 12 lectures and 12 Studio sessions in the year. Lectures introduce students to styles, themes and solutions from video practice and cover essential work processes. Studio sessions are 'hands on' training in tools and techniques. By the end of the course students will have the ability to critically analyse and interpret a range of screen productions and call upon techniques and resources for their own practice.

Students are expected to research and develop each assignment and 'pitch' their approach to the class. Research and development of original ideas is expected - this must be documented in an ongoing manner, and the documentation materials will form part of the class presentations. Time outside of the allocated studio sessions will be needed to successfully develop ideas. This method of research and formal presentation is expected to introduce the student to an application of a high level of organization and the benefits of clear communication skills.

h) Graduate Attributes Developed in this Course

| COFA Graduate Attributes | Activities / Assessment (equally weighted) |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Disciplinary knowledge | Students demonstrate the ability to situate their own practice within the historical and contemporary film/video context. |
| Communication skills | Students develop communication skills to articulate their artistic intentions and the relative strengths and weakness in their work in group reviews and assessments. |
| Technical skills | Students demonstrate (through set projects and exercises) their developing acquisition of the technical video hardware/software skills and the production of video. |
| Critical thinking | Students critically reflect and resolve problems they experience in completion of their works. Students will be encouraged through ongoing reviews to self-critique and workshop how identified problems could be resolved. |
| Group skills | Students develop the skills to critically engage in group feedback discussions. Students use their understanding of the theoretical influences in historical and contemporary practices to comment on their own and other student's artworks. Students demonstrate abilities to work as a team during learning activities. |
| Social awareness | Students make works informed by their understanding of the relationships between audiences and cultural contexts. Students discuss how visual images are interpreted in different social contexts. |
| Ethical understanding | Students learn to apply an ethical consciousness in the creation of their artworks. Students demonstrate this understanding in the critical feedback of their own and other student's work. |
| Information Literacy | Students demonstrate ability to investigate practices through the use of library resources and the wider media. Students use this research to develop and extend concepts for their projects and the different meanings in their artworks. |
| Entrepreneurial skills | Students develop a context and understanding for imagery within 'real world' culture and media. |

i) Approach to learning and teaching

The subject combines studio practice with critique, lectures provided both face to face and online, and blended learning via the COFA *Omnium* system. Multiple learning methods are provided so as to provide a wide spectrum of opportunity.

This subject includes online discussion. For general information about online services for SOMA subjects please see the document *Online Services for Media Arts*.

ASSESSMENT

Assignments:

There are TWO formal pitch/presentations for the course.

There are TWO final screening/presentations for the course.

Assessment will comprise of:

First Assignment pitch/presentation: [week 3] 15%

First screening / presentation: [week 6] 30%

Second Assignment pitch/presentation [week 9] 15%

Second screening / presentation: [week 12] 30%

Studio, group and class participation: 10%

MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

Assignment 1a) Documentary Pitch / Presentation: 15%

Each group of 3-4 students must make a formal presentation (<5 minutes) of a documentary idea to the class, and then hand in a group written summary of no more than 500 words to the tutor.

You will need to clarify the topic of the documentary, the worth of the topic as research, its interest to a general audience, the appropriate style or method of approach. You need to demonstrate specific knowledge that stems from your original research. You need also keep in mind ethical & cultural sensitivity.

Assignment 2b) Documentary Video: 30%

Each crew must present to the class a group documentary work on DV tape, then hand that tape to the tutor. Each student must also hand in a written account of the production process of no more than 500 words.

The work needs to fulfill the pitch. It will be assessed on the quality of the shoot & edit as engaging the audience interest and conveying the information. Technical skills shown in the work will be judged in part by their appropriateness to your stated aim. E.g. a hand held 'realist' style is acceptable if the reasons are sound. The individual reports need to show your contribution to the work: 'I did this, learned that, would do this differently'.

Assignment 1a) Narrative Pitch / Presentation: 15%

Each group of 3-4 students must make a presentation (<5 minute) of a narrative idea to the class, and then hand in a written treatment / scriptment to the tutor.

You need to clarify the character's motivations, goals and obstacles in the plot, the appeal of the idea to a projected audience. The arc must be evident. The shoot needs to be budgeted as feasible in terms of coverage, crew, actors, lighting and so on. Don't claim the impossible in a three week production. You are seeking a 'green light' to proceed.

Assignment 1b) Narrative Video: 30%

Each crew must present to the class a group narrative work authored on DVD, then hand a DVD to the tutor. Each student must also hand in an individual written account of the production process of no more than 500 words.

This is assessed on appropriate camera work, lighting and composition, the edit (pace, rhythm, edits, transitions etc.) Technical advance on your last project. Your ability to critically analyse your own & class work. Your collaboration & the crew dynamics. The individual reports need to show your contribution to the work: 'I did this, learned that, would do this differently'.

The participation score results from your engagement with the subject and other students.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking the ideas or words of others and passing them off as your own. Plagiarism is a type of intellectual theft.

Plagiarism can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement. Plagiarism can have serious consequences, so it is important that students be aware of what it is, and how to avoid it.

It is also plagiarism to claim credit for a proportion a work contributed to a group assessment item that is greater than that actually contributed, to submit an assessment item that has already been submitted for academic credit elsewhere, or to knowingly permit your work to be copied by another student.

There are very serious penalties for plagiarism, ranging from re-submission, reduction of marks (including to zero), failure of the course, and exclusion from the university.

The Learning Centre website has a lot of useful information. See www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 9 Mar. Traditions of Documentary.

Lecture: Course outline. How actual is an 'actuality'? Can film ever convey 'Truth'? We need to delve into the early history to see how Truth is manufactured. Also: Thinking about nonlinear editing, and how the *Final Cut* interface encapsulates the video edit suite.

Studio: DV cameras and lighting boot camp - including white balance, manual focus, exposure. Key lights, fill lights, safety issues. We establish lighting & camera proficiency for borrowing.

Week 2 16 Mar. Great Causes & Propaganda.

Lecture: We continue our history up to propaganda & 'Industrial' films. What is propaganda and is it ever justified? Old propaganda is easy to critique, but can we detect it in recent works as well?

Studio: *Final cut* editing basics. Overview and layout, preferences and settings – scratch disks. Capturing, logging and project organisation. DV scene split, trimming, ripple, roll.

Week 3 23 Mar. Hollywood Continuity and its Reverses.

Studio: Assignment 1A is due – students will pitch their documentary idea.

Lecture: The Hollywood continuity system aims to assure 'a suspension of disbelief' – we'll systematize this & set it up as our standard. Yet TV news gathering and fiction films such as *Cloverfield* & *Blair Witch Project* create authenticity by simulating exactly the 'bad' camera work that we're taught to avoid. How can we use the two principles? Also the basic mechanics of a video interview – issues of journalism, ethics, camerawork, sound and so on.

Week 4 30 Mar. The Poetic Documentary.

Lecture: It's not always the direct route that clarifies a topic. Sometimes you have to be oblique. We'll look at a few examples where directors have mixed poetry and fact to make their essential point more clear. Also – analyzing some very convincing 'mockumentaries' to discover tricks and techniques for manufacturing the authority of documentary.

Studio: Continue to work on editing with *Final Cut*. Refining rough edits, exporting to tape.

Week 5 6 Apr. Video, not Film.

Lecture: Around the late 70's the advent of the Port-a-pack video system suggested a revolutionary social 'videosphere' near identical to the current so called 'blogosphere'. Examining some of the radical claims made back then we're led to think on the differences between film and video, about current attempts to merge high definition video with film, and how 'reality TV' results from these utopian dreams.

Studio is devoted to 'bug fixing' your first assignment.

MID SESSION BREAK 13th APRIL

Week 6 20 Apr. Psychological foundations of Narrative.

Studio: **Assignment 1B is due** – groups will screen their short documentary works for critical feedback from the class.

Lecture: Eternally popular stories use elements and address themes in a way that seems to satisfy basic human desires. Some very interesting (arguably scientific) theories exist about storytelling and how we can best contour the excitement over the course of a story. Also, the film genres: why they exist and how you can use them for plot economy.

Week 7 27 April. Preproduction.

Lecture: When writing or adapting a screenplay no unbreakable rules exist but there's a definite flow that works: from the motivations of characters, their weakness, their goals, the obstacles to obtaining their goals and so on – which then predicts how they react when moved into the story's stress situation. We'll take a look at the free script design software *Celtx*.

Studio: Pre planning the shoot: scouting the location, casting the talent, assembling the crew, arranging the props, planning coverage and so on.

Week 8 4 May. Cinematography for Storytelling.

Lecture: There's few scares on a bright summer day & blue isn't the colour of romance. Storytelling involves cinema elements such as colour temperature, camera angles & lighting planes – and editing style. We'll cover some of the more effective film devices involved in manipulating apparent time and space.

Studio: The elements of DVD authoring with *DVD Studio Pro*. How a DVD is organized, how you can best prepare assets for an effective DVD title.

Week 9 11 May. Soundtrack, Sound Design

Studio: **Assignment 2A is due** – groups will pitch their narrative idea.

Guest Lecture with Simon Hunt: at least half of a movie is the audio. If the sound or the music's not right, no amount of good vision can repair the damage. A director must at very least have a sound design sensibility. We will go into the aesthetics and mechanics of synchronized sound.

Week 10 18 May. Two Difficult Genres.

Lecture: By far the hardest genre to attempt is comedy – failure is hard to excuse. Yet oddly, many contemporary Australian films are pitched as comedic. We'll identify and view some comic traditions such as slapstick, 'gallows humor', satire, Yiddish word play etc. We'll also take a look at building suspense, and how that which is hidden is more powerful than that which is shown.

Studio: Working with recorded sound and music. An introduction to *Soundtrack Pro*.

Week 11 25 May. The Real World Intrudes.

Studio: will be devoted to bug fixing your assignments.

Guest Lecturer will provide some real world experience in video production, survival in the industry, example work and answer your questions.

Week 12 1 Jun. Addressing different screens.

Lecture: Once your production is complete you have a variety of venues to have it seen. Here we will mostly cover the technical needs of getting it out there – streams, codecs, frame rates and discs. We'll also touch on some of the design & marketing ideas that will be covered in later courses.

Studio: **Assignment 2B is due** – groups will screen their short narrative works for critical feedback from the class.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS

Digital video editing requires large amount of storage. You are **strongly advised to purchase a portable hard drive** on which to back up your work in progress. Common sense is that unless you have two copies of a file – It's not backed up! You will need to buy miniDV tapes and DVD-R for practice and for assignments. You will need to book cameras as required.

SAFETY INFORMATION

You have a responsibility to not do anything that risks the safety or health of your fellow students and also staff.

This will involve informing your lecturer of any safety risks you become aware of, and also following the directions of staff in relation to such issues as equipment usage, and safety equipment and clothing.

You are responsible for:

- adhering to UNSW and COFA OHS policies and procedures,
- following instructions on safe work methods,
- promptly reporting hazards or accidents
- ensuring your conduct does not endanger others.

Emergencies and evacuation

In case of emergency you should follow the instructions on the emergency procedures displays, which are located on each level.

The emergency phone number is 9385-6666 (not 000).

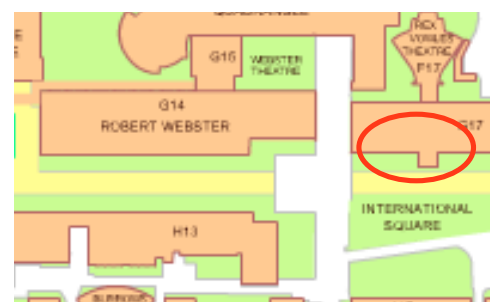
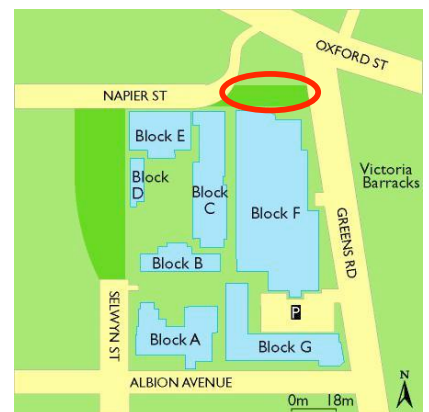
During evacuations always follow the directions given by fire wardens and proceed to the emergency assembly area:

COFA: in front of the campus art store (red oval on diagram A).

Webster Building: International Square lawn (red oval on diagram B).

First aid information

If you are injured or are hurt in any way inform your supervisor. All accidents and incidents must be reported. The names and contact details of first aid officers on campus are displayed on the green and white first aid posters. Security staff are also trained first aid officers.



Electrical safety

Students should ensure that any portable electrical equipment they bring onto the campus (such as laptop computer power supplies) are tested and tagged. Such equipment will not be able to be used on campus if not tagged. Testing can be done at the Resource Centre.

Advice and instructions to students regarding workplace safety & hazardous substances.

Students should be aware of their responsibility to avoid causing injuries to themselves or to others. These injuries could include; eyestrain, hearing damage, back, neck and repetitive strain injury (RSI), burns, chemical poisoning, inhalation damage, lacerations and the like. Students using, or planning to use, unorthodox materials, or materials/ processes/ performances in a potentially damaging manner in their class, or related work, ARE REQUIRED to complete a Risk Assessment Form. This form must be signed by the lecturer and lodged with the relevant Technical Officer or School Administrative Assistant. Unorthodox materials are considered to be material, solvents, chemicals, paints, electricity etc. not covered by standard practice or tuition within the area. All potentially dangerous materials MUST be used in consultation with the mandatory material safety data sheets (MSDS) available at the point of acquisition of such materials. It is UNSW policy that no bodily parts or fluids are used on any campus for any purpose.

Public Liability.

The University has appropriate insurance cover whereby you, the student and the University are indemnified in the event of you, while on work experience, placement or assignment (including such things as film/video shoots, setting up installations off site and performances) become legally liable for any injury to any person or damage to property caused by your negligent act. A Letter of Indemnity Template is available for download from: scoff.ee.unsw.edu.au/forms/indemnity.pdf
This should be signed by the relevant Lecturer or Head of School.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The UNSW Library has books and multimedia pertinent to the course. Recommended reading and Internet sites will also be provide in lectures & placed in the classwork folder on the COFA server during session. Students are expected to make an effort in following tutors instructions with readings on a week-to-week basis.

CONTINUAL COURSE IMPROVEMENT

Periodically student evaluative feedback on the course is gathered, using among other means, UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) Process. Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. Significant changes to the course will be communicated to subsequent cohorts of students taking the course.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

You may fail the subject if more than 3 absences are recorded. You must actively participate in classes, group assignments and complete all set work. You may fail the subject if you do not submit all set work to a satisfactory standard.

Where, because of illness or misadventure, you cannot hand in an assignment on time, or your work has suffered, you can apply for Special Consideration. For information on Special Consideration see: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

Students who have a disability that requires some adjustment in their teaching or learning environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the course convener prior to, or at the commencement of, their course, or with the Equity Officer (Disability) in the Equity and Diversity Unit (9385 4734 or www.equity.unsw.edu.au/disabil.html). Issues to be discussed may include access to materials, including Library materials, signers or note-takers, the provision of services and additional exam and assessment arrangements. Early notification is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.