Previsualization and Preproduction for Film a.k.a “Written, Produced, and Directed by...”

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fall 2014
ART/FLM 172 - 3 credits
CRNS: 75508/75879
Meets Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:45-11:15, Theatre Room 101 or Music 305

A. Instructor:
Maya Salganek, Assistant Professor
Office Location: 105B Fine Arts/Theatre
Office Phone: (907) 474-5950
Office Hours: M/W 9:30-11:30AM with appointments available at:
http://tinyurl.com/mayaUAF
Or by appointment, check my Google Calendar:
https://sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/salganek
Email: maya@alaska.edu

B. Required Reading & Equipment
  - Available as an ebook from Rasmuson Library
  - http://catalog.library.uaf.edu/uhb?/ps=L4QgeUVA78/UAFRAS/7790006/5/0#
- All students will be required to use Blackboard online at http://classes.uaf.edu
- Any additional readings or films are on reserve at the Rasmuson Library for 2 hour check out or will be posted to Blackboard
- **External hard drive** I highly recommend that all video production students purchase their own external hard drive - at least 200GB (500GB recommended) for storing your video projects. The drive can be formatted for Mac or Mac and PC (using exFAT format), according to your preference. All video projects stored on the department’s computers will be deleted by January 15, 2014.
- **Writing Journal** - In class exercises should be done in writing journal. May be electronic if so desired.

C. Suggested Reading and Resources:
- “Making Short Films” by Clifford Thurlow ISBN: 1845200632
- **Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting** by Robert McKee
  ISBN: 978-0060391683
- **Hero with a Thousand Faces** by Joseph Campbell.
- http://www.frameforge3d.com/kb/ Knowledgebase for FrameForge software
- http://www.simplyscripts.com Thousands of screenplays online for free
D. **Course description:**
Laying a foundation for cinema production, this course will explore screenwriting, storyboarding, previsulization animation, animatics, and film pre-production approaches. This course will focus on developing original stories for animation or dramatic film productions.

**What is Previs?**
"Previs is a collaborative process that generates preliminary versions of shots or sequences, predominantly using 3D animation tools and a virtual environment. It enables filmmakers to visually explore creative ideas, plan technical solutions, and communicate a shared vision for efficient production."

-Definition formulated by the ASC-ADG-VES Joint Technology Subcommittee on Previsualization, 2009.

E. **Goals:**
- Students will learn to write visually for film/television/animation.
- Students will evolve their approach to filmmaking through storyboarding, shot composition, and visual design.
- Students will produce animatics and animated storyboards to express their cinematic ideas.
- Students will be prepared to produce an original film using their ideas developed in this course.

F. **Student Learning Outcomes:**
- Students will write an original screenplay and realize it through storyboarding and animatics with a firm grasp of preproduction requirements.
- Students will understand setting up shots and scenes to match their vision of the film.
- Students will be prepared to launch production of an original film project.

G. **Instructional methods:**
The class will meet for lecture and “hands-on” demonstration and practice of various techniques and exercises.

H. **Course policies:**

1. **Attendance:**
Attendance is mandatory. Class participation and preparation is essential for this course. Your classmates are counting on you! The following points will be issued each class for attendance. Attendance is 10% of your total grade.

   - < 9:45am = 5 pts.
   - 9:45 < 9:50 = 3 pts.
   - > 9:50 = 1 pt.

**Take responsibility for getting assignments or handouts from classmates.** If you miss class for any reason, it’s your responsibility to arrange for a classmate to collect copies of any handouts, or to provide you with information on any assignments, activities, lecture materials, or dates changed. Studies have shown that students who attend class regularly and participate fully, find assignments and exams much easier and more meaningful, and (surprise!) tend to get better grades than those who do not attend class regularly.
Be in class to earn a grade for an in-class activity or exercise. Students will be responsible for presenting and critiquing video material in class, should you miss this portion, you will take a zero for the day. In-class activities and exercises may not be made up at a later date. Missed in-class assignments will need to be performed on your own time, and will be expected in your writing journal. In rare instances, students may have to miss class for a valid, university-sanctioned reason (In general, an absence is considered "official" when the student is: (A) participating in an approved field trip or other official UAF activity [e.g., athletics, music, theater arts]; (B) confirmed under doctor's orders; or (C) granted a leave of absence from UAF for reasonable cause by an academic dean or director). Except for medical emergencies, which require documentation, absences must be approved by the instructor prior to the class session that will be missed. Alternate assignments to make up for any in-class points will be given only for instructor-approved absences.

2. Blackboard/Assignments:
   - All students should access Blackboard at http://www.classes.uaf.edu. I do monitor who has accessed it when, so get online.
   - The “Course Information” folder includes a copy of this syllabus, research materials, software links, and instructor contact information, and instructional videos.
   - Assignments are posted in the Assignments folder, and organized by Week. You are responsible for all the assignments listed there. This syllabus is just an outline for class assignments and developments.

3. Cell Phones:
Cell Phones are helpful tools in film production, but should your cell phone ring during a shoot you will be asked to leave for the day and will receive zero points. If it happened on a working set, you would be fired! Texting is prohibited during class.

4. Equipment:
Film Students have access to check out equipment from the equipment checkout located in Bunnell 101A (Journalism department). Checkout hours TBD. You can look at available equipment at http://lend-items.com. Login with your Facebook account.

5. Editing Labs:
The Alaska Media Center computer lab (Music 305) has 20 imacs or MacPros loaded with Final Cut Pro 7 (Studio 3), Adobe Master Collection CS6, Movie Magic Budgeting & Scheduling, and Avid Media Composer 6 for you to use. The labs also feature Celtx screenwriting software, and FrameForge Previz software for storyboarding and animatics. You will need your polar express card to access the lab. Each entrance to the Lab is recorded, so should there be a problem we know who was in the lab when. Please sign-in and out when you use the computers (so I know how often you were really there editing).
I. Evaluation of Work & Grades

1. Values

All work will be evaluated using a +/- grading system as follows *:

- A+ = 100-97%
- A  = 93-96%
- A- = 90-92%
- B+ = 87-89%
- B  = 83-86%
- B- = 80-82%
- C+ = 77-79%
- C  = 73-76%
- C- = 70-72%
- D+ = 67-79%
- D  = 63-66%
- D- = 60-62%
- F  = 59 - 0%

*NOTE: Film majors are required to achieve a “C-” grade or higher in order to use this course towards graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C+ (2.3)</td>
<td>“C” (including C+ and C-) indicates a satisfactory level of acquired knowledge and performance in completion of course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C (2.0)</td>
<td>C- (1.7) is the minimum acceptable grade that undergraduate students may receive for courses to count toward the major or minor degree requirements, or as a prerequisite for another course. A minimum grade of C (2.0), however, MAY be required by specific programs for prerequisite and / or major / minor courses. Please consult specific program listings in the UAF Catalog.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C- (1.7)</td>
<td>C- (1.7) is the minimum acceptable grade required for all Core (X) Courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+ (1.3)</td>
<td>“D” (including D+ and D-) indicates a minimal level of acquired knowledge and minimal performance in completion of course requirements. This grade does not satisfy requirements for courses in the major, minor, Core, or graduate programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D (1.0)</td>
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<td>D- (.7)</td>
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Value of Assigned Work toward Final Grade:

- Attendance/participation & discussion ................. 10%
- Written assignments ......................................... 50%
- Production Assignments ..................................... 40%
- Final Projects .................................................. 20%
- Total .................................................................... 100%

2. Grading Written and Production Assignments:

The ability to communicate ideas clearly is the cornerstone of a great filmmaker. To demonstrate your vision, you should plan to organize your ideas clearly, use correct grammar, spell words and names correctly, and demonstrate that you’ve thoroughly conceptualized and edited your work. Effort put in to the pre-production will make up for problems during production and post.

All production assignments should be turned in with accompanying production material. Screenplays, storyboards, production schedules, contact sheets, etc.
It’s not "cheating" to ask for opinions and editing skills of others. Instead, the discussion is positive and can bring new insights to your work. The Writing Center (http://www.alaska.edu/english/studentresources/writing/) is available for students to develop their writing skills. Please visit or contact them for assistance, Gruening 801 or 474-5314. For assistance with video production, please consult me, or your production team members.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS** may include:
- Writing journal/in-class writings
- film reviews and film director papers
- play critique from a directorial standpoint
- directorial concept paper/directors’ notes
- screenplays

**PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS** may include:
- storyboards
- animatics
- an illustrated script or prompt book including analysis of script, scenes, characters
- designs, renderings, etc.

3. **Late Papers/Assignments**
ALL ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE SUBMITTED ON TIME OR BE PENALIZED – 5pts FOR EACH LATE DAY. All written assignments, unless otherwise noted, are to be typed double-spaced and attached to assignments on blackboard.

J. **Film Club:** Students are encouraged to participate in the UAF Student Film Club. Meetings take place every Thursday from 1:05-1:55 in the Theatre Green Room.

K. **Disability Services:** The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. I will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (203 WHIT, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. Please notify me immediately if you need special assistance in this class.
**Course calendar:** Tentative schedule. Readings should be completed by the date assigned. All assignments should be reviewed on blackboard where explicit instructions and resource materials will be posted. Items marked with an * are available on Reserve at the Rasmuson Library. All items marked with a † are available via Blackboard to download/print/ and read.

## SCREENWRITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;WELCOME&lt;br&gt;September 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Overview of syllabus. Intro to Screenwriting. <strong>Reading Assignment:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Making Short Films Chapter 1 -The Script †&lt;br&gt;☐ Screenplay by Syd Field, Chapters 1-5 †&lt;br&gt;☐ Sikumi screenplay by Andrew MacLean</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Character is action&lt;br&gt;9/9 &amp; 9/11</td>
<td><strong>Have Read:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Motifs, Heroes, and Enduring Truths&lt;br&gt;☐ Endings/Beginnings/Pivot&lt;br&gt;☐ “Spin” by Double Edge Films&lt;br&gt;☐ Rubber&lt;br&gt;☐ View: Little Miss Sunshine - excerpts †&lt;br&gt;☐ Introduction to Celtx&lt;br&gt;☐ View: Shot by Shot: Pages ix – 6&lt;br&gt;☐ View: Screenplay: Chapters 10-12&lt;br&gt;☐ View: Selected short film scripts on blackboard&lt;br&gt;☐ View: Screenplay: Chapters 6-9</td>
<td><strong>Writing Assignment:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Writing images, showing action. Identifying Character need. <strong>Writing Assignment:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ On Blackboard: Character biographies –DUE next class&lt;br&gt;☐ 3-5 page Dramatic Screenplay – Genre: Dramatic Choice. Due next class. Bring Copies for classmates!</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;9/ 16 &amp; 9/18&lt;br&gt;Story Structure &amp; Metaphor</td>
<td><strong>Write what You Know</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Have Read:&lt;br&gt;☐ End, Begin, and Change&lt;br&gt;☐ View: short films &amp; excerpts&lt;br&gt;☐ Select a second short film&lt;br&gt;☐ Read Script 1 of all students&lt;br&gt;☐ Read Script 2 of all students&lt;br&gt;☐ Read Script 3 of all students&lt;br&gt;☐ Endings/Beginning/Pivot&lt;br&gt;☐ “Spin” by Double Edge Films&lt;br&gt;☐ Rubber&lt;br&gt;☐ Index card scenes – story structure&lt;br&gt;☐ Write 3-5 page Dramatic Screenplay –Genre: Comedy or Tragedy - Due next class&lt;br&gt;☐ DUE: 3 page Dramatic Choice screenplay&lt;br&gt;☐ DUE: Comedy/Tragedy Screenplay</td>
<td><strong>Writing Assignment:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ DUE: Comedy/Tragedy Screenplay</td>
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### Storyboarding & Visual Design

#### Week 4
9/23 & 9/25
Pre-production Design & Storyboarding

- **“Designing the Frame: Shot composition, art design, and visual metaphors”**
  - **DUE:** 5-10 page Dramatic Screenplay - Genre: Your Choice
  - **Have Read:**
    - Shot by Shot: Chapters 2 & 3. Words to Stills to Shots (Empire of the Sun, Citizen Kane, Graduate)
    - **View:** examples of above plus Brother’s Quay, Chel White, David Lynch
  - **Writing Assignment:**
    - Cleanup/expand one of the previous three screenplays, and bring the best one to class with copies next week.

- **Propelling the Action forward with Montage**
  - **Visiting Artist:** Mareca Guthrie
  - **Have Read:**
    - Shot by Shot: Chapters 5-7, 21 & 22
    - Eisenstein’s theories of Montage†.

#### Week 5
9/30 & 10/1
Story to Storyline

- **DUE:** Best screenplay w/ class copies
  - **Have Read:**
    - Screenplay: Chapters 14, 16, 17, 18
    - Shot by Shot: Chapters 4 & 8.
  - **In Class:** Read and review screenplays

#### Week 6
10/7 & 10/9
Previz into Animatics

- **Animatics Introduced with video editing software:**
  - **In Class:** Design meetings
  - **Production Assignment:**
    - Production Assignment: Animatics from Storyboards 1. Due 10/22
  - **DUE:** Photo Storyboards - Class Critique

- **Producing: What and Why?**
  - **Have Read:**
    - Film Production: Chapter 1 - The Production Team,
    - Chapter 2 - The Production Office
    - Chapter 3 - Basic Accounting,
    - Chapter 5 - Incentives
    - Chapter 7 - Insurance Requirements
  - **In Class:** Animatics Production

- **Outsourcing – Finding the right person for the job.**
  - **Have Read:**
    - Film Production: Chapter 9 - Building Relationships
    - Chapter 10 - Deal Memos
    - Chapter 11 - Unions and Guilds,
    - Chapter 12 - Principal Talent;
    - Chapter 13 - Background Talent

#### Week 7
10/14 & 16

- **Final Cut Animatic DUE. Class Critiques.**

- **FrameForge introduced:**
  - Have explored:
    - http://www.frameforge3d.com/watch-demo/
    - http://www.frameforge3d.com/kb/

- **“Reading between the lines” Dialogue & Dramatic Need**
  - **Have Read:**
    - Shot by Shot: Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12 -
| Week 9 10/28 & 30 | **Have Read:**  
- Film Production: Chapter 17: Safety  
- Shot by Shot: Chapters 17-20  

**Staging and Motion options via FrameForge**  

**Production Assignment:**  
Final Animatics, with rendered audio, voice over, credits, soundtrack  
Due Week 15 (12/4) for Critique. |
|---|---|
| Week 10 11/4 & 11/6 | **Budgeting with MovieMagic**  
**Have Read:**  
- Film Production  
  - Chapter 25 - Independent Filmmaking  
  - Chapter 26, Low-Budget Filmmaking  

**Production Assignment:**  
Prepare a preliminary budget for your film. Fantasy version! Due 11/14 |
| Week 11 11/11 & 13 | **Audio & Effects Enhancements:**  
Adding Sound Design to your project. Voice-overs, score, and music rights.  

**Have Read:**  
- Film Production  
  - Chapter 15 - Clearances & Releases  
  - Chapter 16 - Guide to Music Clearance  
  - Chapter 23 - Effects  

**Casting:** What to look for, and how.  
Voice over casting call. Preliminary readings for production casting. |
| Week 12 11/18 & 20 | **Wiggle Room** |
| Week 13 11/25 | **Sharing and Exporting your projects**  
**Have Read:**  
- Film Production  
  - Chapter 29 - Wrap  
  - Chapter 30 - Post Production Overview  

**Production Preparations: Script Breakdown & Scheduling**  
**Have Read:**  
- Film Production:  
  - Chapter 4 - From Script to Schedule  
  - Chapter 6 - Pre-Production  

**Production Assignment:**  
Do a script breakdown for classmate’s film. Include a budget and breakdown sheets. Due 11/8.  
**DUE:** 3D Animatic Exercise (Blue Bead) |
| Week 14 | **The Future Job**  
**Patience or Broadcast?** |
| 12/2 & 4 | **Have Read:**  
**Film Production**  
☐ Chapter 27 - New Media,  
☐ Chapter 28 - Commercial Production  
☐ Chapter 31 - Greener Filmmaking  
☐ Chapter 32 - Industry Survival Tips | **Have Read:**  
☐ *Shot by Shot: Chapter 23*  
Avatar to the Max. Without a box. Self-publishing vs. Distribution vs. hulu. Can you go viral? |
|---|---|
| **Week 15**  
**12/9 & 11** | **Critique of Final Previz Animatics.** | **Critique of Final Previz Animatics.** |
| **FINAL EXAM** | 8 - 10 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 18  
**FINAL FILM SCREENING for Public**  
Screenplay & Production notebooks due. |