Course Overview
Seminar in professional filmmaking techniques leading to the completion of an original narrative film.

This is an advanced, project-based film production course, involving active student participation in story development, pre-production, sync sound super-16mm production, digital post and product preparation, with equal discussion of conceptual, technical and aesthetic concerns.

Course Objectives
It is my hope that this will be a significant learning experience, not only in your understanding of the individual elements of the filmmaking process, but also in your understanding of the process as a whole – a process that hinges on self-knowledge, critical thinking, decision-making and being adaptive.

Afterwards, you should have what it takes to survive in any production environment, and feel confident initiating your own projects without Towson’s guidance. You will also begin to form an effective portfolio, which you will use to generate future opportunities.

By design, you will be given much control over the course. I am not here to disseminate information. My job is to facilitate the discoveries and progress you make, as filmmakers.

Groups
The class will divide into groups, and each group will produce a short film. Each group will be allowed at least five days of production. Each student will assume an above-the-line position (producer, director, DP, production designer, sound recordist/editor), thereby sharing a level of the project’s ownership. The writer can be anyone/all in the group. After finishing the script, the writer must assume another above-the-line position. You will be allowed to form your own groups, choose your project amongst the group, and lobby for your desired crew position during an in-class film marketplace.

The Films
As with any filmmaking endeavor, there will be a finite amount of resources available to you (time, money, equipment, crew, etc.). It is unreasonable and ultimately a waste of time, money and opportunity to stretch your production too far beyond the extent of your resources. To make a film twice as long but ½ the desired quality, is not what we will practice in the course. I will not allow any film to progress into production that is not ready or feasible.

Class meetings/group meetings/weekly assignments
Because the class will be quickly divided into groups and groups divided into positions, it will be difficult to conduct a class that pertains to everyone’s current tasks. As a result, class time will become an opportunity to explore specialized topics in film style/technique,
conduct workshops and equipment demonstrations, and have time for class discussion on production problems/solutions that all may benefit from.

I am going to require that each group regularly meet with me to touch base and discuss issues, specific to your film.

**Required Texts**
None

**Recommended Texts**


**Assignments**
All assignments will be accompanied by a handout, explaining requirements in more detail.  **All deadlines are nonnegotiable.** Graded assignments will be returned to students within a reasonable period of time.

**The Production Notebook**
The producer bears great responsibility within the group.  His/her efforts are clearly tied to the success of every aspect of the film’s production.  The production notebook is one of the primary means of gauging the group’s success during pre-production (25% of total grade – for each group member).  Not only does the success of the film rest squarely on producers, but they play a great role in determining the group’s grade as well.

**Grading**
Individual grades will be determined using a combination of group and personal evaluation.  Specifically, 65% (see table below) of an individual’s overall grade comes from an evaluation of the group’s film and related materials.  The remaining 35% is determined by the individual’s performance.  If one person within the group is delinquent in his/her duties, and subsequently the whole project suffers, I will take that into account when determining the grades of others in the affected group, who have otherwise been performing well.

<p>| Development/pre-production (incl. Treatment, step outline, rough/final drafts, storyboards, breakdowns, location assignment, production notebook) | 25% |
| Final Film (evidencing progress in production/post-production) | 40% |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation (attitude, group participation)</th>
<th>15%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual presentation (note: producers’ credit will come from prod. ntbk.)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 93-100%  C 70-75%
A- 90-92%    D 60-69% (Does not count toward major)
B+ 87-89%    F 0-59% (Does not count toward major)
B 83-86%
B- 80-82%
C+ 76-79%

Attendance
You get one (1) absence free of charge. For every absence thereafter, I lower your grade by three (3) points. Late arrivals are just as sinful in our work. Each will cost three (3) points. If you need to leave class early for a reasonable circumstance, you must arrange that in advance – otherwise early departures will result in a 3-point penalty.

Academic Integrity
The EMF Department adheres to the Towson University “Student Academic Integrity Policy.” Any form of cheating or plagiarism is prohibited in the policy. Please visit www.towson.edu/student life/judicialaffairs/academicintegrity.html for details. Any violation of this policy will result in a failing grade for the course.

Disability Note
Requirements for EMF Department classes follow Towson University’s disability policy; see www.towson.edu/dss for details. Any student who may need accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment to see the instructor during the first week of class. A memo from the Disability Support Services authorizing your accommodation will be required.

Course Schedule

Week 1
Course overview
Short film screenings
Workshop ideas/the “pitch”
Equipment tutorial
**Weekly Assignment:** story treatments; prepare your pitch.

Week 2
VML procedures
Pitching your idea, and choosing your groups/roles – *film marketplace*
Prospectus
Equipment tutorial
**Weekly Assignments:** **Writer** – research/step outline. **Producer** – Create the production notebook; prospectus; Rea/Irving, p. 3-7; 25-29.

Week 3
Producing the short film – Breaking down the script/Producing forms
Equipment tutorial
**Weekly Assignments:** **Writer** – 1st draft. **Producer** – Rea/Irving, p 31-38.
**Director** – Choose one film (can be from any genre/era); prepare a 10 minute presentation on the director’s use of film language to communicate information and/or elicit emotion, using segments from the film as a visual aid. DUE 10/110% of total grade.

**DP** – Find and read 1 article from *American Cinematographer*; prepare a 10 minute presentation on the DP/film for the class using segments from the film and overhead diagrams (the assignment will be explained in a detailed handout) Due: 10/1. 10% of total grade.

**editors** – Choose one film (can be from any genre/era); prepare a 10 minute presentation on the editor’s use of his/her craft/art to communicate information and/or elicit emotion. Use segments from the film as a visual aid. Due 10/1 10% of total grade.

**Week 4**

Film language

Equipment tutorial

**Weekly Assignments:**

**Writer** – Script revisions

**Producer** – Script breakdown (lining the script/breakdown pages); Rea/Irving, p47-60 & 91-99; Schedule production; location surveys (these are due prior to entering production – varies by group); update notebook.

**Director** – production prep; continue work on presentation.

**DP** – Production prep; Continue work on presentation.

**editor** -- Continue work on presentation.

**Week 5**

Class presentations – Directors, DP’s and Editors

Equipment tutorial

**Weekly Assignments:**

**Group 1** – Prepare to shoot (meet with me).

**Group 2** – Final pre-production arrangements and script revisions.

**Groups 3/4** – pre-production arrangements and script revisions.

**PRODUCTION MONTH – GROUPS 1-4 WILL CYCLE THROUGH 5-6 DAY PRODUCTION SCHEDULES—See attached production schedule for specifics.**

**GROUPS MUST SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH ME THE WEEK OF THEIR PRODUCTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF EQUIPMENT.**

**Week 6**

VML technology/workflow review (EDITORS REQUIRED)

**Weekly Assignments:**

**Group 1** - Send film to lab/modern video.

**Group 2** - Prepare to shoot (meet with me)

**Group 3** - Final pre-production arrangements and script revisions.

**Group 4** - Pre-production arrangements and script revisions.

**Week 7**

Group Meetings – Times TBD

**Group 1** - Assembly edit

**Group 2** - Send film to lab/modern video.

**Group 3** - Prepare to shoot (meet with me)

**Group 4** - Pre-production arrangements and script revisions.

**Week 8**

Group Meetings – Times TBD

**Weekly Assignments:**

**Group 1** - edit (con’t)
**Group 2** - Assembly edit  
**Group 3** - Send film to lab/modern video.  
**Group 4** - Prepare to shoot (meet with me)

**Week 9**  
**Group Meetings** – Times TBD  
**Weekly Assignments:**  
**Group 1** - edit  
**Group 2** - edit  
**Group 3** - assembly edit  
**Group 4** - Send film to lab/modern video.

**Week 10**  
Discussion – Festival preparation and strategy. Film distribution.  
**Assignment:** Using “withoutabox.com, register your film, create a profile/press kit and identify 3 potential festivals to enter. Personal essay (The assignment will be detailed in a handout; this is due. This is assignment is worth 10% or your grade.)

**POST MONTH. BY THIS POINT, ALL GROUPS ARE THROUGH PRINCIPLE PHOTOGRAPHY. WHILE YOUR FILM IS BEING PROCESSED YOU WILL ARRANGE FOR A SUPERVISED TRANSFER AT MODERN VIDEO.**

**INDIVIDUAL ISSUES/PROBLEMS IN POST-PRODUCTION CAN BE ADDRESSED IN OUT-OF-CLASS MEETINGS WITH ME. I CAN VISIT DURING YOUR EDITING SESSIONS AND HELP YOU THROUGH ANY PROBLEMS YOU MAY HAVE. PLEASE SCHEDULE THESE MEETINGS IN ADVANCE IF POSSIBLE!**

**Week 11**  
Discussion – Festival preparation and strategy (con’t); Career strategy  
**Weekly Assignments:** Edit; Personal essay.

**Week 12**  
Group consultations and post-production critiques  
**Assignments:** Edit; Personal essay.

**Week 13**  
Group consultations and post-production critiques  
**Assignments:** Edit; Personal essay.

**Week 14**  
Group consultations and post-production critiques  
**Assignments:** Edit; Personal essay.

**Week 15**  
Instructor evaluations  
**Assignments:** Edit; Personal essay.

**ALL FINAL FILMS, PRODUCTION NOTEBOOKS AND PERSONAL ESSAYS ARE DUE 3:30PM NO EXCEPTIONS!**

**7PM - FINAL SCREENING – LOCATION TBA**

**Instructor’s Notes/other information**

**Time/effort commitment**  
This will be a time/effort intensive course during certain parts of the semester. As noted above you will have many commitments outside of class, especially during production. If
you can’t commit to this semester’s schedule please reconsider taking the course or waiting for a semester when you can devote more time.

**Monetary Commitment**
Filmmaking costs $$. I cannot accurately gauge how much you will spend on your film (ultimately up to you & your group), but basic film cost, lab expenses and various expendables will range between $500-$1000/person, depending on how long your film is. This doesn’t take into account transportation, food, props, etc. If you are concerned with this or anticipate difficulty, please talk with me as soon as possible.

**Post-production requirements – YOU MUST BUY YOUR OWN HARD DRIVE**
All post-production will be conducted on AVID XpressDV or Final Cut Pro. All media will be stored on your own external drives.

**RESPECTING EQUIPMENT and the VML**
ANY ABUSE OF EMF EQUIPMENT, BORNE OF NEGLECT OR MALICE, WILL AFFECT YOUR GRADE. HONEST MISTAKES WILL HAPPEN AND IT IS IN YOUR BEST INTEREST TO BE HONEST AT ALL TIMES REGARDING DAMAGE. REPORT ALL MALFUNCTIONS/DAMAGE IMMEDIATELY.

ALL EQUIPMENT POLICIES AND MANUALS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE THROUGH THE EMF WEBSITE - YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO PRINT OUT SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS/MANUALS DURING THE COURSE.

**Film Stock and Lab**
You will be responsible for purchasing film stock from KODAK or Fuji as well as arranging for processing through COLORLAB. You will be required to do a supervised transfer with Colorlab or Modern Video in Philadelphia. Details to be discussed.

This syllabus is subject to change during the course to better meet student needs and accommodate any unforeseen circumstances. All changes to the course structure will be accompanied by a typed amendment and will be distributed to all students.
Seminar in Narrative Film

Student Production Schedule

Student groups must set specific times with VML Supervisor:

**GROUP #1**
Tuesday
PICK-UP

Monday
RETURN

**GROUP #2**
Wednesday
PICK-UP

Tuesday
RETURN

**GROUP #3**
Thursday
PICK-UP

Wednesday
RETURN

**GROUP #4**
Friday
PICK-UP

Thursday
RETURN

**Group #5 (pick-up or re-shoots if needed)**
Monday
PICK-UP

Monday
RETURN