

LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Spring Semester 2019

Fundamentals of Story FD143

2 Units

Marshall Vandruff

Fridays 6 – 10 PM

BB 14

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FUNDAMENTALS OF STORY for Animation Majors, FD143

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To learn the craft of storytelling, especially as it applies to filmmaking and animation. This includes identifying character and story components, understanding how master storytellers work, developing and pitching ideas, and taking concepts through final production as short films.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to analyze a story's structure, pitch a story idea, write in screenplay format, create a story reel using Adobe Premiere, and apply classic storytelling skills to a finished film.

EVALUATION & GRADING CRITERIA:

MIDTERM (March 15):

One-Minute Film (Hello or Goodbye) without dialogue 20 points
Class participation (includes attendance, attention, involvement, and homework criteria) 20 points

INTERIM (April 26):

Classic Story Reboot: Pitch with Poster 10 points

FINAL (May 17):

Three-Minute Live Action Film 25 points
Class participation (includes attendance, attention, involvement, and weekly homework) 25 points

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS FOR COURSE 100 points

To make the most of our formal class time, commit to full attention with electronic media off.

Late work receives no credit. Treat directions and deadlines as professionals. See *How to Present Your Slides*.

MIDTERM PROJECT:

One-Minute Film without dialogue based on Hello/Goodbye theme.

Your film can include sound effects, music, or remain silent, but no dialogue.

It can be a "hello" or a "goodbye" or both, or an ironic or creative treatment.

It can be an introduction to a character or place, an arrival or departing, a birth or death.

It must be edited to exactly one minute (not counting credits). See technical criteria in *How to Present Your Movies*.

INTERIM PROJECT:

Classic Story Reboot:

Choose a classic movie or story from the master list.

Brainstorm ideas (this class will help you via homework) for how you would like to retell it.

Develop an idea to pitch in one minute: Two kinds of log-lines, and a poster design. Sell us!

Fit all of this onto one slide, as if you were designing an ad to investors.

FINAL PROJECT:

Three-Minute Live Action Film

Brainstorm and develop three log-lines for possible short films. Pitch them on April 5.

Choose one to develop into screenplay format. Storyboard it. Prepare for production. Produce it.

Movies can be shot with DSLR cameras checked out from I.T., and edited with school software.

MATERIALS & SUPPLIES: This class requires the use of digital cameras and editing software:

If you shoot your movie with a smart-phone, you need the app *Filmic Pro* (\$15).

If you would like to use a DSLR camera, it can be checked out at the IT desk.

Editing must be done in Adobe Premiere (free access on school computers).

The usual pencil, pen, and paper skills for ideating.

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Fundamentals of Story is an introductory course to storytelling principles and the elements of film language. The class covers the relationship between character and story, structure, establishing empathy/enmity, the role of conflict, and communicating emotions in a visual medium. The emphasis is on understanding the common components of all stories and using them to hook, involve, and satisfy an audience with a credible and emotionally effective ending.

FUNDAMENTALS OF STORY: Spring 2019 COURSE SCHEDULE/TIMELINE:

- Feb 1: Introduction to Storytelling. Course Outline. Character Types.
Assignments: Watch **Paper Moon (1973)** with other students and discuss. Watch **Bart the Daredevil**. Draw or caricature 3-6 “types” you know, like, dislike, or want to include in stories. Post on one slide. Review this outline, especially HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK, and use the uploading checklist.
- Feb 8: **Bart the Daredevil**: Desire, Conflict & Reversals. Story Ideation & Structure. Collaborators.
Assignments: Watch **Groundhog Day (1993)** with students and discuss. Read chapter one of Save The Cat. Brainstorm conflicts and challenges for your characters. Post three ideas on one 1920x1080 slide by Feb 14 at 11pm.
- Feb 15: Story Exercises: Brainstorming & Revision. Premises. Choices, Risks, and Rising Stakes. Camera Experiments.
Assignments: Watch **Bullets Over Broadway (1994)** with students and discuss. Watch **Krusty Gets Busted**. Begin to collect commercials. Brainstorm rising stakes (“How extreme can this get?”) for your film. Prepare to discuss.
- Feb 22: **Krusty Gets Busted**: Setups & Payoffs. Technology & Film Style. Commercials.
Read chapter two (pages 21-44) of Save The Cat. Watch **The Artist (2011)** with students and discuss. Prepare commercials to share. Brainstorm setups/payoffs for your film. Prepare beat-sheet for shots, post on one slide.
- March 1: **Festival of Commercials 1**. Short Film Technical Training (Filmic Pro, Canon DSLR). Adobe Premiere.
Shoot Non-Dialogue “Hello/Goodbye” Short (one-minute). Prepare links or files of favorite commercials or short films.
- March 8: **Festival of Commercials 2 and Short-Films** for Inspiration.
Edit one-minute Hello/Goodbye Non-Dialogue Short. Prepare to show video in class (but don’t post it).
- March 15: MIDTERM**: “Hello/Goodbye” One-Minute Short.
Watch **Bart Gets an F**. Read chapter three (pages 47-64) of Save The Cat. Revise the order of Pixar’s 22 Maxims. Brainstorm at least 40 three-minute short-film ideas, with option to post any that you would like to discuss. Brainstorm Rebooted Classic ideas. Post 1–3 rough Rebooted Classic ideas on one slide by March 28.
- March 22: NO CLASS - Spring Break
- March 29: **Bart Gets an F**: Protagonist Responsibility. The Pixar List. Story & Scene Analyses: Tools & Techniques.
Develop Log-Lines for your short film. Create a reversal chart or “fortune dynamics” graph.
Post three short-film Log-Lines with simple fortune graphs on one slide by April 4 at 11pm for discussion in class.
- April 5: Crit of Log Lines. Screenwriting Format.
Read chapter six (pages 119-140) of Save The Cat. Seek storyboard-to-screen examples of your favorite shows or films. Select one pitch. Write it as a three-minute (three page) screenplay. Post screenplay by April 11 as a pdf. Develop one Rebooted Classic idea. Post on one jpg slide by April 11 at 11pm.
- April 12: Rebooted Classics. Storyboarding.
Read chapter seven of Save The Cat. Storyboard your film in prep for story reel.
Post storyboard as jpgs by April 18 on as few slides as readable. Include one slide that contains all frames.
- April 19: **Film Screening TBA**. Camera, Image, and Shot Structure.
Revise your storyboard to empower your key shots. If you want feedback, post revisions by April 25.
- April 26: **Film Screening TBA**. Story Reels. Music & Audio Mixing.
Rough 3-minute story reel with temp audio. Can include shot footage. Bring files into class to show on May 3.
- May 3: **Film Screening TBA**. Story Reels. Pace, Tension, and Timing.
Shoot your footage. Edit rough cut of Three-Minute Live-Action Short. Prepare to show work in progress as needed.
- May 10: Open Lab and Workshop

Prepare final cut of Live Action Short (3 minutes) for Final.

May 17: FINAL PRESENTATIONS: Live-Action Short (3 Minutes)

* Not all classic films are worth your time, but I recommend this short list related to the themes of this class.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)
Casablanca (1942)
Double Indemnity (1944)
Twelve Angry Men (1956)
Dr. Strangelove (1964)
Paper Moon (1973)
The Verdict (1982)
Midnight Run (1988)
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988)
Misery (1990)
Groundhog Day (1993)
Fresh (1994)
Bullets Over Broadway (1994)
The Artist (2011)

For **Classic Reboot** project, choose stories that are old or in the public domain. Recommendations:

Alice in Wonderland
Sherlock Holmes
Little Nemo in Slumberland
Dracula
Frankenstein
High Noon
Robin Hood
King Arthur
Little Red Riding Hood
The Time Machine
War of the Worlds
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
The Count of Monte Cristo
The Scarlett Letter
Robinson Crusoe
Peter Pan
Journey To The Center of the Earth
Romeo and Juliet
The Phantom of the Opera
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
Rip Van Winkle
Treasure Island
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
Myths, Bible Stories, Parables, Fairy Tales, Folk Tales, Songs... but they must be in the Public Domain.

SUGGESTED TEXTS:

STORY by Robert McKee
MAKING MOVIES by Sidney Lumet
THE SECRETS OF STORY by Matt Bird
ACTING WITHOUT AGONY by Don Richardson
THE ART OF DRAMATIC WRITING by Lajos Egri
MAKING A GOOD SCRIPT GREAT by Linda Seger

CREATIVE FILMMAKING FROM THE INSIDE OUT by Dannenbaum, Hodge & Mayer
REBEL WITHOUT A CREW by Robert Rodriguez. Inspiring! A model for success.
REQUIRED TEXT: SAVE THE CAT by Blake Snyder

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR SLIDES:

Weekly Homework and Projects: Upload digital files at this page on Thursday nights previous to class by 11 pm:

PRIVATE

If the above link doesn't work, *copy and paste* the URL. Once it works, bookmark the Dropbox link to upload weekly homework.

LAYOUTS: 1920 x 1080 horizontal slides, because the display screen is horizontal.

Lay out images to delete excess white space. In other words, make it easy to see things on the page.

Include the fewest pages possible, but rather than overcrowd a page, break it up into separate pages.

RESOLUTION: Make all files 1920 wide x 1080 pixels high.

DPI is not relevant for presentation. Pixel dimensions are. 1920 x 1080!

If you need more space, or to "zoom in" for details, present extra 1920x1080 images.

FILE FORMATS & NAMING: Submit images as *jpeg* files with three-letter extension *.jpg* (no *e*).

"jpeg compress" the files efficiently (between 8 -11), but not so low that it damages the image (like 6 or lower).

Include your name in two places:

1) On the image, integrated into the pixels, like with a promo piece.

Include semester and year on Midterm and Final (though its a good habit to always include them)

2) As first part of file name, no spaces. Use underscores (not hyphens) for necessary divisions.

For example: MarshallVandruff_StoryPitch_01.jpg

Give each file a unique name. If you name a file MyProject_Design.jpg each week, it overwrites your previous image.

Frank Guthrie has presented short YouTube videos for his class that use similar criteria as ours:

DART 001 Part 1 - File Creation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzgjvO4X7TI>

DART 001 Part 2 - Naming & Export: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5fExrI08Ds>

UPLOADING CHECKLIST: **IMPORTANT! This determines whether your work will be seen and credited.**

- Δ The layouts are efficient and images read clearly on the screen
- Δ The image has your name embedded into the pixels on each frame
- Δ The file is 1920 x 1080, RGB, jpeg file with the extension .jpg (no "e" in jpg)
- Δ The file name begins with your name, no spaces or hyphens - underscores only
- Δ The atomic clock says the time is previous to 11 pm on Thursday night before the homework is due

MAKE IT EASY! Go to this URL and download a ready-made template:

<http://marshallart.com/SHOP/misc-pages/assignments/template/>

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR MOVIES:

Unless we find a convenient way to upload movies, bring them on flash keys or any quick-transfer medium to the class computer. Follow the same naming conventions. For example:

MyName_ShortFilm_MyBestWorkV4.mov (MOV's or MP4's only)

Criteria: Quicktime 1920 x 1080, H.264 codec, AAC audio, 24 frames per second, progressive scan, square pixels.

Start on a blank frame: Transition into your film any way you like (fade in, cut in, pop in...) but start empty.

If your file exports at 250 mb or more (it will show you at the base of the Export window), choose Medium Bitrate in the Preset pop-up menu (near the top) to bring it down in size.

You should create correct settings when you open your NEW SEQUENCE, and you *must* create correct settings when you EXPORT. Check and double-check *Summary: Output* in the Export window to be sure.

Remember that the technical criteria are non-negotiables... Your work must meet these specs. If it does not, or if it is late, you do not receive credit for it. If in doubt, or if you are not yet digitally competent, ask for help.