

Moving Image Editing: Theory & Practice

COURSE DETAILS

Course Designator and Number: LNDN 3255

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: On-Site Faculty

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Moving images are ubiquitous. As one of the most pervasive manifestations of the digital age, they broke out with the confines of the cinema theatre and show up on the multitude of screens around us. Just as we are surrounded by many forms of the audio-visual, we also encounter a multitude of editing practices. From blockbusters to YouTube videos, we experience images that are carefully selected and artfully cut in a way that is entertaining, persuasive, or simply moving.

The course is designed to introduce students to the theory, practice, and art of editing. It intertwines historical accounts of editing practice with media analysis and hands-on exercises. Each of the first nine sessions is devoted to one of the key concepts that illuminates intersections between media and culture: conversation, gaze, action, persuasion, story, beat, humour, metaphor, and voice. Each session is then divided into three distinctive parts. The first uses film excerpts to showcase editing devices employed in relation to the theme of the class. The second introduces a theoretical understanding of the pertinent editing procedures and instigates a discussion around them. In the last part of the session, students will use a pre-selected set of clips to create their own edit.

The course is based on an innovative approach to editing techniques that sees them in a close dialogue with the underlying cultural phenomena that shape the current media landscape.

Course Objectives

The primary goal of the course is to teach students a breadth of editing techniques in a way that informs practice with a theoretical understanding of editing and within its historical context.

Learning Outcomes

- a. Developing technical skills in moving image editing;
- b. Broadening knowledge of media history;
- c. Learning a selection of media theories;
- d. Enhancing skills in critical analysis of media;
- e. Producing a visual essay;
- f. Producing a portfolio showcasing editing skills.

Methodology

Each session will have a practical component, and there will be a screening of film excerpts at the beginning of the class. There will also be some reading assignments, and we will discuss readings in class.

Required Readings/Materials

- Nora M. Alter, *Translating the Essay into Film and Installation*, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol 6, Issue 1, 2007.
- Aumont, Jacques. *Montage*. Montreal: caboose, 2014.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977.
- Bergson, Henri Louis. 2016. *Laughter*. Read Books Ltd. mylibrary.com?id=930589.
- Bricca, Jacob. *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Eisenstein, Sergei. 'Vertical Montage.' In S. M. Eisenstein. *Selected Works. Volume II, Towards a Theory of Montage*, 327–399. London: BFI Publishing, 1991.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003.
- Keathley, Christian and Jason Mittell, ed. *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image*. Montreal: caboose, 2016.
- Mulvey, Laura. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833–44.
- Murch, Walter. In *the Blink of An Eye. A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Silman–James Press, 2001.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.
- Pearlman, Karen. *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*. New York: Focal Press, 2016.

Recommended Readings

- Fairservice, Don. *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Grimshaw, Anna. 2008. *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Modern Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin and David J. Heeger, 'Neurocinematics: the Neuroscience of Film,' *Projections 2*, issue 1 (Summer 2008): 1–26.
- Phelan, James. 1996. *Narrative as rhetoric: technique, audiences, ethics, ideology*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter grade	Score or percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of grade
Editing portfolio	20%
Participation & attendance	10%
Written assignment	25%
Audio-visual essay	45%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Editing portfolio: During each class, students will learn an editing technique and have an opportunity to create their own short edits. These will be assessed as students' individual portfolio at the end of the course.

Grade: 20%

Participation and attendance: Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions.

Grade: 10%

Written assignment: Students will write a 2,000-word essay analysing editing devices employed in a film of their choice.

Grade: 25%

Audio-visual essay: At the end of the course, students will create an audio-visual essay about the selected concepts discussed in class.

Grade: 45%

COURSE CONTENT

Unit 1

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Murch, Walter. In *the Blink of An Eye. A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2 nd ed. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001.
- **Conversation**
 - This session will start off by discussing research on naturally occurring conversations that has been developed in sociology and linguistics (conversation analysis). This will be followed by a detail analysis of the shot-reverse-shot technique and the way editors use this basic cutting structure to modify or punctuate the content of a filmed conversation. The session will finish with an overview of the available editing software and a practical exercise in editing a dialogue sequence.

Unit 2

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Berger, John. 2008. *Ways of seeing: [based on the BBC television series]*. London: Penguin.
 - Mulvey, Laura. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999: 833-44.
- **Recommended reading**
 - Grimshaw, Anna. 2008. *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Modern Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- **Gaze**
 - Following a metaphor of the kino-eye, this session will look at the embeddedness of the prosthetic apparatus of cinema in gender, race, and class politics. The practical component of the session will focus on editing POV shots, working with the off-screen space and the question of editorial selection as a tool of semiotic emphasis.

Unit 3

- **Recommended reading**
 - Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin and David J. Heeger, 'Neurocinematics: the Neuroscience of Film,' *Projections 2*, issue 1 (Summer 2008): 1-26.
- **Action**
 - A theoretical part of the session will examine human movement and the neuroscientific explanation of our perception of action. Students will

then learn techniques of cutting on action, maintaining the screen direction, and editing dance scenes.

Unit 4

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Aumont, Jacques. *Montage*. Montreal: caboose, 2014.
 - Keathley, Christian and Jason Mittell, ed. *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image*. Montreal: caboose, 2016.
- **Persuasion**
 - This session looks at theories of montage and how one can construct arguments using a series of images. It will also examine the principles of rhetoric as a form of discourse and the methodology of videographic criticism.

Unit 5

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Bricca, Jacob. *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- **Recommended reading**
 - Phelan, James. 1996. *Narrative as rhetoric: technique, audiences, ethics, ideology*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- **Story**
 - The aim of this session is to draw connections between editing devices and the way audiences respond to narratives in terms of their intellectual and emotional engagement. The focus is on constructing continuities in the editing material and the ways of synchronizing their effects.

Unit 6

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Pearlman, Karen. *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*. New York: Focal Press, 2016.
 - Eisenstein, Sergei. 'Vertical Montage.' In S. M. Eisenstein. *Selected Works. Volume II, Towards a Theory of Montage*, 327–399. London: BFI Publishing, 1991.
- **Beat**
 - This session explores the idea of a 'beat' as a notion that can be used to describe musical, narrative, and graphic elements of the moving images. It will also seek to present editing as an art of orchestrating audio-visual components. The practical part of the session will have emphasis on editing sound and music.

Unit 7

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Bergson, Henri Louis. 2016. *Laughter*. Read Books Ltd. myilibrary.com?id=930589.
- **Humour**
 - When and why do we laugh? What is the social role of laughter? Examining these questions will be followed by a close analysis of comic scenes in a wide selection of works, which will help to elucidate how cutting produces or enhances comic effects.

Unit 8

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003.
 - Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977.
- **Metaphor**
 - Metaphor is more than a figure of speech. It is a way of structuring knowledge. This session will begin with a broad discussion of the ways in which our thinking is predicated on metaphoric constructs. We will also discuss practical implications of what Barthes called 'the third meaning.' In the last part of the session, students will create their own cinematic metaphors.

Unit 9

- **Required reading [excerpts]**
 - Nora M. Alter, *Translating the Essay into Film and Installation*, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol 6, Issue 1, 2007.
 - Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- **Voice**
 - In the first half of the session, students will consider the various forms of the essayistic filmmaking. The second half of the session will focus on practical and creative aspects of editing voice.

Unit 10

- Tutorials
- In this session, students will have an opportunity to develop their ideas for the final project, an audio-visual essay.

Unit 11

- Colour grading/sound mixing/tutorials
- The first half of the session will be devoted to the final stages of post-production: mixing sound and colour grading. In the second half, students will receive feedback on the rough cuts of their final projects.

Unit 12

- Presentation to the whole cohort

POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.