

## **COM2301: Video Production**

Tuesdays, 3:00pm to 5:50pm (Semester A, 2016/2017) – M4003 [Section C01]

Tuesdays, 7:00pm to 9:50pm (Semester A, 2016/2017) – M5050 [Sections C02 & CP1]

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**Office hours:** Tuesdays, 12pm to 1pm & 5pm to 6pm - M5062

### **Course Description**

The main goal of this course is to provide you with an introduction to producing professional digital video content for the mass media (advertising, documentaries, news reporting and current affairs, digital media and public relations). Through extended hands-on training, it will lay the foundations in video production that you will need in future courses that will equip you with much more in-depth knowledge regarding the different stages (pre-production, production and postproduction), elements (video, audio, text) and formats (short stories, documentaries, news reports, commercials, public service announcements...). Moreover, this course will not only provide you an overview of different methods and techniques, but it will also provide you with resources that will help you to independently learn more about those aspects of video production that are interesting to you in the future.

Although this is not an editing, filmmaking or video-directing course, by the end of the semester you will have acquired the basic skills and confidence to independently design, shoot and edit video for the mass media. More specifically, in this course you will (1) learn how to prepare a video shoot by creating a shot list, drafting a storyboard and writing a treatment; (2) you will become familiar with shot styles, shot composition and video manipulation as you learn basic techniques in shooting and editing; and, (3) you will learn how to export and disseminate your video productions and tailor them to different media.

### **Expectations**

This course is oriented towards practice. What this means is that, yes, we will go through some of the most important theoretical concepts, but, most importantly, we will be spending time shooting and editing video, analyzing other people's work and discussing how to improve your own work.

By joining this course you and me go into an informal contract. I commit myself to (1) providing you with as many opportunities as possible to practice what we learn in class; (2) offering you feedback to each of your assignments; (3) making extra exercises, drills and samples available to you whenever needed; and, (4) monitoring your progress so that, by the end of the course, we can both agree that your video shooting and editing skills have improved. In return, all I want is that you set aside enough time each week to complete the assignments, finish the readings and review what we learn in class. Isn't that a simple formula?

### Learning outcomes

By the time you complete this course, you should be able to tick all of the following learning outcomes:

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge and skills of managing the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production;
- 2) Describe the meanings of various shot styles and analyze shot composition and video structure;
- 3) Apply the knowledge and skills of video editing in video production;
- 4) Produce videos in various formats for different purposes of mass communication

### Required Text

There is no text for this course.

### Recommended Texts and Resources

The following are some good resources that cover part of the content of the course. All of them are available at the library. I have request for some of these books to be put on reserve so you will not be able to check them out for more than one day. For some of the books, older editions are available. If you check older editions, keep in mind that anything published earlier than 2005 will be considerably outdated.

- Owens, J., & Millerson, G. (2012). *Video production handbook* (5th ed.). Burlington: Focal Press.
- Schenk, S., & Long, B. (2012). *The digital filmmaking handbook* (4th ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Zettl, H. (2013). *Video basics 7 + workbook* (7th ed.). Singapore: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

On top of the textbooks above, the following two websites have excellent video tutorials that can complement what we will learn in class.

- [Adobe Premiere Pro CC Tutorials](#)
- [Lynda.com](#) (you can request access through CityU by following [this link](#))

### Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. This is a beginner's course to video production. If you have experience in shooting or editing video/audio that will come as an added advantage, but if you have no previous experience, do not panic: we will get you to the end of the semester alive.

### Language of instruction

English will be the only language of instruction for this section and all of the assignments will have to be completed in English. You are free to interview people in Cantonese and Mandarin for your projects, but if you do so, keep in mind that you must include English subtitles.

**Equipment and software**

All required equipment (DSLR cameras, tripods, microphones) and editing software for this course will be provided to you by the Department. You are able to borrow equipment and access the editing rooms as students of this course. Because equipment is in high demand, I would strongly recommend that you acquired your own camera. We will be using digital SLR cameras (digital single-lens reflex cameras) for this course. The model available at the Department is Canon EOS 600D. As DSLR cameras are becoming increasingly inexpensive, you might want to consider purchasing one for your studies and future work.

The preferred audio and video editing tools for the course are Adobe Premiere, Adobe Audition and Adobe After Effects, all of which you can use for free at the Department. If you are familiar with other professional tools such as Final Cut or Avid Media Composer, you are welcome to use them for your assignments. A quality, open source and free alternative acceptable for an introductory course like this is OpenShot Video Editor, available for Mac, Windows and Linux (<http://www.openshot.org>). It comes with a good manual and is fairly easy to use. Note, however, that available functions are more limited.

Students will be requested to compensate for the damaged equipment. Those who fail to pay for the compensation will not be allowed to borrow any equipment and their course grades will be assigned as “I” (Incomplete) until the payments are settled.

**Canvas and Drive/YouTube**

We will be using Canvas as the main tool to communicate during the semester (<https://canvas.cityu.edu.hk>). Please make sure to login regularly to Canvas and to keep an eye on your CityU email address. After 48 hours of posting an announcement on Canvas, I will assume that you have all read them. These might include changes in class assignments, special arrangements or requests.

To ease the grading process, I request all video assignments to be posted either on YouTube or Google Drive. As a CityU student you are entitled to a free Google Apps account linked to your university username. If you are not using one, please create one during the first week of class. Please note that I will not accept assignments that have not been shared using either YouTube or Drive following the instructions provided to you in due course.

Sign-up page for GApps account: <http://www6.cityu.edu.hk/cscagent/GApps.htm>  
Login page: <https://www.google.com/a/gapps.cityu.edu.hk/ServiceLogin>

**Attendance**

You are expected to come to class every week. This is a hands-on class. We will be doing in-class exercises, discuss cases and examples during the lectures and learn by interacting with each other. Absences will greatly hamper your learning progress so you should do your best to come to class regularly. If you need to miss a class, please let me know in advance. More than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade (F). I will keep attendance records and will use them in determining borderline grade decisions.

### **Deadlines**

I take deadlines very strictly. After quite a long time working as a journalist, I learnt the hard way that deadlines are not to be missed. Therefore I will not accommodate late submissions under any circumstances. It is your job to organize your time effectively in order to meet the deadlines. **The submission deadline for each week is Tuesday 12pm.** No submissions will be accepted after this

### **Readings and tutorials**

You are expected to come to class having read and watched what is assigned each week. For example, for week 2 you have one reading and one tutorial. These need to be completed **BEFORE** you come to class. Classes will be very much oriented towards practicing what is explained in detail in the readings and the video tutorials. Do not expect me to read and summarize them for you. I will review the difficult concepts and walk you through some of the tutorials, but not all of them. As you will see, slides for this course will have **very** little text. It is your job to read and summarize the main ideas of the readings. Completing the readings before coming to class will also allow you to ask questions and to engage in discussions.

### **Mobile phone use**

Refrain from using your mobile phones in class, as they are a major source of distraction. If you have something really important to tweet (such as how cool this course is) or a WhatsApp message to reply to, you can do that during the break. At times I might ask you to use your phone for in-class assignments. Only at that point the use of mobile phones would be justified.

### **Plagiarism**

As students of CityU, you have already been introduced to the concept of academic honesty and the problems associated with plagiarism, which is defined as using others' ideas, texts, video or audio as your own in your school projects. By now you must be familiar with plagiarism in academic writing. If you are not, please review the contents of CityU's [academic honesty portal](#).

Remember: you cannot use the work of other creators and pass it as your own, including audio and video. If you borrow footage from another source, you must clearly state that it is not your own. Also, when using video or audio from another source, you must first make sure that it is not copyright protected. You might use small fractions under the so-called 'fair-dealing' doctrine.

Also, it is not acceptable to reuse your previous work for other courses. All assignments you submit for COM2301 must be original, must be your own creation and must not use any materials that are copyrighted. Even if you violate any of these premises unintentionally, it will still be considered as a form of plagiarism. If you have doubts as to what constitutes plagiarism, ask in class.

### Safety & Law

When shooting video you must remain alert at all times. Not only do accidents happen when you play Pokémon Go, but also when you are shooting video. Always keep an eye on your surroundings when you are out on the field. It is fairly easy to lose track of vehicles, people and other moving objects (and animals) when you are focusing on the viewfinder.

It is also worth remembering that you must always abide by the law when shooting video. There might be places where video recording is not allowed. There might be places where you are even not supposed to be in at all. At times, people you want to capture on film will refuse. Always be polite and ask before you start shooting.

### Evaluation and grading

There is no final exam for this course. Your grade will be based on four individual assignments, a group project and in-class participation and exercises. The weighting is as follows:

- Individual Assignment #1: 15%
- Individual Assignment #2: 20%
- In-class participation and exercises: 15%
- Group Assignment #1: 10%
- Group Assignment #2: 10%
- Group Assignment #3: 30%

The fact that there is no final exam means that it will be very difficult for you to get a good grade if you do not work on the course materials on a regular basis. It is virtually impossible to learn the skills taught in this course by studying last minute. **Learning how to shoot and edit takes a lot of time.** Be ready to put plenty of hours of work to master the software and to improve your shooting skills. My piece of advice is: organize yourself in a way that allows you meet the deadlines comfortably or this will be a very challenging course.

In this course we will combine peer grading (i.e. you will grade your colleagues' work) and my grading. For each video assignment you will be asked to grade the work of 3 to 5 of your colleagues'. I will provide you with guidelines on how give feedback. When doing so, be respectful and constructive.

If you decide to pursue a career in video production you will often have to face public criticism. Learning to accept others' opinions and judgments is an important skill that you need to master at an early stage of your career.

If you receive a grade of "C" or lower in any video assignment, you will be allowed to reedit the piece in order to improve your grade. Take the opportunity to reedit your work as a learning opportunity.

### Schedule

Keep in mind that this schedule is subject to changes based on how the semester goes. Any updates to the class schedule will be published on Canvas. Please monitor Canvas regularly to make sure you do not miss out on important information.

#### *Week 1 – August 30 | Introduction and Pre-production Basics*

This week you will become acquainted with the fundamentals of the course. We will look have a first look at what video production means and what the pre-production stage looks like. This week's in-class hands-on session will involve basic storytelling.

#### *Week 2 – September 6 | Pre-production and Camera Basics*

We will finish reviewing some of the essential aspects of the pre-production stage and will get our hands around some DSLR cameras. You will learn how to operate these cameras and be confident talking about key concepts such as focal length, lens angle and exposure.

Required reading:

- Musburger, chapter 4; Owens & Millerson, chapter 6.

Required video tutorials:

- YouTube Creator Academy – Pre-production: before pressing record (in English with Chinese subtitles).

#### *Week 3 – September 13 | Framing, composition, and storytelling: Shooting Basics*

This week we will learn some basic rules of video shooting, that is, how to capture the best pictures with your DSLR cameras. We will also learn the importance of shooting with editing in mind and to always keep in what story it is that we are shooting.

Required readings:

- Schenk & Long, chapter 7.

Required video tutorials:

- YouTube Creator Academy – Compose your shots (in English with Chinese subtitles).
- Intro to Adobe Premiere Pro (Overview of the Interface, Import Media, Select Shots, Edit the Timeline, Refine the Edit, Export video).

Assignment:

- Submit storyboard and shot list for your '24 hours in the life of...' project (Assignment #1A).

#### *Week 4 – September 20 | Essentials of Editing: Techniques and Transitions*

We will spend the first half of the class reviewing how to use Adobe Premiere. Remember that you need to watch video tutorials before coming to class. During the second half you will put your knowledge to practice using some unedited raw footage.

Required readings:

- Owens & Millerson, chapter 15.

Required video tutorials:

- How to edit videos with Premiere Pro.

*Week 5 – September 27 | Audio for Video Production*

This week you will incorporate audio editing skills to your toolbox. We will learn the basic ideas of rhythm, audio recording and audio transitions. We will apply these during the hands-on session, where you will be editing a music video.

Required readings:

- Schenk & Long, chapters 8&15.

Required video tutorials:

- Adobe Premiere Pro Audio (Basic audio editing, Normalize audio, Clean up audio, Edit Music with Audition)

Assignment:

- Submit the final edit of '24 hours in the life of...' project (Assignment #1B)

*Week 6 – October 4 | Using a DSLR camera: review of basic concepts*

During the first session of the class we will revisit some of the concepts we learnt in weeks 2 and 3. During the later part of the class, you will shoot footage for a news package on a topic assigned by me.

Required video tutorials:

- Adobe Premiere Pro – Create a video story

Assignment:

- Complete peer review of '24 hours in the life of...' BEFORE class.

*Week 7 – October 11 | No Class – READING WEEK*

*Week 8 – October 18 | Online news*

This week we will have a guest speaker during the first hour. Jarrod Watt, deputy online editor at the *South China Morning Post* will talk about how the Post created a video production unit. During the second half of the class, we will go through some of the basics of news packages. We will discuss differences in storytelling and format between legacy media and new media.

Required readings:

- Filak, chapter 8 (by Engstrom and Larson)

Assignment:

- Submit treatment, storyboard and shotlist for individual feature story (Assignment #2A).
- Submit a question that you would like to ask our guest speaker on Canvas.

*Week 9 – October 25 | News packages*

During the first half of the class you will be able to edit the footage you shot three weeks ago. We will use the last hour to review your videos and discuss ways to improve them.

Required readings:

- Griffith & Papacharissi, 2012

Required video tutorials:

- YouTube Creator Academy – 10 YouTube Fundamentals

Assignment:

- Submit treatment of commercial for group project (Group Assignment #1).

*Week 10 – November 1 | Video production for advertising and PR*

We will spend the first half of the class talking about the production of television commercials and other promotional videos. During the second half we will discuss the treatment and storyboard of your video commercials. Be prepared to contribute to the discussion in class.

Required readings:

- Cury, chapters 4 & 5.

Assignment:

- Submit storyboard and shot list of commercial for group project (Group Assignment #2).

*Week 11 – November 8 | Lighting*

Although lighting is an essential part of professional video shooting, it is also one of the most difficult ones to master. In class we will have a basic introduction to some lighting concepts. You will have time to work on your group project in class.

Required readings:

- Owens & Millerson, chapter 11.

Required video tutorials:

- Adobe Premiere and subtitles (creating OC and exporting CC).

Assignment:

- Submit the final edit of the individual feature story (Assignment #2B).



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### *Week 12 – November 15 | Viewing and reviewing Assignment #2*

This week we will watch some parts of your second assignment and discuss them in class to see what was outstanding and what could have been done better. You will have time to work on your group project during the last hour of the class.

Assignment:

- Complete peer review of individual feature story BEFORE class.

### *Week 13 – November 22 | Group presentations & farewell*

During this class you will present your group project. Each presentation should last between 10 and 15 minutes, including the screening of your video production.

Assignment:

- Submit rough-cut of commercial for group project. **The final edit is due one week later (November 29, 12pm on YouTube).**