FA190 Introduction to Digital Filmmaking: Idea & Form

Seminar Leader: Charity Ellis
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Office Hours: by appointment

The goals of this course are to develop cinematic language fluency and to build technical skills.

> *Film is incredibly democratic and accessible, it's probably the best option if you actually want to change the world, and not just re-decorate it. - Banksy*

Course Description

Providing a comprehensive introduction to the fundamentals of digital film & video, this foundational course is designed to support students in creating their own body of work, from short sound and video exercises to complete productions in any genre of their choosing. Students will develop fluency in cinematic language, grounded in both creative decision-making and technical expertise, thus enabling them to bring their visions to life.

Using a range of professional video and audio equipment, students will gain hands-on experience over the course of the semester through in-class labs, group shoots, and individual filmmaking assignments. Students will learn how to master the camera's manual settings; how to effectively light a scene; as well as the essentials of sound recording and sound design. As a space for furthering creative expression, projects will find completion through non-linear editing in programs such as Adobe Premiere Pro.

To compliment hands-on learning, students will enhance their ability to analyze and critique film and video content through screenings and discussion of international works from a variety of genres and eras—narrative, documentary, experimental, 'art' video, online streaming content, etc

Requirements

There are no prerequisites for this course. Curiosity is recommended.

Students are expected to:
● Turn off phones during class time.
● Arrive to class prepared, with necessary technology to ensure adequate participation
● Inform the Professor via email at least 2 hours before class if you will be absent.
● Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff (incl. AV) outside of class time.
● Allocate and organize time for all stages of production and clean up of shared spaces.
● Respond to emails in a timely manner.
● Inform the professor at the beginning of the semester if photos of a student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.

<u>Academic Integrity</u>
Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet

the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen,(accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the Bard College Berlin Accessibility page. Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, **one** unexcused absence from this once-per-week course should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. All absences beyond this will require documentation (of illness, etc). Two or more unexcused absences will affect your final grade. With regard to all absences, it is recommended that students communicate with their professor about their health-status. We can decide together the best way to keep you on track with your learning. Because this course includes a lot of in-class hands-on learning, late arrivals are also discouraged and may be counted as absences.

Please note, Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Introduction to Digital Filmmaking: Idea and Form is a course designed to both build the technical skills to produce content and also fluency for reading digital film & video content. Class meetings will center around hands-on production labs, viewings and lectures. Assignments to be completed outside of class will be within the context of developing technical skills and fluency in cinematic language. These assignments include hands-on film & video productions and also viewing ('reading') films and film scenes. Films and videos assigned to view outside of class should be freely available to students online or via DVDs in the Bard College Berlin library. These 'readings' will be discussed in-class to support our cinematic language skill development.

Students will be assessed on all aspects of their participation in class. This includes preparedness for and participation in discussions of reading and/or viewing assignments, the timely completion of written and production assignments, the quality of research, ability to work independently and responsibly, as well as willingness and capability of working within the group. Attendance and participation is a significant component of this class and goes beyond mere attendance for grading purposes. Being punctual, actively engaging with the material, and contributing to discussions, critiques and practical exercises are crucial aspects that indicate your commitment to academic excellence and personal development. Embracing these qualities not only enhances individual learning experiences, but also fosters an inspiring and supportive environment for one's colleagues, encouraging their growth as well.

This is a communications course! Grading will reflect the student's ability and willingness to communicate with the Professor and amongst themselves; and also through the tools of time-based media itself: the appropriate ambition demonstrated in one's digital productions, as well as the willingness to budget time for all requirements connected to this class. This assessment also includes preparation, production, and cleaning up of spaces used at Bard College Berlin.

Submitting written project proposals for both the midterm and final assignments is required.

In-class screenings of completed video works and of a rough cut version of the final project are required. Apart from attendance and participation, overall grades will be influenced by the results of a short technical quiz, a collaborative presentation on a topic to be assigned in class, and film/video viewing ('readings') assignments. Please note, updates to the scheduling of lectures, in-class labs, screenings and readings may be made, and will be announced both in-class and via digital communications.

Specific details regarding each assignment will be provided in class on the dates indicated in the weekly schedule below.

>09 September: In-Class Lab shot assignment completed same day, in class
>23 September: Scene Storyboard due
>30 September: Week 3 Lab Assignment Due* (Portrait)

>13 October Assignment # 1: due Monday, @17:00
>14 October: In-class screening & critique of Assignment 1

>10 November: Assignment # 2: Video file due Monday, @17:00
>11 November: In-class screening & critique of Assignment 2

1   18 November Assignment # 3: Pitch/Presentation
● Assignment #3 (Final Project) proposals (ca. 250 words) are due in your student folders via google classroom by 18:00 on Monday, 17 November 2025. This proposal should include the working title, all authors (in case you choose to work in a group), and a description of the content and the form of the video work. Students should be prepared to give a brief (max, 5 min) presentation of project proposals during class on Tuesday, 18 November 2025.

>03 December: Assignment # 3: Rough Cut Presentation
● Rough-cut project presentations (Assignment #3): Have your rough cut uploaded to your student folder in google classroom by 02 December 2025 @ 18:00. For class, please prepare a brief introduction, and think about specific feedback you would like to have from the group.

>08 December: Assignment # 3: Final Video file due Monday, @20:00
In-class screening & critique of Assignment 3, 09 December

● Presentation: Dates will be assigned in class
● Tech Quiz: in class on 09 December 2025

● ** All video assignments need to be exported in mp4 format with H.264 codec **
and uploaded to your student folder in google drive on the dates/times listed above

<u>Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations</u>
Late submissions on assignments will be downgraded one full grade. (Example: B+ becomes C+). The instructor is not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. Where the instructor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are also entitled and encouraged to make an appointment with the instructor to receive individual feedback on seminar participation and work, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester
regarding class progress.

Students receive end-of-semester grades for their seminar work.

<u>Grading Rubric</u>
30% Participation (Attendance, Discussion & Presentation)
15% In-Class Labs
 3% Storyboard
10% Assignment # 1
15% Assignment # 2
22% Assignment # 3 (including Project Proposal & Rough Draft Presentation)
5% Tech Quiz

Schedule

The Fall 2025 semester runs from Monday, September 1 until Friday, December 19, with the Fall break planned from Monday, October 20, - Sunday, October 26, 2025.
- Normal course sessions end on Friday, December 12.
- Completion week is from Monday, December 15 through Friday, December 19.
  - Make-up classes and final exams can take place in completion week.
  - Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Please see the detailed weekly course schedule below.

Grades Submission

All grades are submitted digitally to the Registrar's Office in a template provided in advance. Please note the following submission deadlines when setting final project deadlines:

- Reports of Students of Concern are due end of week 8, i.e. October 31, 2025

- Final grades for graduating students are due December 12, 2025 by noon. *NB please set your submission dates accordingly so as to meet this deadline*

- Final grades for all students are due on January 2, 2026

Reminders about the above deadlines will be communicated by <u>registrar@berlin.bard.edu</u>

Week One *02 September* View: *Melies, Keaton, &*	Introductions & Syllabus; Overview of Film & Video history through viewings Introduction to camera, tripod For the semester: Sony ZV-E10 manual https://helpguide.sony.net/ilc/2070/v1/en/print.pdf

Week Two *09 September*	In Depth: Camera Technical; ISO, Aperture, other camera settings, SD cards AV Intro & Policy In-class camera lab, part I (in pairs:1-shots w/ diff. cam settings) View results For next week: Film viewings on Kanopy: *Jeanne Dielman*, *8 1/2*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Modern Times*, OR *Touki Bouki*
Week Three *16 September* View: *Warhol, Wegman, Color of Pomengranates, The Shining*	Discussion In Depth: Film as a Language: Cinematography & Composition In-class filming lab : portrait film For next week: (Film readings) camera & editing considerations. *Battleship Potemkin, Tokyo Story,* OR (*additional options given in class…*) & Storyboard a scene! *(details given in class)*
Week Four *23 September* View: Film Dialogue Scenes *(Paris Texas, Close-Up, Parasite, His Girl Friday, Tokyo Story)*	Discussion DUE: Storyboards In Depth: Basic Video Editing, & Importing/exporting For Next Week: Edit In-Class Film Lab (Week 3 Portraits) For next week: (Film readings)
Week Five *30 September* View: *Last Year at Marienbad,* *La Cienaga, Pather Panchali*	DUE: Portraits In Depth: Lighting Intro to lighting equipment In-class lab: 3-point lighting, the interview or (…) For next week: Viewer's choice
Week Six *07 October* *View: TBD*	Discussion In Depth: Sound Recording Intro to Zoom audio recorders, microphones, cables, etc. Presentation Assignment 1: Dialogue scene Due Monday, 13 October @ 18:00

Monday, 13 October	DUE: Dialogue Scene 13 October @ 18:00 (6pm)
Week Seven *14 October*	In-Class Viewing & Critiques: Assignment 1: Dialogue Scene In-class lab : audio walk Discussion
Week Eight *21 October*	Fall Break
Week Nine *28 October* *View: TBD, Mika Rottenberg, Shelley Silver, Lev Manovich, music videos, newscast, social media*	In Depth: Advanced Editing Presentation Genres! For next week: (Film readings/Kanopy, choose 2) *Orlando,* *Buena Vista Social Club, Reassemblage, La Jetee, Mizoguchi, These Hands, (additional titles and links given in class…)* Assignment 2: 'Moral Tales'
Week Ten *04 November* *View: Contempt, Peter Greenaway, Akira Kurosawa, Ousmane Sembene*	Discussion Presentation In Depth: Mise en Scene
Monday, 10 November	DUE: Assignment 2 10 November @ 18:00 (6pm)
Week Eleven *11 November*	In-class Viewing & Critique: Assignment 2 Assignment 3: (details given in class) Due 08 December

Week Twelve *18 November*	**DUE:** Assignment 3 Film Proposals In Depth: Green Screen	
Week Thirteen *25 November*	Presentation x 2 Morning Coffee Screening	
Monday, 01 December	**Due**: Rough Cut of Assignment #3 @18:00	upload file by 01 December 2025
Week Fourteen *02 December*	In-class: View Rough Draft/edits of Assignment #3, screenings & critiques	
Monday, 08 December	**DUE:** Assignment 3 08 December @ 20:00 (8pm)	
Week Fifteen *09 December*	Tech Quiz Due Monday 08 December: Final Video, Assignment 3 In class screenings & critiques, Installation for Open Studios	
11 or 12 December 2025	OPEN STUDIOS	
Week Sixteen *16 December*	Completion Week	
	** Supplemental readings and Assignments will be made available as digital PDFs and in our shared online drive. Print-outs alaways available upon request.	

Film viewing titles (above) subject to change.

All Video files should be uploaded on the dates by or before the times stipulated above unless other arrangements are made ahead of time.

Generally speaking, video files are due the day before class.
Videos should be exported for upload with these settings:
format: choose mp4, via H.264 codec
frame size: 1920x1080; frame rate: 25 or 50
audio format: .wav or .aiff at 48000 Hz, Stereo

Please upload your video files to your student folder.
Label each file appropriately: Name_Assignment#_Date