

# Digital Motion Picture Pre-Production

## COMM 3640 SYLLABUS

Fall Semester 2006  
Udvar-Hazy School of Business Room 218  
Tues-Thurs 9:00 am to 10:15 am  
Office Hours: By appointment, preferably after class

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Text: The Complete Film Production Handbook 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Eve Light Honthaner

### Course Description

An intermediate course designed to understand and develop skills required in the Pre-Production phase of producing a motion picture. Those skills include conceptualizing a production project, writing a treatment, writing a screenplay, creating a schedule and budget, casting talent, and presenting a proposal for funding a production.

### Required Skills

The course requires literacy skills beyond the high school level.

### Policies

The motion picture industry is a highly competitive field. At a minimum, people who aspire to careers in this field need to exhibit professional behavior on the job and in this class. Those behaviors include:

- Attending scheduled classes/events.
- Arriving to classes and appointments promptly.
- Engaging and participating in activities and discussions fully.
- Exhibiting flexibility regarding possible modifications to the syllabus or assignments to meet unique needs of the class.
- Proofing work for typos and grammatical errors. "Spell Check" is helpful but not fool proof. Use resources such as a dictionary, the DSC Writing Lab and DSC OWL (Online Writing Lab). This website includes APA and MLA guides for writing, formatting and editing papers.
- Turning cell phones, computers and pagers off during class.
- Completing assessments on the date designated.
- Completing the final exam. Every course in Arts, Letters and Sciences includes a final exam. Consult the semester schedule for exam date and time.
- Taking responsibility to raise and address disabilities. "If you are a student with a physical or mental impairment and would like to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in Room 201 of the Student Services Center. The Disability Resource Center will determine your eligibility for services based upon complete professional documentation. If you are deemed eligible, the Disability Resource Center will further evaluate the effectiveness of your accommodation requests and will authorize reasonable accommodations that are appropriate for your disability."

### Course Objectives

Through regular attendance and active participation in this class, you will be able to:

1. Understand how Pre-Production fits in the overall process of producing a motion picture.
2. Differentiate roles and assume responsibility as a member of a production team;
3. Conceptualize a production project;
4. Write a comprehensive treatment including communication objectives, a target audience analysis, and a production design which anticipates visual requirements;
5. Participate in the screenwriting process;
6. "Break down" a script for production purposes;
7. Create a production schedule;
8. Develop a production budget;
9. Scout locations, procure clearances and apply the Filmmaker's Code of Conduct;
10. Cast principle talent, extras, and/or pre-interviews for documentary production;

11. Incorporate plans which reflect the importance and responsibility of safety during a production;
12. Create and deliver a "Pitch" for funding a proposed project;
13. Progress to subsequent offerings in the Communication in New Media Program.

### **Your Production Project**

To foster your development in motion picture production and ultimately produce "reel" fodder to help you get a job, you will conceptualize and pre-produce a short project during this semester. The project is divided into two parts: A Treatment, and Collateral Materials. This is a Team Project with a maximum of four members per team. The final product will be the basis for producing a short dramatic film (maximum 8 minutes) that is suitable for submission to a film festival.

The Treatment includes a project goal in the form of communication objectives, an audience analysis, a production design which reflects the visual flow of the screen play without the dialogue, a proposed production schedule for Winter Semester, and an estimated budget.

Required Collateral Materials include a treatment and budget, screen play, storyboard and developmental art, location scouting reports/photos and associated clearances, cast descriptions, photos and calls for principles and extras, production crew listing, and production resources inventory. There are forms in the textbook which should be used for documenting many of the Collateral Materials.

Near the end of the semester, using the Treatment and Collateral Materials, your team will "Pitch your Project" to a panel of "studio executives". You will be vying for financial backing. The team who does the best job of preparing and presenting the materials will receive a modest budget for producing their project in Winter 2006. Regardless of which team is selected, however, all projects will go into production Winter 2006, and may qualify for submission to a local Film Festival.

### **Assessments**

Assessments will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer. The content of the assessments will be based on lectures by the instructor and guest speakers, class discussions, and content from the textbook and related readings.

### **Grading Philosophy**

For many reasons, "grading" a student's understanding, improvement, and application of content presented during a semester is very difficult to do. Nevertheless, I am required to give you a letter grade at the end of the semester. To help you achieve the grade you aspire to, the following spells out the criteria I will use to determine your grade.

A -- You surpass the requirements of all assigned activities; average a minimum score of 90% or more on assessments and graded projects; execute original, critical thinking when applying new skills/knowledge; demonstrate achievement of course objectives as evidenced in written and oral communications; participate very effectively in class assignments and exhibit strong collaboration with team and class members; and contribute to discussions and ask good questions which engage others, including the instructor.

B -- You meet the requirements of assigned activities; average a minimum score of 80% on assessments and graded projects; execute critical thinking when applying new skills/knowledge; demonstrate achievement of two thirds of course objectives as evidenced in written and oral communications; participate appropriately in class assignments and exhibit good collaboration with team and class members; and contribute to discussions and ask questions which engage others, including the instructor.

C -- You meet most of the requirements of assigned activities; average a minimum score of 70%

on assessments and graded projects; demonstration understanding of course objectives as evidenced in written and oral communications; participate in class assignments and exhibit collaboration with team and class members; and ask good questions which engage others, including the instructor.

D -- You meet less than half the requirements of assigned activities; average a minimum score of 60% on assessments and graded projects; acknowledge course objectives as evidenced in written and oral communications; participate minimally in class assignments and team activities.

F --Your apathy outweighs your achievement.

**Points Breakdown**

To further help you focus your attention, the following presents a Points Breakdown for different assignments/activities throughout the semester. Use the matrix below to keep track of your scores and grade:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Your Score</u>
Assessment One	100	_____
Production Treatment Movie Review	100	_____
Production Treatment (Team)	200	_____
Assessment Two	100	_____
Production Collateral Materials (Team)	200	_____
Personal Development Assessment	100	_____
Assessment Three	100	_____
"Pitch Your Project" Rating (Team)	<u>100</u>	_____
Possible Points	1,000	

Points Range

Grade Range

900- 1,000	A
800- 899	B
700 - 799	C
600 - 699	D
Below 599	F

08/20/06