Communication and Media COM 303: Video Narrative
Course Outline and Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Andrew Klobucar
Office: 428 Cullimore Hall
Phone: 973.596.5724
Email: klobucar@njit.edu

Office Hours: TR: 1:00-2:00pm (W apt)
Classroom: PC40
Term: Fall 2023

Course Format and Objectives

This class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday in Mall PC40 between 2:30 and 3:50 pm.

Instructional Objectives

Technological advances in digital media production, along with the rise of a fully multimodal web, have made videography an increasingly important component of professional communication. In fact, it's no exaggeration to say that nearly all forms of cultural production have undergone a massive transformation in terms of how they incorporate and depend upon new audio and visual media formats. One might say that we are in the midst of redeveloping the very nature of what it means to be literate in our society.

At a general level, this course seeks to introduce and adapt students to different video-based multimedia environments in order to develop new strategies for both reading and writing within our increasingly screen-oriented culture. To this end, the video narrative emerges as a very useful discourse able to encompass a wide array of media formats and genres.

After taking this course students will:

- *Have acquired a comprehensive knowledge of different historical and theoretical lineages in videography.*

- *Have a working knowledge of and be able to practice hands-on techniques and technologies to produce independent media works of their own.*

- *Be familiar and be able to practice strategies and techniques for both reading and writing within a visually-based, screen-oriented culture.*

- *Have developed skills and professional social traits that enable them to work successfully and productively in group environments.*

- *Show competency in the following four areas associated with producing and critically analyzing video-based, electronic media: visual narrative structures, video production /screenwriting practices, videography genres and electronic media distribution.*

Course Requirements

Attendance/ Participation: 10 marks
Videography Techniques
- Storyboard Assignment   2 marks
- Shot Analysis   5 marks

Videography exercises
- Film Forum Discussion
  3 Questions (2 marks each)   6 marks
- Videography Exercise   3 marks

Research Writing Project
Evaluative Essay   10 marks
Video Projects
- Narrated Picture Story   4 marks
- Instruction   20 marks
- Documentary   20 marks
- Dramatic Serial   20 marks

Tuesday Classes will typically begin with a short introductory lecture to the week's activities that I will prepare with questions and open discussion to follow. On Thursdays, I will typically give the presentation ball over to you, all learners, to discuss the works and ideas assigned that week according to your own methods and viewing skills. Be ready! You could be responsible for up to 10 minutes of class time! Because much of the software we will be using is only available on campus, each class will also be used to work on individual or group assignments.

Videography Assignments

Four major video projects will comprise the more significant part of the assigned and assessed work. The projects will demonstrate different video genres, including instruction, documentary, artistic experiment, and dramatic. Due to the complex structure and number of resources associated with videography projects, you can work in small, pre-formed groups of up to three.

Research and Critical Analysis Assignments

Several assignments are designed to build competency in basic videography techniques, including camera work, script and storyboard writing and postproduction video editing. Four short exercises assigned towards the course's beginning will allow students to engage with the fundamentals of video production on both individual and group levels. One evaluative essay demonstrating critical analysis and research skills will be assigned toward the end of the term.

Forum Discussion Assignments

Throughout the course, we will read and critically discuss pre-assigned essays central to video and film studies in the current era. Three separate forum discussion topics will be available via Canvas, covering some of the issues and ideas brought up in these works.

Participation

This course is learner-centered, meaning that each class will offer you, the learners, the opportunity to lead discussions and questions on the topics presented. In other words, participation means more than attendance! Ten percent of the final grade will be based on the frequency and quality of your comments, questions, and observations, emphasizing quality. The quality is determined by, among other things, the relevance, insight and clarity of remarks.

All written assignments should conform to the guidelines for presentation set out in the class. The evaluative papers should be submitted by the MLA style sheet as laid out in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The correct use of sources and documentation remain essential factors in the grading schema. Being primarily a video workshop course, only some assignments will require written work to be submitted. Only the forum discussion entries, the shot analysis and the evaluative essay, will be based on individually written contributions. However, each of these submissions must follow the university AI content policy on citation and the additional policies I have included for this course only.

NJIT Citation Policy for Generative AI

If students are allowed to use AI in a course or specific assignments, it is essential to specify the rule to help avoid academic integrity issues. Popular citation styles listed in the NJIT Library include MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, and ACS. Some colleges/departments may use other citation styles. Instructors must specify which citation style should be used and the format. In addition, besides direct quotes and rephrases, it is possible to use AI throughout the assignment, like brainstorming, creating outlines, generating first drafts, proofreading, etc., which constitutes a gray area that could cause academic integrity concerns. Therefore, have a conversion with or add a statement into the syllabi regarding what is allowed and how you want students to acknowledge the use of AI throughout the process.

Course Policy on the Use of AI Content Generators for all Writing Assignments

Writing practices are being drastically transformed by advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI productivity (e.g. ChatGPT, Grammarly) are acceptable an encouraged for use in this course with the following guidelines are:

- **AI-generated texts *cannot* be submitted as original work for assessment. However, AI content generators can be used for early drafts. Learners are expected to revise and submit an original draft for final assessment.**
- **Extra cover sheet with the following details must be submitted with your assignment, including:**
  1. **name of AI content generator used.**
  2. **date used.**
  3. **prompt or prompts submitted to the AI content generator.**
  4. **The full AI version of all prior drafts with the final document the student has revised and written for assessment. Revisions must be indicated in the draft.**

Learners not in full compliance with this policy will receive an automatic F.

Punctuality and Attendance

Each weekly in-class session will offer learners multiple opportunities to discuss and probe topics relevant to the course via individual input and group debate. This activity level in the course is worth ten **marks** and will be assessed according to the frequency and relevance of each contribution. My pedagogy emphasizes a learner-active approach to in-class assignments, where I hope learners lead discussions as often as I, your instructor. Learners are encouraged to introduce material and ideas they believe are relevant to the topic at hand. Independent learner-led seminars can be scheduled one week in advance as requested. Learners are expected to attend every class.

Absences due to illness must be confirmed a *minimum* of **4 hours** before class by email to avoid penalty. In-class activities and general participation will account for ten **marks** and will be based on the frequency, relevance, and available quality of the learner's comments, questions, and observations. More than six **unexcused absences (3 weeks of the curriculum)** will result in automatic course failure; excessive unexcused lateness of 20 minutes or more throughout the course will be considered one absence. Learners who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance or athletic events must submit to their instructors a written list of dates that will be missed by the end of the second week of classes. Learners are expected to make up missed work.

- **Suppose a class cannot be attended for any reason other than physical illness. In that case, I must be notified at least one day before the class is scheduled to enable me to prepare alternative access to the same material.**
- **Extra time to complete all individual assignments must be petitioned in writing at least one week (7 days) before the work is due.**
- **Assignment drafts or requests for assignment-specific advice must be scheduled nine days before the assignment's due date if extra help is to be delivered in a timely fashion.**

Each weekly in-class session will offer learners multiple opportunities to discuss and probe topics relevant to the course via individual input and group debate. This activity level in the course is worth ten **marks** and will be assessed according to the frequency and relevance of each contribution. My pedagogy emphasizes a learner-active approach to in-class

assignments, where I hope learners lead discussions as often as I, your instructor. Learners are encouraged to introduce material and ideas they believe are relevant to the topic at hand. Independent learner-led seminars can be scheduled one week in advance as requested. Learners are expected to attend every class.

Absences due to illness must be confirmed a *minimum* of **4 hours** before class by email to avoid penalty. In-class activities and general participation will account for ten **marks** and will be based on the frequency, relevance, and available quality of the learner's comments, questions, and observations. More than six **unexcused absences (3 weeks of the curriculum)** will result in automatic course failure; excessive unexcused lateness of 20 minutes or more throughout the course will be considered one absence. Learners who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance or athletic events must submit to their instructors a written list of dates that will be missed by the end of the second week of classes. Learners are expected to make up missed work.

- **Suppose a class cannot be attended for any reason other than physical illness. In that case, I must be notified at least one day before the class is scheduled to enable me to prepare alternative access to the same material.**
- **Extra time to complete all individual assignments must be petitioned in writing at least one week (7 days) before the work is due.**
- **Assignment drafts or requests for assignment-specific advice must be scheduled nine days before the assignment's due date if extra help is to be delivered in a timely fashion.**

Alternative submission access for late assignments and extra course material will be provided for each graded task; however, late assignments and missed classes outside these guidelines will be penalized. Late assignments will be deducted 10 percent of the task's course value up to 1 week after submission. Late assignments will be deducted 20 percent of the task's course value from 8 days to 2 weeks after the submission date. Late assignments will be deducted 50 percent of the task's course value from 15 days to 4 weeks after the submission date. Assignments missing for more than four weeks will not be accepted. No late work will receive commentary supplementary to its graded evaluation.

Required Texts:

Selected Essays published on Canvas

Course Syllabus

Date	Topics/Readings	Assignments

Week 1
5-7 September
	### The Screen as a Media Form: Introductions
	• Class Introduction
	• Canvas/course technologies
	
	Story, Narratives, and Images
	We'll begin the course with a set of informal discussions on how many writers, working with different film and video producers have created extremely effective stories and narratives for the screen. Be prepared to introduce the class to some of your own favourite film or video narratives, giving us a few ideas on why you like them.
	
	• Screen Culture and multidisciplinary studies of narrative
	• Visual modes of narrative:
	  • How do images tell stories?
	  • Photographs, Paintings, Murals as Narratives
		Class Introductions and Syllabus and Outline Discussions
		• **Read the syllabus and Outline for 7 September Discussion**

Week 2 **12-14 September**		**Narrative Comparison Work for In-Class Discussion will be set for Thursday afternoon.**
Week 3 **19-21 September**	### Graphic Novels as Image-based Narratives One of the most popular forms of visual stories don't even use screens. Since the mid-20th century comic books and graphic novels have appealed to millions of readers. For this section, we'll look at one of the most popular graphic novels produced in the last 15 years and discuss how its panels combine with narrative structure and even character development to create a still highly admired story. Ask yourselves: How you might set up a series of the images in the assigned graphic novel as actual shots? Why are some of the panels more effective than others?	**Choose a partner for next week's group discussions on the assigned graphic novel.** **Forum/Class Discussion 1: When images become shots (due 28 September – 2 marks)**
Week 4 **26-28 September**	**Readings – Available on Canvas site** • Satrapi, *Persepolis* (2007) • Graphic novels: Description, Images, Shots	**Forum Discussion 1 Due**
Week 5 **3-5 October**	### From Graphic Panels to Shots and Sequences in Films Let's test our ability to analyse what other directors have done in various shot sequences to build intense narratives, even if the narrative sequence is only a few minutes long. Some questions to ask: • Can you locate or map how the sequence builds to an effective climax? • How does the climax wind down in preparation for the next sequence? • How do the sequences merge, extending the narrative into a longer scene? • Are there *different* techniques in panels that impress you?	**Shot Analysis** **(Due: 12 October – 5 marks)**
Week 6 **10--12 October**	**Building Continuity: When Shots become Sequences, and then Develop into Scenes** • Intro to Techniques and Methods for Creating Visual Narrative Sequences and Scene.	**Narrated Picture Story Assignment** **Due: 19 October** **4 marks**
Week 7 **17-19 October**	### The Grammar of the Edit • Screenwriting Fundamentals • Intro to editing software: Introduction to Adobe Premiere as in-class editing tool. **Developing Outlines, Organising Treatments, Writing Scripts** • Templates will be provided on Canvas	**Storyboard with Videography Exercise** **(Due 26 October – 5 marks total)**

Week 8 **24-26 October**	**Film/Video Genres: History and Analysis** Since the early 20th century, instructors and governments everywhere discovered that visual demonstrations have always proven to be better instruction guides than simply print works (even if the print work contained numerous images and figures to show readers how any task can be done. Cooking shows on television often proved to be better more effective guides than even learning from recipes in a cookbook.	**Video Project 1:** **Group Instruction Video** **(Due 9 November --10 marks)** **Discussion/Workshop** **For Project 1**
Week 9 **31-2 November**	**Instruction: The Screen and Education** • Instruction Films as industry and State Apparatuses: The Use of Instruction to Inform Audiences how to Behave and Do Things Properly and Professionally • Contemporary DIY culture: Instruction Videos Produced Independently **Video Project 1** • **Establish Groups (pre-production: week 8)** • **Editing Footage (Production: week 9)** **Video Resources for Discussion** Selected Instruction videos	**Discussion/Workshop** **For Project 1 (Tuesday)** **Project 1 Showcase** **(Thursday)** **Evaluative Essay: Genre and Technique (Due 16 November–10 marks)**
Week 10 **7-9 November**	**Documentary: The Screen and Perspective** Building objectivity from Cinema to Video to the Web. Even when the first novel came out in the 18th century, readers were unsure whether they were reading the actual journeys and travels across the world of a mysterious captain named "Gulliver" or fiction. Photography, film and video can also provide both an opportunity to "document" the world around us, while often stylizing it to a producer's own vision. This assignment gives us an opportunity to analyze different documentary productions, while asking us to critically think about objectivity in any mode of representation. Can any work be truly objective? How would you try to establish as much objectivity as possible? As you'll see, there is an "art" to making a video seem less than opinionated than it really might be.	**Video Project 2:** **Group Documentary Video** **(Due 21 November)**
Weeks 11 **14-16 November**	**Video Project 2** • **Establish Groups (Pre-production: week 9)** • **Editing Footage (Production: week 10)** • **Soundtrack and Titling (Post-production: week 11)**	**Forum/class Discussion 2:** **Types of Documentary (due 21 November -- 2 marks)**
Week 12 **21 November** **(Tuesday class)**	**Video Resources for Discussion** • James Burns, "We Live This" • David Lynch Interview Project: "Joe Batton" (and others) **Online Readings – Available on Canvas site** • Bill Nichols, "Chapter 6: Types of Documentary" (2001; 2010) **Critically Understanding Genre and Technique in Videography** • Methods of evaluating video and videography genres through technical form and structure **Online Readings – Available on Canvas site** • Susan Sontag, from *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)	**Project 2 Showcase**
Week 13 **28-30 November**	**Dramatic Serials/Webisodes: The Screen and Audience** Writing serial dramas and comedies have proven to be extremely popular over the last decade, where talented writers and directors have come together to produce the level of content one used to expect only in theatres for mass audiences. This final project will give us an opportunity to build our own series and produce a minimum of two episodes for it. We can continue as long as we think it needs or	**Video Project 3** **Dramatic Serials** **Due 16 Dec. – 10 marks** **Project 3 Showcase**

	just leave it as a project to be completed independently. Typically class groups of three can produce between three and four episodes for a single story. Perhaps, this project can one day be developed for a streaming channel like HBO Max or Netflix one day. One never knows… **Video Project 3** • **Establish Groups (pre-production: week 13)** • **Editing Footage (Production: week 14** • **Soundtrack and Titling (Post-production: week 15)**	**Forum/class Discussion 3: Escaping the Spectacle** **2 marks** **Discussion/Workshop For Project 3**
Week 15 12 December	**Distributed Networks: Social Media and the New/You Tube** • Vertov: Man with a Movie Camera • Contemporary video series produced for online streaming **Video Resources for Discussion** • Selected YouTube Shorts • Webisodes, Cell Phone films • HollyTube: Television Online Resource • **Online Readings – Available on Canvas site** • Sherry Turkle, "Introduction" to *Alone Together* • A. Hidri, "Media Romanticism: The New Public Sphere" (secondary)	**Project 3 Draft Showcase**