



COM 303 Video Narrative

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Klobucar Office Hours: F12:00-1:00 pm

Office: CULL428

Classroom: FMH 307

Contact Information:

Term: Spring 2025 (S2025)

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Course Format and Objectives

This class will meet on Fridays in PC MALL 37 between 1:00 and 3:50 pm.

Required: Humanities 101/102. Technical prerequisites require consistent, secure access to a personal computer with up-to-date word processing and graphics software (e.g., HTML5 and/or a trusted video player) and high-speed internet, as most of the work will be read via the screen.

Please refer to the course schedule for details on the assigned readings. Students are expected to read and be familiar with the assigned weekly reading as the course progresses. In addition to reviewing the weekly reading, please create and keep track of your own reading notes, questions, and discussion topics.

Duration: 21 January – 7 May 2025. This course provides three credits for a Humanities and Social Sciences course at the undergraduate level. Students should anticipate a workload of 6-9 hours per week, including class time, to fulfill course requirements.

Video Narrative: Course Overview

General Course Description

This course explores the art and techniques of video narratives in the context of modern digital media. Students will examine the evolution of videography, from its historical roots to its current role in shaping contemporary communication. Through a combination of theoretical study and hands-on practice, participants will develop a comprehensive understanding of video production, storytelling, and distribution in various digital platforms. The curriculum will cover key aspects such as shot composition, editing techniques, sound design, and narrative structure. By the end of the course, students will have produced their own short video projects in various genres, demonstrating their ability to craft compelling visual stories for today's digital landscape. Each assignment has been designed to show students the importance of understanding audience engagement and platform-specific storytelling techniques. Students will also have an opportunity to explore how different digital platforms influence narrative structure and viewer interaction. Additionally, they will learn to adapt their storytelling approaches to various formats, ranging from instructional videos, to short-form social media content to longer documentary-style pieces and multi-episode storytelling.

Learning Objectives

By the end of 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.
- Become familiar with and 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

Assignment List

Assignment and Description	Course Value
Participation Active engagement in class discussions and activities	10 marks
Film Forum Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Forums for In-class Discuss & Response will be set up based on assigned readings. Each Discussion/Response will be worth 2 marks 	6 marks
Videography Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storyboard Assignment All shots begin with a storyboard panel telling the videographer how to set up the shot. Shot sheets are thus very helpful. Shot Analysis We'll look at several critically acclaimed films and critically analyze one key sequence, looking at its videographic components and seeing how they might contribute to the story using multimodal elements. 	2 marks
	5 marks
Videography Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This assignment gives you the opportunity to choose one of several prepared treatments posted to the Canvas course and build your first videography sequence based solely on the information the treatment provides. 	3 marks
Research Writing Project: Evaluative Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have the privilege of using GenAI tools like Sora in video production now. This paper will give you a chance to discuss the impact you think they may have on all future videography work. 	10 marks
Video Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrated Picture Story 4 marks Instruction 20 marks Documentary 20 marks Dramatic Serial 20 marks 	64 marks
Total Course Value	100 marks!

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.

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

Writing practices are being drastically transformed by advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI productivity (e.g. ChatGPT, Grammarly) are acceptable and 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.**

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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.

Course Syllabus and Schedule

The following is the current 15-week schedule for COM 303 S2025. Please note that this schedule is subject to change depending on how well the course and classwork proceed.

Week	Topics/Readings	Assignments
Week 1 24 January	The Screen as a Media Form: Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class Introduction Canvas/course technologies 	Class Introductions and Syllabus and Outline Discussions Read the syllabus and Outline before class and let's discuss any questions or concerns you may have about the course. You have one assignment for the following week. See below.
Week 2 31 January	Story, Narratives, and Images We'll begin the course with informal and friendly 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screen Culture and multidisciplinary studies of narrative Visual modes of narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do images tell stories? Photographs, Paintings, Murals as Narratives 	Narrative Comparison Work for In-Class Discussion will be set for Thursday afternoon. Last week, you uploaded, via our G-Drive, a single image that you find meaningful in some way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We'll first what the image is communicating Lead a discussion on why the meaning is clear or possibly directed to a specific social audience
Week 3 7 February	Graphic Novels as Image-based Narratives One of the most popular forms of visual stories don't even use screens. Since the mid-20 th 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 14 February – 2 marks) Shot Analysis (Due: 21 February – 5 marks)
Week 4 14 February	Readings – Available on Canvas site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> (2007) Graphic novels: Description, Images, Shots 	Forum Discussion 1 Due
Week 5 21 February	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 	Shot Analysis due Narrated Picture Story Assignment (Due: 28 February 4 marks) Preparation for Short Videography Assignment (7 March)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do the sequences merge, extending the narrative into a longer scene? Are there <i>different</i> techniques in panels that impress you? 	Videography Workshop preparations and initial production work
Week 6 28 February	The Grammar of the Edit The Next two weeks mark of the core of learning the basics of videography through our first production and post-production exercises. We will be using Adobe Premiere in class to complete your work.	Narrated Picture Story Due for Showcase Videography Assignment Production/post-production
Week 7 7 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing Techniques and Methods for Creating Visual Narrative Sequences and Scenes. Screenwriting Fundamentals Intro to editing software: Introduction to Adobe Premiere as in-class editing tool. Developing Outlines, Organising Treatments, Writing Scripts <i>Note: Templates will be provided on Canvas</i>	Videography Showcase (in-class)
Week 8 14 March	Film/Video Genres: History and Analysis Since the early 20 th 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. Instruction: The Screen and Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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: Group Instruction Video (Due 28 March - 20 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Groups (pre-production: week 8) Editing Footage (Production over Spring Break) Instruction Video Production and Post-Production Evaluative Essay: Genre and Technique (Due 4 April –10 marks)
Spring Break (16-22 March)		
Week 10 28 March	Documentary: The Screen and Perspective Building objectivity from Cinema to Video to the Web. Even when the first novel came out in the 18 th 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.	Showcase Instruction Video Video Project 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Groups (Pre-production: week 10) Editing Footage (Production/Post-production: week 11) Online Readings – Available on Canvas site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill Nichols, "Chapter 6: Types of Documentary" (2001; 2010)

Week 11 4 April	Video Resources for Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Burns, "We Live This" Beth Sabey, "Sunny" 	Video Project 2 Production and Post-production in groups Forum/class Discussion 2: Types of Documentary Evaluative Essay Due
Week 12 11 April	Critically Understanding Genre and Technique in Videography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods of evaluating video and videography genres through technical form and structure 	Showcase Documentary
Week 13 25 April	Dramatic Serials/Webisodes: The Screen and Audience <p>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 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...</p>	Video Project 3: Dramatic Serials (Due 12 Dec. – 20 marks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Groups (pre-production: week 13)
Weeks 14/15 Friday 2 May Wednesday 7 May	<p>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 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...</p> <p>Distributed Networks: Social Media and the New/You Tube</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vertov: Man with a Movie Camera <p>Social Media Narratives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TikTok, Instagram Webisodes, Cell Phone films <p>HollyTube: YouTube and Vimeo Television Online</p>	Forum/class Discussion 3: Feeling "Sora" for Ourselves 2 marks Online Readings – Available on Canvas site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Kurzrock, "Intensified Play: Cinematic study of TikTok mobile app" (2019) J. Hewlett-Hall, "Folklore, Storytelling and Coping with the Internet on TikTok" (2023) <p>Video Project 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editing Footage (Production: week 14) Post-production/showcase draft: week 15)