



COMM 299 Themes in Film & Digital Media - Filmmaking in Rome

John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2025

Wednesdays | 2:30-5:30pm

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Office Hours: Wed., 11:00-12:00 pm

Course Description

COMM 299: Themes in Film & Digital Media: Filmmaking in Rome is a hands-on introduction to writing, directing and editing the short film. Students participate in the development, production, direction and post-production of a short subject up to ten minutes in length. Filming will take place outside class hours.

The class has no prerequisites, and it includes a field trip to Rome's famed Cinecittà film studios and/or a film screening in one of the main arthouse movie theaters in Rome, followed by a "movie talk" dinner.

By conceiving, planning and executing a short narrative film or documentary, students explore how to choose an appropriate subject, how to develop that idea into the classic three act structure, and how to edit, polish and ultimately bring to market that finished product. Students will work in groups to develop, produce, direct and do post-production of a story up to ten minutes in length. This short film subject will be chosen via class participation prior to shooting. We will also engage in analysis and critique, and consider the potential marketing and distribution of short films through the Internet. There are no prerequisites for this class, enrollment is for anyone - it's recommended the student be familiar with the basics of shooting and editing a short film, whether reading up on it, or making short films.

Learning Outcomes

The class will provide students with practical experience in television/video production of short films.

- *Learn the basic principles of narrative storytelling for film.
- *Develop skills while expressing creativity through video production.
- *Gain an understanding of general video practices, across various contexts.
- *Learn to work collaboratively

Students will work in teams. Number of films will depend on the number of students enrolled. **Maximum length: 10 minutes.** If two or more students co-direct a piece, **Maximum length is 15 minutes.**

Required Text / Materials

Recommended that students bring their own cameras/DSLRs and laptop editing equipment, also not required. Students of this class will be granted an "at home" license for Adobe Creative Cloud, including Adobe Premiere Pro CC, to install on their laptops. The license will last throughout the semester.

If you have no laptop, then faculty computer time will be provided, when available. Campus computers are all equipped with Adobe Premiere.

Students are required to read a film script for class discussion.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

This course meets once a week, thus a total of 1 unexcused absence will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.**

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.

Assessment Components

- 50% - YOUR OVERALL INVOLVEMENT WITH FINAL VIDEO
- 20% - ATTENDANCE AND/OR COOPERATIVE PARTICIPATION WITH OTHERS
- 20% - ASSIGNMENTS AND MEETING DEADLINES
- 10% - FINAL EXAM

Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reasons; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.***

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Course Schedule

Friday Class Day:
Friday 5th



Week 1 – Introduction. Students will pair up into teams and brainstorm on short film ideas (bringing a script and/or short story in public domain that can be adapted is advisable). General discussion of student projects will follow. Assignment of short films to be watched and critiqued. Viewing previous student pieces for evaluation. We will discuss visual style, using locations and elements that are easily accessible.

Week 2-3-4 – From the idea to the final script. Getting familiar with scriptwriting (from the idea to the synopsis, treatment and final script). General discussion of story ideas. Students will work in groups on the storyline and script. Student presentations of their projects/works in progress/Treatments or outlines of individual projects due. Each student will make a presentation, and via review, films will be chosen from those treatments/scripts. Class filming practices start, getting familiar with common filmmaking practices.

Week 5-6 Pre-production/Script breakdown and analysis. All final scripts will be analyzed to deliver a production schedule and a budget. The main roles in a **film crew** are introduced: director, producer, DoP, sound recordist, 1st Ad, production designer, continuity etc. Tentative teams are created. **Casting:** students will be required to film auditions for main roles. Actors will either be other students or actors from Rome, depending on availability. Review documentation: talent releases, insurance, safety, etc. Possible script breakdown or lighting and camera class. Filming practice in class, students will experience different roles on set. Final teams are created, depending on students' weekly schedules.

Week 7-8-9 Shooting period - Filming will take place outside class time, all teams will have to schedule their filming outside class hours. Dailies are watched and commented on in class. Rough cuts in process – Class discussion about rough cuts. Every film team is required to show 3-5 minutes of edited footage in class. Each student is required to present some of the work they've done, whether directing, shooting, or editing.

Week 10-13. Editing. Individual Rough Cut sessions with students or teams. Sign up for one hour of individual evaluations of your progress. Important to add music and work on your sound mix during this period, as your sound work will be included in your final grade.

Marketing and distribution of the short film, via the marketplace, or online DIY distribution.

Fine cuts due – no picture changes without permission from instructor

Final project with final sound mix due. Minor tweaking allowed until the final day to turn in projects. Final edits will require a finished picture and mixed soundtrack.

Week 14

Final screening date TBD.

The final video will be graded on technical achievement, communication, creativity and overall effort per person. Consistency in attendance and assistance on other projects constitutes the second area of evaluation. **Note: it is mandatory you turn in all the paperwork, attend classes regularly and turn in a finished film. This will result in an average grade. In order to get an above average grade, students are required to stretch their talents as filmmakers, to present their idea in a fresh, new perspective, putting their hearts and soul into the project, and doing their best to make a compelling film about a subject matter that is equally compelling, comedic or sheds new light on a subject.**