



Film and Video Production II
COMM-434.001

Spring 2009
Location: tbd
Class Hours: Wednesday, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Professor Greg Smith

Cell: 301.325.4521
Mailbox: SOC Main Office in MGC 300
Office Hours: By appointment.
Email: greg.email@verizon.net
Website: www.prosfromdoverproductions.com

Teaching Assistant: Jai Jamison

Prerequisites: COMM-330, COMM-331, COMM-382, visual media or multimedia design and development major, and minimum 2.5 GPA.

NOTE: The contents of this syllabus are meant as a guide, and *only* as a guide. They detail the semester's requirements and materials and how they will be presented. The specifics of each class (ie, readings, assignments, etc.) may change from week to week. The instructor may deviate from this syllabus without prior notice at any time during the semester; although I will do my best to keep you up to date at the end of each class session.

If you are unclear for any reason about what's due or when, ask me in class or send me an email. If you send an email, *you must make contact with me*; simply sending an email doesn't excuse you from an assignment. Also, please note: you must use the email listed above; I have other email accounts, but am using this one exclusively for this class. If you send a note to an email address *other* than the one listed above, I won't see it and it does not count for this class.

Welcome to your next step in the filmmaking process. I'm excited to have all of you in my class. We'll build on what you've learned in previous courses and learn new techniques and procedures in order to create great films. We've got a lot to do, so let's get to work...

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is intended as the next stage in enhancing the filmmaking abilities you developed in Film and Video Production I. Students will use small-format video to film their projects. Additionally, the course introduces students to basic 16mm cinematography.

Areas covered will include, but not limited to: planning, treatment, shot scripting, development of scene and character, location lighting, refinements in continuity editing techniques, location sound recording, visual design and preparing you for the real world of filmmaking deadlines and responsibilities. The development of student projects will be guided through lectures, screenings, readings, discussions (in which you'll be expected to be an active participant) and hands-on demonstrations in class and in the field. Your work will be discussed and criticized by your peers in a constructive and supportive environment. The objective throughout will be to find an appropriate balance between artistic expression and professional craft.

Here are some of the skills we'll achieve in the next few weeks:

- To develop basic filmmaking production skills
- To understand and better employ lighting techniques
- To understand the difference between film and video as imaging media
- To construct visual narratives that are lucid and aesthetically effective
- To introduce and practice more advanced techniques specific to professional video production and post-production
- To develop critical abilities while analyzing one's own work as well as that of your classmates
- To refine skills in directing, videography, lighting, sound recording and mixing, and digital non-linear editing
- To develop skills unique to documentary and to dramatic narrative production techniques
- To employ a practical vocabulary for working in and communicating about film and video production
- To refine skills to work in collaboration throughout all phases of production
- To learn to think on your feet and troubleshoot technical and logistical issues in the often-hecktic world of production, both in class and in the field
- To practice a superior professional attitude throughout the course

Also, please note the following disclaimer from the Department:

By enrolling in this course, you grant the University permission to have your work, which you created in conjunction with this course, copied and distributed (in print, electronic, and/or any digital medium) and to incorporate your work, in whole or in part, into derivative works for educational, research, archival, promotional and other purposes consistent with the mission of American University.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Art of Technique: An Aesthetic Approach to Film and Video Production
by John S. Douglass and Glenn P. Harnden

The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video
by Tom Schroppel

COURSE GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance/Absences

This is the official policy from the AU Academic Regulations:

Section.09 Absence of Students

The university expects students to attend all classes and to arrive on time. In establishing attendance policies, faculty members may not penalize student for absences resulting from circumstances beyond the student's control, such as illness, accident, religious observance or representing the university at athletic or other off-campus activities. *Faculty members may require reasonable documentation in support of a student's request to be excused from class* and may set reasonable dates by which missed work must be submitted. If a student's absences are so frequent, such as during a prolonged illness, as to make satisfactory progress in a class unlikely, a faculty member may recommend that a student drop the course under the regulations covering changes in registration (see 75.00.06.A2.a-b).

Simply put, class attendance is mandatory. We have a lot to cover this semester and most of what we cover will be presented in class or class-related labs. Here are the guidelines:

1. If you miss a class and want this to be considered "excused", you'll be required to provide some sort of documentation to support that absence; ie, a doctor's note, etc. Please don't abuse this privilege.
2. A student with two *unexcused* absences will have their final grade for the course lowered by one full letter (ie, an A would become a B). The final grade will be lowered an additional letter for every absence greater than two.
3. If you plan to take advantage of a University-approved religious holiday that is *not* a regular AU closing date, you must make contact with, and advise me at least 24 hours before the class you will be missing.

4. Be on time. If you are more than 10 minutes late to a class, it will count as an unexcused absence.
5. It is the student's responsibility to get notes on missed lectures and assignments.
6. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for any assignments which are due at the next class.

2. Participation in Class Discussions

Filmmaking is a collaborative art. You are required to participate in discussions and to give your classmates constructive criticism and receive criticism yourself. You will also be expected at times to partner with your classmates. You will be graded on how good a partner you are in terms of making yourself available for others' projects.

3a. Handing in Assignments to Blackboard Digital Dropbox

Written assignments should be sent to the Digital Dropbox within the announced deadline. Email submissions will not be accepted. Late assignments will have one letter grade subtracted for every day that it is late.

Important note on Digital Dropbox:

- It is each student's responsibility to learn to properly use and post items to the Digital Dropbox. If you don't know how, contact the Help Line at: 202.885.3904
- The digital dropbox is located in the Tools section of Blackboard.
- **Common mistake:** There is a difference between "saving" or "adding" a file and "submitting" it. You must "submit" a file for it to count. When you are ready to post your file (so that I can see it), select "Send file", NOT "Add File". (Adding the file only saves it to the server.) After you have hit "Send File", hit "Submit" at the bottom of the page. This will properly post it, and then you will get the following page that says:

Receipt: Success

The file has been sent to the selected users with role of instructor.

...That's the confirmation that you've posted it properly. If you don't see this notice, you haven't properly posted it.

- I would also recommend that you do not include any so-called strange or unusual characters in the filename of the document - so no numbers, spaces or symbols. For some reason, Blackboard has had occasional difficulty in downloading documents with these types of characters in their names.

3b. Handing in Assignments on Tape:

The **Music Video and Rough Cut** projects should be handed in on **Mini-DV** tape and the tape itself must be properly labeled:

- *Your name
- *class (COMM 434)
- *date
- *project title
- *and TRT (total running time).

The Final Film Project Rough Cuts and Complete film should have head and end credits. The end credit roll usually doesn't exceed 30 seconds. If you're rolling music under the end credits, this music should either end cold or fade out at or near the end of the credits. After the final image and sound have disappeared, add 30 seconds of black.

When turning in a tape, projects must be cued up to the beginning of the countdown so that we don't have to roll through a lot of stuff to get to the film. Also note that the **required length of the Final Film Project** includes everything from the *end* of the countdown at the top, through and including the end of the credit roll.

Also...very important: Keep a copy of anything you hand in. This is especially important for diagrams and storyboards that are difficult to replicate.

Also very important: Be careful to back up and/or keep extra copies of your work in progress. In years past, there have been instances of students who have had their portable hard drives stolen just before the assignments are due. This is not an excuse for a missed deadline.

4. Reading Assignments

It is expected that you will have completed the assigned readings as given out in class and posted on Blackboard. The reading is relevant to both the lecture on that day and the stage at which you should be in your own projects.

5. Checking Out Equipment

Equipment Room Manager: Geoff Turner 202-885-2092. Geoff is a good guy. Make him your friend. Bring him muffins. Treat him with respect.

You must reserve equipment *well in advance* by submitting your request in person in the Equipment Room using the reservation book kept by the staff. They will not take reservations over the phone. Demand for equipment is always high, especially at the end of the semester, and one of the skills you will be responsible for is **planning ahead**. Leave yourself plenty of time to allow for possible equipment malfunction, equipment unavailability, bad weather, scheduling conflicts with crew and actors, etc. If you have made a reservation and you are unable to take advantage of it, cancel it as soon as

possible to allow other students to use the equipment. Failure to do so will be brought to my attention.

Sharing of equipment is encouraged, but the student under whose name the equipment is checked out is the student responsible for its safe return. You will be held responsible for any damage to, or loss of the equipment.

Here are a few common sense rules to live by when using University camera equipment:

- *Never leave equipment in your car in plain sight or overnight (even in the trunk.)
- *Never leave the equipment unattended *anywhere...even for a moment.*
- *Do not attempt any maintenance. Bring any equipment problems to the attention of the Equipment Room staff.
- *Do not leave the Equipment Room without first checking that all the equipment is working satisfactorily.
- *Please inform the Equipment Room attendants of any malfunctions when you return the equipment.

Also note that if you want to use your *own* equipment to complete a project, you have to get prior approval from me.

6. Supplies

There are a few items which you'll need to purchase for the class. Some of these are **required**, some are **suggested**:

Required to purchase:

*Each student will need to purchase several **mini-DV** tapes, available at the Equipment Renter in The Media Production Center. These will be used in the camera and for the assignments you will turn in. Always use a **new** tape; re-use of recycled tapes can lead to drop outs and other technical complications.

*After you finish editing a project, **save** your file independently because files stored on University computers are eventually deleted. Each student is required to purchase their own **external hard drive** to store their projects. Drives have come down in price substantially and are very affordable now. You should do this not only to protect your project from unwanted deletion, but because many of you will work on your projects in several different locations (MPC, MGC, Advanced Lab, etc.). Having your projects on a personal/portable external drive means you can move from one lab to another without fear of losing your project.

Suggested to purchase:

*When you check out a microphone from the Equipment Room, if it takes a battery, make sure that the battery is *brand new*. In addition, I strongly recommend carrying

extra microphone batteries. You can get these in the Equipment Room when you check out a microphone.

*You may want to purchase a set of **real headphones** to use with the camera/microphone. My favorite is the Sony 7506, which has both ¼” and mini-stereo adaptation. (Using these with your iPod will blow you away!) It’s better to use headphones that have a larger foam ear covering, rather than the “bud-style” earphones that typically come with an iPod; though if you have to use ear buds, they’ll do in a pinch.

*Each crew may want to purchase a piece of **white foam-core board** (available at art supply stores such as Pearl). Suggested size: 4 x 4 feet square. Some pieces may be available at the Equipment Room. These will come in handy as a reflector when you are using lights.

One additional note on shooting in the field:

Make sure that your rechargeable camera batteries are *fully charged* before you begin shooting and that you have the proper A/C adapter for the camera just in case you need to recharge those batteries during the course of a shoot. The A/C adapter can also be used to directly power the camera if the batteries go dead.

7. Editing

You will be using Final Cut Pro software for your assignments. Getting comfortable with this software is crucial to your success in this class and future assignments. If you need a refresher, the Department offers Practicums in using this software.

In the world of computers, stuff happens...frequently...and when you can least afford for things to go bad. It would be in your best interest to follow these simple rules:

1. Here is some very good advice on editing...learn it and it may save your life:

SAVE IT

BACK IT UP (extra copy)

and KNOW WHERE YOU SAVED ALL OF YOUR WORK.

2. You should thoroughly understand the difference between your **program** and your **media**, as well as the different hard drive locations and the means of backup. .

3. Never walk away from your edit station, even for a moment, without saving and backing up. Become **OBSESSIVE** about this. It will save you many headaches in the future.

4. **DON’T WAIT TILL THE LAST MINUTE TO EDIT.** Plan on being done with your project before it is due. This allows time for technical problems, scheduling problems etc. “An editing suite wasn’t available,” is **NOT** an acceptable excuse. As you might guess, the labs get really busy at the end of the semester. You should take

that into account and beat the rush. “Murphy’s Law” says: “If you are editing 10 minutes before class, the computers will sense this and cease working.” Count on it. If you don’t have your project ready at the beginning of class, it will be considered late and you’ll drop at least one letter grade immediately.

5. And finally, lost work through negligence will not be accepted. Simply put, losing projects because you didn’t save it properly, or bad transfers, bad planning, leaving a hard drive unattended, etc, are *not* valid excuses for turning in work late or not at all. That’s the way it is in the real world and, for that reason, that’s the way we do things in this class. My advice is to double and triple check that your work is saved and that your work tape plays properly on *several* DV players before bringing it into class.

8. Academic Integrity Code

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering for this class, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code and are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will be treated seriously and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. If you have questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general, or as they relate to particular requirements for this course, please see me.

Simply put, most of the Code boils down to this:

- *You are responsible for your *own* education.
- *You need to do your own work and cite sources accurately.
- *The work you turn in must be your own.
- *Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated on any level and taken very seriously.
- *“Shading the truth” is the same as lying and will be treated as such.

9. Professionalism

1. We are professionals in this course and you will be expected to treat me and your fellow filmmakers with the utmost respect.

2. The presence of a camera and an artistic vision does not give you license to violate someone’s privacy. Always ask permission before you videotape someone’s likeness, even in a public place, and then get a signed release from them (there will be release forms posted on the Blackboard site which you can download. Take these releases with you on every shoot.). Do not enter private property without permission. If you are using a commercial property as a location, such as a store, approach the manager, explain what you are doing and ask permission and get a signed release. If it is not granted, find another location.

3. Do not attempt even *remotely* dangerous stunts, or attempt to use pyrotechnics or other special effects without express approval from the instructor, and then only under professional supervision.

4. When taping in a public space, be aware of how your “performance” may appear to outsiders. In an age of perpetual security threats, prop weapons and simulated violence can be very convincing and very frightening to onlookers and police.

GRADING

A	95 - 100 points
A-	90 – 94
B+	88 - 89
B	83 – 87
B-	80 – 82
C+	78 - 79
C	73 – 77
C-	70 – 72
D+	68 - 69
D	63 – 67
D-	60 - 62
F	59 and below

For example:

A level work will demonstrate originality, outstanding technique in the service of the theme, evidence of preparation and attention to detail. This level of work goes *well beyond* simply satisfying the technical requirements. It will demonstrate creative storytelling through the craft and professional preparation. This is a *superior* level of achievement.

B level work demonstrates an understanding of the concepts and technique of the assignment, meeting all of the required specifications of an assignment and adequate preparation for that assignment.

C level work demonstrates some appropriate use of the technique, but is marked by evidence of insufficient preparation, lack of attention to detail, rushed editing, missing required elements, etc.

D level work means you’re doing the minimum to get by, don’t hand in assignments on time, only participate when called on and have a generally poor attitude toward class requirements and the professionalism needed to become a filmmaker.

F level work means...well...we all know what that means.

And remember:

1. I don’t give out grades in this class. You **earn** them or you don’t.
2. *Take responsibility for the work you’ve been assigned.* If you miss a deadline or screw up on an assignment, take responsibility for it. I will help you through whatever I can, but I don’t like giving extensions, etc, just because you couldn’t fit

work for this class into your very busy schedule. You'll be busy this semester. So will I. We're all busy. That's not an excuse for not getting something done. I hold the line on this point because this is the way things are in the real world; if you miss a deadline there, you lose a client or your job. These are the guidelines under which we will operate in this class.

Course Grading Outline

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the assignments below weighted by the following percentages. Explanations of each category and assignment are below.

Assignments are due **by the beginning of the class**. That includes assignments that you bring into class (ie: rough cuts and other video presentations) as well as Assigned Reports, which must be posted to Blackboard's Digital Drop Box. Your grade will drop by a letter grade for every class late on any assignment.

20%	Assigned Reports (2 x 10% each): "Greatest Scene" & "Features vs. Docs"
25%	Music Video Project (including journal)
10%	"Greatest Scene" presentation
5%	Film project pre-production
10%	Two Film Project Rough Cuts (5% for each)
20%	Finished Film (including journal)
10%	<u>Participation, attendance, professionalism, etc.</u>
100%	TOTAL

CLASS SCHEDULE

Here is the official AU calendar for SPRING SEMESTER 2009:

January 4–11	Su–Su	Spring Welcome Week
January 9	F	Last day to register for spring 2009 without a late fee
January 12	M	Spring classes begin
		Late registration (with \$50 fee) begins
		Students begin submitting applications for spring graduation
January 15	Th	Freshman fall semester admission application deadline
January 16	F	Late registration for spring ends
		Last day to drop MBA 1st Module courses for 100% refund and without a "W" recorded
January 19	M	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; no classes, university offices closed
January 20	T	Inauguration Day; no classes, university offices closed

January 21 W Mathematics Equivalency Examination
 January 26 M Last day to add a spring course or change a grade option
 Last day to drop a spring course for a 100% refund and without a
 "W" recorded
 Last day to drop MBA 1st Module courses for a 50% refund
 (no refunds for 1st Modules after this date)
 February 2 M Last day to drop a spring course for a 50% refund
 Last day to add an internship or Cooperative Education Field
 Experience
 Last day to drop MBA 1st Module courses
 February 7 S English Competency Examination
 February 9 M Last day to drop a spring course for a 25% refund (no refunds after
 this date)
 Last day to add an independent reading course or study project
 February 15 Su Freshman fall semester financial aid application deadline
 February 16 M Early warning notices due in Registrar's Office
 March 1 Su Undergraduate transfer fall and spring semester financial aid
 application deadline
 March 6 F Last day to drop a spring class (mid-term)
March 8–15 Su–Su Spring break; no classes, university offices open
Monday through Friday
 March 16 M MBA 2nd Module courses begin
 March 20 F Last day to drop MBA 2nd Module courses for 100% refund and
 without a "W" recorded
 March 27 F Last day to drop MBA 2nd Module courses for a 50% refund
 (no refunds for 2nd Modules after this date)
 March 28 S English Competency Examination
 March 30 M Summer 2009 registration (with payment) and Fall 2009 advance
 registration (with billing) begins
 April 6 M Last day to drop MBA 2nd Module courses
April 28 T Spring classes end
 Theses and dissertations due in Registrar's Office for spring degree
 candidates
 April 29 W Spring study day; no classes
April 30–May 6 Th–W Spring final examinations
 May 1 F Undergraduate transfer fall semester admission application
 deadline for students living outside the United States
 May 5–11 T–M Spring final grades due
 May 8 F Commencement Weekend Activities
 May 9 S Commencement Ceremonies: School of Public Affairs (9:00 a.m.)
 School of Communication (1:00 p.m.)
 College of Arts and Sciences (4:30 p.m.)
 May 10 Su Commencement Ceremonies: Kogod School of Business (9:00
 a.m.)
 School of International Service (1:00 p.m.)

And here is our tentative class schedule, which is subject to change:

1/14/09 Class One

Lecture: Welcome; syllabus review; misc “great” film clips

Speaker: Desson Thomson: “Great scenes”

Assignment: prepare “Greatest Scene” presentation and report

1/21 Class Two

Due: “Greatest Scene” presentation and report

Assignment: Report: “Features vs. Docs”

1/28 Class Three

Due: Report: “Features vs. Docs”

Lecture: MX in film; MX videos

Pick teams for MX video and outline the project

Assignment: Beginning shooting Music Video Project

Reading: lighting techniques from Schroppel, Douglass

2/4 Class Four

Lecture/Lab: lighting techniques

Assignment: Continue shooting MX video

2/11 Class Five

Due: Screen Music Videos

Assignment: Reading: Treatments, beat sheets, storyboarding from Schroppel, Douglass

2/18 Class Six

Lecture: Treatments, beat sheets, storyboarding

Speaker: Matt McNevin: pitches, treatments and beat sheets

Assign “teams” for Final Film Project: Groups A and B

Assignment: Prepare pitch for final film project idea; as well as Treatment, Beat Sheet and Storyboards

2/25 Class Seven

Due/Presentation: Pitches for Final Film Project; including Treatment, Beat Sheet and Storyboards

Assignment: Begin filming Final Film Project

3/4 Class Eight

Lab/Lecture: Sound recording

Assignment: Continue Final Film Project; Group A prep for Rough Cut #1 screenings

3/11 Spring Break: No Class

3/18 Class Nine

Due/Screen: Rough Cut #1, Group A

Assignment: Continue Final Film Project; Group B prep for Rough Cut #1 screenings

3/25 Class Ten

Due/Screen: Rough Cut #1, Group B

Assignment: Continue filming/editing Final Film Project; Group A prepare for
Rough Cut #2 screenings

4/1 Class Eleven

Due/Screen: Rough Cut #2, Group A

Assignment: Group B prep for Rough Cut #2 screenings

4/8 Class Twelve

Due/Screen: Rough Cut #2, Group B

Assignment: Group A prepare for Finished Film screenings

4/15 Class Thirteen

Due/Screen: Group A Finished Film screenings

Assignment: Group B prepare for Finished Film screenings

4/29 No Class, official AU study day

5/6 Class Fourteen

Due/Screen: Group B Finished Film screenings

Lecture: Final thoughts

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS

Note: The films and reports you turn in will *not* be returned, and I won't make copies of them for you after you turn them in. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you keep a copy of whatever you hand in.

Reports (2 x 10% = 20% total for both reports)

During the semester, I'll assign two reports. The first will be a report on the differences and similarities between feature films and documentaries. The second will be a report on your "Greatest Scene Ever" (see below for details.) These reports must be a minimum of three pages, double-spaced. Footnotes and references if applicable. **All reports must be posted to the Digital Dropbox on Blackboard.**

Music Video Project (25%)

You will work in teams to produce a music video. Each team will be given the same song on which to base your film. Following the lyrics to the chosen version, each team will produce/film its own version of a music video to accompany the supplied song. The only soundtrack of the film will be the music. Each member of the team will be responsible for equal parts of the assignment; trade off and share all duties. **You must turn in this project on Mini-DV. Other formats will not be accepted.**

The tape you turn in will be formatted along the following lines:

1. Dub your project directly from the computer (Final Cut Pro program) to **virgin** (new) **Mini-DV** tape. *Do not use a recycled tape*, as this may cause dropouts.
2. At the top of each tape:
 - :30 of black
 - Countdown from eight
 - Head Titles (these can be “MTV style” over the first shot)
 - The body of the video
 - End titles (these can be “MTV style” over the final shot)
3. When you bring your tape into class for screening, make sure it is cued to the beginning of the countdown.
4. Most importantly: before turning it in, *make very sure to review your tape* to be sure there’s something there. If there’s nothing on your tape, it will be graded late. I would suggest playing it back on more than one machine after you’ve finished making your master copy.

I will be grading the video project based on the following:

1. Lighting
2. Camera work
3. A mixture of shots, including, but not limited to: close-up, wide and medium shots
4. An overall professionalism and feel to the completed video
5. A complete Production Journal (see below)
6. Ability to work with team members

As part of this project, you’ll be required to turn in a **Production Journal**, minimum two pages, double spaced. Write it in diary/chronological style. Include your experiences and that of your crew: expectations, successes, failures, lessons learned, etc. These reports will be confidential; its contents will not be shared with any other member of the class. So please be honest, direct, constructive and complete as I may rely on these comments to assess group teamwork and cooperation. For example, if others in your group were helpful, say why. If you feel that they let you down, explain what you expected and how you feel they didn’t come through. When you’re done, **post these Journals to the Digital Dropbox in Blackboard.**

“Greatest Scene Ever” Project (10%)

The purpose of this project is to highlight a scene from a chosen film and explain, in a presentation to the class, why you think it’s the “greatest scene ever.” It’s simple: choose a particular movie, pick one of the key scenes. This scene should be *no more than five minutes in length*. (The Library has a wonderful selection of DVD’s to choose from.) You’re looking to choose a film that displays “greatness” in terms of technical expertise and connection to the general audience. Once you’ve shown your scene (clip) to the class, you’ll explain:

1. Details about the filmmaker, release date, any awards, etc.
2. Talk about the **technical aspects** of the film, including, but not limited to: lighting, camera work, directing, historical context, sound, music, etc., and how these elements made this such a great scene.
3. Talk about the **emotional** aspects of the film, including how the film connects to the audience.
4. Demonstrate an overall understanding of why the film, in your opinion, is important to the craft of filmmaking and cinematic history.

In addition, write a three page, double-spaced report on all of the above, and **post it to the Digital Dropbox** before the start of the class on the day of the presentation.

Final Film Project: 4-8 min. (35% Total)

The purpose of this project is to combine all of the techniques you have learned during this and previous semesters. This will be an original work. Your film must have **a beginning, a middle and an end**. I’d prefer you attempt a dramatic or comedic idea, but you may attempt a documentary approach if approved by me.

Each student will be responsible for their own film, but we will assign support groups for everyone. As a group member, you will be required to aid other members of your specific group in the filming, editing and production of their film. You will be graded not only on your film, but on how good a group member you have been; i.e.: a good group member makes themselves available when needed.

The class will be divided into two main groups: A and B. This will be a random selection on my part. Everyone will have the same relative amount of time to work on their project.

The Final Film Project grading will be broken out into three categories:

- 5% Preproduction** (Pitch, treatment, beat sheet and storyboards)
- 10% Two Rough Cuts (5% for each; screened in Mini-DV format)**
- 20% Finished film (screened in DVD format)**

The breakdown is explained below:

Pre-production

You will be required to submit:

- A **Treatment** of an original idea for your final film. It should be at least three pages, double spaced, printed and checked for grammar and spelling. It should include a basic prose style description of the story. I should be able to discern the subject, goal, obstacles and resolution. You should write it in “**treatment style**”, meaning that you use **present tense, visual language** to describe the story from the perspective of a viewer watching the completed film. Focus on **what we see**.
- A “**Beat Sheet**”: a breakdown of the film scene by scene.
- A complete set of **Storyboards** for your entire film...scene by scene. No fewer than 10 boards, no more than 30.

Rough Cuts

There will be **two** of these (check the calendar for specific dates.) These are the parameters for the rough cuts:

1. The rough cut should be at least **80% of the final film**. Scenes which are missing should be replaced by a “card” that says “**Scene Missing**”. This card will bridge the gap between the already-filmed scenes. This card should be on the screen for approximately 4 seconds.
2. The editing and sound mix can be in a rough form. (You will make the final sound level adjustments for the final presentation.)
3. If there is to be a lot of music in the final film, I’d like to hear *some* of that music in the rough cut.
4. The rough cut film should be mastered **to Mini-DV**.

A reminder: There are quite a few students in this class and many more film students on campus shooting films than there is available equipment. *Book your equipment early.*

Also, *do not wait until the last minute* to edit your rough cut (or final film). “I couldn’t get into an editing suite because they were all booked” is *not* a reasonable excuse for not turning in your film on time and you’ll lose points. *Plan ahead.*

Finished Film

For the **completed** version of the Final Film Project, **turn it in on DVD**.

I will base your grade on the following:

1. Camera movement and composition should support the themes of the film.
2. Where appropriate, it should incorporate audio location synch sound recorded with a boom mic. You should include appropriate dialogue and action sequences. This is to demonstrate that you understand basic microphone recording techniques. ADR the scenes that need them (when location sound is too distant or not clear.)
3. Use of music. You’ll be graded on how well it supports the piece.
4. Professional “look” and feel to the film.

5. Scenes which use artificial light should demonstrate an understanding of the basic three-point lighting arrangement.
6. The editing should demonstrate an understanding of the rules of continuity, rhythm and pacing.

On the day you screen your completed film, you will also turn in:

Hand me a copy of your **call sheets, shooting schedule, location logs and release forms.*

Post to Blackboard a **Production Journal.* These are due by the beginning of the class. The Journal must be at least three pages, in diary style, double-spaced, of your experience and your crew: expectations, successes, failures, and lessons for the future. Walk me through the process you went through to make this film: from pre-production, through production and into post-production. Also, tell me what you'd do differently next time. At the top of the first page, put:

(your name)

Production Journal

COMM 434

Prof Smith

(date)

(name of your film)

(your other crew members)

Participation, Professionalism and Teamwork (10%)

This portion of your grade is *subjective*, that is, it's based on how I feel you performed in both the tangible and intangible areas of the class. It's also *cumulative*, that is, you need to demonstrate these qualities from Day One...not just at the end of the semester. If you're not sure where you stand at any given time, ask me. This portion of your grade is based on:

*Contributions to the discussions in class.

*Both receiving and giving constructive criticism of your peers' projects.

*The completeness of your proposals and demonstration of planning and effective time management.

*Class attendance. See guidelines below as to what constitutes an **officially excused** absence. Only officially excused absences will be accepted.

*Information about your performance from both your and others' Project (Production) Journals.

Final Thoughts

Inclement Weather:

If the weather seems like we might not have class, call the number below to find out whether the school will be open. Should we have a “weather day” on a day that an assignment is due, I expect the assignment to be turned in by the next possible class that the university *is* open.

AU EMERGENCY WEATHER STATUS

202-885-1100

My Complete Contact Information

I will try my best to make myself available to you when you need me. Please don’t hesitate to contact me by email (first) or phone (second) if you have any questions, problems, observations, etc. Here is my contact info:

My Email: greg.email@verizon.net
My Website: www.prosfromdoverproductions.com
My cell 301.325.4521
My Mailbox: SOC Main Office in MGC 300
My Office Hours: **By appointment only**

Also this bears repeating: if you send an email, *you must make contact with me*; simply *sending* an email doesn’t excuse you from an assignment. Also, very important: you must use the email I’ve listed. I have other email accounts, but am using this one exclusively for this class. If you send a note to an email address *other* than the one listed below, I won’t see it and it does not count for this class.

Other essential AU contact numbers

Blackboard (Digital Dropbox)	202.885.3904
SOC Main	202.885.2060
AU EMERGENCY WEATHER STATUS	202.885-1100
PUBLIC SAFETY EMERGENCY	202.885-3636
Public Safety NON-Emergency	202.885-2527
Student Info After-Hours	202.885-3535
Ali Shirazi, Broadcast Center Manager	x2888 shirazi@american.edu
Geoff Turner, Equipment Room Mgr.	x2092 gturner@american.edu