

## Intro to Film Language

**Course code: FMS 200**

**Semester and year: Spring 2021**

**Day and time: Mondays 14:45 - 17:30**

**Instructor: Prof. Marek Jícha, MgA. Doc.**

**Instructor contact: marek.jicha@aauni.edu tel: 723437344**

**Consultation hours: Preferably by appointment or Mondays, 17:30 – 18.15**

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Introductory
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	None
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Bachelors/Elective

### 1. Course Description:

This course focuses on increasing the students' awareness of how the camera contributes to the development of film language or visual dramatization. In film, a director and cinematographer collaborate on the use of expressive tools which constitute film language. The main cinematic tools are Movement, Framing, Points of View, Angles, Shot sizes, Axis rules, Depth of Field, Resolution, Color and Compositional factors, including the Golden Ratio. Each tool will be examined separately for its expressive potential, with examples from different screenings used to help the student understand how each tool may contribute to developing a film's language and dramatic potential. Several styles are examined in order to expand the student's awareness of the tools' expressive range. Movement is stressed, since film is above all else, motion pictures.

### 2. Student learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able:

- to define film language as visual dramatization and the cinematic tools used to create it.
- identify the expressive tools available to the filmmaker for visual dramatization
- understand the role of movement, framing, points of view, angles, shot sizes, axis rules, depth of field, resolution, color and compositional factors in developing a film's expressive language and telling a dramatic story visually.
- define each of the above named expressive tools and give an example of their functioning in film.
- have experience capturing in photographs a short story sequence using tools of movement, frame and shot size.
- analyze film sequences for the interplay of expressive tools

### 3. Reading Material:

#### ***Required Materials***

**Course material is available digitally, on NEO, with selected chapters from the books named below.**

#### ***Additional Recommended Materials:***

Daniel Arijon: *Grammar of The Film Language*

Bruce Block: *The Visual Story*

### 4. Teaching Methodology

The course consists of lectures devoted to developing an understanding of each expressive tool, with screenings of short sequences from films wherein the tool's functions are especially interesting for developing a film's dramatic storytelling and visual style. Discussion of film clips viewed will be of importance. Class time is also devoted to student presentations of exercises assigned.

### 5. Preliminary Course Schedule:

Date	Class Agenda
Feb. 8 <b>Lesson 1</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Theory of Visual Intensity for dramatic storytelling and introduction to the tools of film language. Theory of Spectator. Introduction to Filmlanguage Camera Tools. Elaboration of syllabus. Screening of slapstick comedy <i>Sktitek</i> (The Imp) cinematographed and edited by Marek Jicha.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Bruce Block: <i>The Visual Story</i>, pages 2.-8. (on NEO)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Become familiar with course syllabus and readings, start of "Catch the Movement exercise"</p>
Feb. 15 <b>Lesson 2</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Movement Theory as a tool for increasing visual intensity. "Catch the motion exercise" assigned.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Movement as the first tool and screening of Melies' films. Screening of clips from Vertov "Man with a Movie Camera (1929), Walter Ruttmann „Symphony of the City“, Alexander Hackenschmied „Aimless walk“. (Feature, Documentrary, News). In-depth analysis of movement as cinema's most expressive tool; Development of film movement, types of movement explored (within shot, with camera, subjective, movement within movement...). Further elaboration on types of cinematic motion. „Catch the motion exercise" assigned and explained.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Bruce Block: <i>The Visual Story</i>, pages 168.-193.(on NEO)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare "Catch the movement" exercise to be edited within camera and presented on Oct 5th. Exercise: complete and upload to youtube.</p>
Feb. 22 <b>Lesson 3</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Movement Theory - Presentations and critique of "Catch the movement."</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Screening of each student's uploaded (youtube) exercise with feedback.</p> <p>Screening and analysis of film <b><i>A Song of Two Humans</i></b> (also known as <b><i>Sunrise</i></b>) is from 1927, directed by <b>Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau</b>.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Written analysis of Sunrise/Murnau for its expressive use of movement</p>
March 1 <b>Lesson 4</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Framing Theory as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> In-depth analysis of frame as practical and evocative tool for engaging audience imagination and raising questions related to story</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Bruce Block: <i>The Visual Story</i>, pages 62-73 (on NEO)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p>
March 8 <b>Lesson 5</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Framing Theory – Continuing.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Screening and analysis of film <b><i>The Sacrifice</i></b> (Swedish <b><i>Offret</i></b>), 1986 film of Andrei Tarkovsky.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Bruce Block: <i>The Visual Story</i>, pages 62-73</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Written analysis of Sacrifice/Tarkovski</p>
March 15 <b>Lesson 6</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Narration and POV Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Theory and expressive purpose of POV shots (POV of character, POV of narrator, POV of camera, POV of author and POV of spectator)</p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Written analysis of Sacrifice/Tarkovski</p>
March 22 <b>Lesson 7</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Composition and the Golden Number Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Balanced and unbalanced picture compositions. Director and Cinematographer's work Golden number. Center of the Picture. Closed and</p>

	<p>Open Compositions. Dramatization created when compositions are unbalanced. Review of Historical Styles in Visual Art.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare „Composition Exercise“ in shot composition - take a person as subject (could be still photographic or with movement):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Person is situated in the centre of the shot.</li> <li>2. Person is situated in golden section line</li> <li>3. Person is situated in 1/3 composition line</li> <li>4. (3 compositions) Person in the park in Gothic style (symbolic), Renaissance (realistic) style and Baroque (expressive) style.</li> </ol> <p>Exercise to be edited within camera and presented on April 6. Exercise: complete and upload to youtube.</p>
<p>March 29 <b>Lesson 8</b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Depth of Field Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Presentations and critique of „Composition Exercise.“ + Theory of Depth of Field. Lenses (telephoto, wide, normal use, aberrations, refocusing by focus puller). Basics of optical laws. Circle of Confusion. Perspective as tool for 3D look. Four basic ways to keep 3D look.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare for First written test on Nov. 9</p>
<p>April 5</p>	<p><b>No Class Spring Break</b></p>
<p>April 12 <b>Lesson 9</b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Depth of Field Theory continued / Midterm test</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Theory of Depth of Field. Lenses (telephoto, wide, normal use, aberrations, refocusing by focus puller). Basics of optical laws. Circle of Confusion. Perspective as tool for 3D look. Four basic ways to keep 3D look. + <b>First Written Test</b> (material from lectures on Movement, Framing Theory, Narration and POV Theory, Composition Theory) / Objective test taken during last 45 minutes of class.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Material from <i>Grammar of The Film Language</i> (on NEO)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> reading is preparatory for upcoming exercise „Shot sizes and composition“ due Nov. 23</p>
<p>April 19 <b>Lesson 10</b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Shot Sizes and Spatial Resolution Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> preparation for final exercise</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> "Dialogue between two players" (Grammar, pp. 50-74) in digital reader</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare Exercise „Shot sizes and composition“ - take a subject (must have person in story), and create simple story (interview or encounter) in ten shots. First shot is exposition (who/where), remaining shots portray simple actions, shot in closeups. Complete exercise and upload to youtube. Due Nov. 23rd</p>
<p>April 26 <b>Lesson 11</b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Presentation and Critique of Shot size exercise</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Screening of each student's uploaded (youtube) exercise with feedback. + Start of Color (Wheel) Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for test on Dec. 14</p>
<p>May 3 <b>Lesson 12</b></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Color (Wheel) Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Aristotle, Newton, Goethe, Maxwell, Itten. Color Spaces and Color management. Color correction as Final Tool. Colorgrading "before" Shooting. Color Correction Sandwiches. Color of costumes. Colors of set and props. Painters' methods to mix colors. Impressionistic, Expressionistic, Decorative and Symbolic way of using colors.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for test on Dec. 14</p>

May 10 <b>Lesson 13</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Axes and Angles Theory - as a tool for increasing visual intensity. Ten basic rules how to cross the Line of the action without confusing spectators. Classic and non standard Lighting.</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Expressive tools are reviewed and discussed. Using the camera to create angles. How to exploit a location's potential. Theory of backgrounds.</p> <p>Lighting Theory – Two basic ways: Conventional "Hollywood" lighting as used presently compared with the "Neorealistic" lighting method which came into use after WWII.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for exam on May 25</p>
May 17 <b>Lesson 14</b>	<p><b>Final exams' week:</b> Written Test (lectures on Depth of field Theory, Shot Sizes and Spatial Resolution Theory, Color (Wheel) Theory, Axes and Angles Theory).</p>

## **6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)**

### **Extended Course Description:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Workload (average)</b>	<b>Weight in Final Grade</b>	<b>Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*</b>
Attendance and Class Participation	42	10%	Understanding of film language Ability to discern expressive tools within film sequences	1, 2, 3
"Catch the Motion" Exercise	15	15%	Ability to recognize and work with motion as expressive tool	1, 2, 3
Midterm Exam	15	15%	Understanding of film language	1
Shot size exercise	15	15%	Ability to recognize and work with shot size as expressive tool	1, 2, 3
„Composition Exercise	15	15%	Ability to recognize and work with composition as expressive tool	1, 2, 3
Written analyses	10	15%	2x written observations on use of expressive tools in film screened	1, 2, 3
Final Exam	38	15%	Understanding of film language	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## **7. Detailed description of the assignments**

**[Written analyses of films screened in class]:** The student observes particular expressive tools at work in the film screened and notes key moments in the film where the tool was used to advance action, involve the audience and/or add significance to the film. Analysis is short. One page. Details (specific questions to be answered) will be given in class at time of screenings.

### **Assessment breakdown**

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Understanding of expressive tool(s) and function	35
Clarity of examples cited from film	35
Completed on time	30

**["Catch the Movement"]:** The student captures ten shots with movement that is not made by people. Examples shown in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Understanding motion as key to cinematic storytelling	20
Visual clarity	20
Adherence to exercise rules: ten shots (10 points), no dialogue (10 points), no person shown in sequence (10 points), simple action divided into stages (10 points), uploaded to youtube (10 points), completed on time (10 points)	60

**["Shot size exercise"]:** Exercise in shot sizes. Students create simple visual interview between two people in ten shots. First shot is long shot exposition (who/where), remaining shots in closeups. Location must change once, using new long shot. Complete exercise and upload to youtube. Only two long shots allowed, all else close-ups. More details given in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Understanding of wide shot for use in exposition	10
Understanding of close ups for conveying emotional information	10
Clarity of Visual story-telling	20
Adherence to exercise rules: ten shots (10 points), location change (10 points), two people (journalist and subject) (10 points), simple action revealed visually (10 points), uploaded to youtube (10 points), completed on time (10 points)	60

**["Composition exercise"]:** Choose a person as subject (could be still photographic or with movement):

1. Person is situated in the centre of the shot.
2. Person is situated in golden section line
3. Person is situated in 1/3 composition line

Prepare 3 compositions: Person in the park in Gothic style (symbolic), Renaissance (realistic) style and Baroque (expressive) style.

Exercise to uploaded to youtube. More details given in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Understanding compositional principles	20
Understanding different compositional styles	20
Adherence to exercise rules: clear subject and location (10 points), clear location (10 points), three different compositions (20 points), uploaded to youtube (10 points), completed on time (10 points)	60

**8. General Requirements and School Policies**

**General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

**Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

### **Attendance**

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Absence excuse and make-up options**

Should the student be absent from a class for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he needs to submit an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents proving the reasons for absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week from the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### **Electronic devices**

Normally, when meeting on campus, electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### **Cheating and disruptive behavior**

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior, the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center**

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND–REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self plagiarize.

6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU. If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### **Course accessibility and inclusion**

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

### **9.Grading Scale**

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Percentage*</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	95 – 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A–	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B–	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C–	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student’s work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	

F	0 – 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.
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\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Prepared by and when:** Revised by Marek Jícha, Jan 22, 2021

**Approved by and when:** Alzbeta Klatova, 1/2/2021