

**INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION-FALL 2009**  
**MCM 271-Section 2**  
**MWF 2:00-2:50 a.m.**  
**Dan Rather Communication Building 110/Studio**

(Please Note: for this class, you will need a headset and a miniDV tape)

Dr. Glenda R. Balas  
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**OFFICE HOURS**

MWF-11:00-12 noon; MW 3:00-4:00 p.m. As Department Chair, I am typically in the office all day, every day. I have an open door policy; please feel free to drop in.

**COURSE MISSION & PRIMARY COURSE GOAL**

To introduce students to accepted practices and skills used in the production of visual media

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

MCM 271 is the department's introductory course in visual communication, providing students opportunity to learn the foundations of digital video photography and editing, on-camera performance, and studio producing/directing. Although many of our class sessions will involve hands-on production experiences in lab or the field, we will also seek to gain an understanding of visual theory and analysis. Course activities will introduce students to the following:

Digital camera operation  
Composition, framing, and visual theory  
Digital editing and basic sound manipulation  
Media writing and on-camera presence  
Studio production  
Producing and directing in the studio  
Pre-production planning strategies and tools  
Remote production

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Having completed this course, students should:

1. know and employ the language and terminology of video production
2. recognize and replicate the approaches and strategies of video production  
better understand the practices, activities, and behind-the-scenes operations that work to produce media content
3. be able to work as part of a production team
4. be prepared for more advanced courses in visual production at Sam Houston State University, as well as entry-level internships at area media firms

5. be able to view television, film, and other visual media with a critical eye
6. be more creative, expressive, and analytical, especially about the role of media in our culture
7. know more about their own capabilities, natural gifts, and professional goals

### **COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected and required. Media production is largely a team effort; everyone suffers when members of the team are not present in class. You are granted two excused absences for the course of the term. After that, every “bundle” of one to two absences results in the reduction of your grade by one-half letter grade. Proper documentation from your physician/clinic will be required for absences deemed excusable due to illness. All documentation for excused absences must be submitted to me no later than four days after the illness. This conversation should occur in person, either during my office hours or after class. Emailed explanations of such absences will not be accepted.

**Late work:** Late work will not be accepted, except in rare occasions related to extreme circumstances. These EXTREMELY RARE situations will be considered on a case by case basis.

**Missing exams:** If you must miss an exam, you must contact me prior to the test in order to qualify for make-up status. If you do not notify me, either by email or in person, of the absence BEFORE the examination, you will not be allowed to make it up.

### **COURSE TEXTS**

The course text for MCM 271 is *Video Basics 6*, written by Herbert Zettl and published by Thomson and Wadsworth (2007). Other readings that support the course mission may be assigned as well.

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

All activities and assignments in this course have been designed to aid students in thinking creatively and acquiring and honing foundational skills in media production. Handouts with full descriptions of these assignments and class activities will be provided.

1. Shot Sheet—a team-based activity designed to introduce students to basic digital video shooting and editing (non-graded)
2. Music Video—a team-based assignment integrating existing music sound track and video shot by students. Extension of the “Shot Sheet” activity (graded)
3. “Rotation” exercise—studio production exercise designed to introduce students to studio camera operation, directing, and technical directing (non-graded)
4. Storyboarding Project—an assignment designed to provide practice in storyboarding; also asks students to use storyboarding as a way to better understand the beginning of a specific film (graded).

5. Poster Session—oral presentations to peers in the 271 course. Involves discussion of concept, pre-production planning, script, and storyboards for Final Project (graded)
6. Preliminary Studio Production—a team-based studio production designed to help students prepare for subsequent studio projects (graded).
7. Final Project—a team-based project that produces a studio performance show. Focuses on directing, technical directing, audio, and camera operation. Includes final project and assigned reflection papers and planning materials (graded).
8. Quizzes (3)—will cover readings from course text, handouts, class lecture, class discussion, and other material presented in class. (More information about each quiz will be presented prior to test time; these quizzes will follow a “short answer” format, including true-false, multiple choice, short essay, matching, etc.) (graded)
9. Final Exam—comprehensive exam covering assigned readings and material discussed in class (graded)
10. Participation—active involvement in class discussions and activities. As part of your participation in this course, you will also be expected to crew at least once on a Channel 7 production (live-to-tape music production, etc.). (graded)

### **GRADING**

Music Video	5%
Poster Session	5%
Storyboarding Assignment	5%
Quizzes (10% each)	30% (total)
Preliminary Studio Production	10%
Final Project	20%
Final Exam	15%
Participation	10%

### **CLASSROOM PRACTICES-DR. BALAS**

1. Turn your cell phone off before class begins. **ABSOLUTELY NO TEXT MESSAGING DURING CLASS.**
2. Do not leave class during class time. This is a two-hour class. We will take a break in the middle of class; and you should take care of all personal issues prior to the beginning of class or during this break. As we move from the classroom to the studio, **DO NOT** wander off or take care of personal matters (visiting with friends, restroom, phone calls, etc.). Proceed immediately to the studio.
3. Please dress appropriately for this class. We are training to become media professionals; please dress like one.

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES REGARDING ACADEMIC CLASSES**

The university has policies that apply to all students within the classroom. A brief summary of each of these policies is below. Detailed information may be found at

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

1. Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences, both in and out of the classroom. The University subscribes to Turnitin, the worldwide standard in online plagiarism prevention.
2. Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs, nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center.
3. Observance of Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work.
4. Visitors in the Classroom: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.
5. Classroom Decorum [Classroom Rules of Conduct]: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

\*Please note that there may be some minor shifts in the schedule, due to the needs of students and the class in general.

### ***WEEK 1      COMPOSITION***

August 24      Class Introductions  
August 26      Visual theory, composition, framing  
August 28      Visual theory, composition, framing

### ***WEEK 2      SHOOTING-CAMERA OPERATION***

August 31      Introduction to the field camera  
September 2      Shot Sheet Exercise (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)  
September 4      Shot Sheet Exercise (Independent Lab Day-Working on your own)

### ***WEEK 3      SHOOTING-CAMERA OPERATION***

September 7      Labor Day Holiday- no class  
September 9      Shot Sheet Exercise (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

September 11 Shot Sheet Exercise (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

**WEEK 4      *STORYBOARDING***

September 14 Storyboarding, concepts of editing (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

September 16 Shooting and Editing (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

September 18 Editing: Music video (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

**WEEK 5      *EDITING***

September 21 Editing: Music video (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

September 23 Editing: Music video (BRING MINI-DV TAPES)

September 25 Viewing: Music video projects; Storyboarding assignment

**WEEK 6      *INTRODUCTION TO STUDIO PRODUCTION***

September 28 Quiz #1 [Chap 3, 4, 6 (Zettl); course handouts, class discussion]

September 30 Introduction to Studio Technology

October 2      Introduction to Studio Positions

**WEEK 7      *INTRODUCTION TO STUDIO PRODUCTION***

October 5      “Rotation” Studio Exercise-Group 1

October 7      “Rotation” Studio Exercise-Group 2

October 9

**WEEK 8      *WORKING IN THE STUDIO***

October 12      Introduction to Project #1

October 14      “Working out the Details”—Project #1

October 16      Pre-production planning—Project #1

**WEEK 9**

October 19      Project #1-rehearsal (Group 1)

October 21      Project #1-taping (Group 1)

October 23      Project #1-rehearsal (Group 2)

**WEEK 10**

October 26      Project #1-taping (Group 2)

October 28      Viewing: Project #1, Groups 1 and 2

October 30      Quiz #2 [Chap 1, 2, 13 (Zettl); course handouts, class discussion]

**WEEK 11**

November 2      Introduction to Final Project

November 4      Pre-production planning (concept stage)

November 6      Final Project: Pitch to Prof. Balas

**WEEK 12**

November 9      Prep for Poster Session

November 11      Prep for Poster Session

November 13

**WEEK 13**

- November 16 Poster Session
- November 18 Working in groups: Pre-production planning (Final Project)
- November 20 Working in groups: Pre-production planning (Final Project)

**WEEK 14**

- November 23 Quiz #3 [Chap 14, 16, 17 (Zettl); course handouts, discussion]
- November 25--Thanksgiving
- November 27--Thanksgiving

**WEEK 15**

- November 30 Rehearsal: Group 1 (Final Project)
- December 2 Taping: Group 1 (Final Project)
- December 4 Rehearsal: Group 2 (Final Project)

**WEEK 16**

- December 7 Taping: Group 2 (Final Project)
- December 9 Viewing: Final Projects; Discussion: Final Reflection Essay
- December 11 Review: Final Exam

**FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 14 (5:00-7:00 p.m.)**