
FILM STUDIES CAPSTONE

FALL 2023

Instructor

Christopher Nold

Email

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Office Location & Hours

By appointment

Course Number

FILM 486 (3 credit hours)

Location

Online via Zoom

Time

W 9:10 – 11:05am CT

GENERAL INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A senior capstone experience synthesizing and assessing the complete field of study for film majors. Emphasis on independent development and discussion. Includes an exploration of career and graduate study opportunities as well as intensive research and analysis into the present and future states of filmmaking.

OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Course Objectives: By course end, the well-disciplined student will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of key issues in the current film industry and their chosen field of interest.
- Effectively summarize stories and their own comments for coverage and pitches.
- Interact with professionals from WKU Film's alumni network as well as others in their field of interest.
- Market themselves as professionals or potential graduate students with a comprehensive portfolio.

Student Responsibilities: Students will be expected to spend time outside of class reading, writing, and preparing assignments and projects. Readings and assignments must be completed in a timely manner. Late work WILL NOT be accepted. Because of the participatory nature of the class, students are expected to be on time and ready to engage in discussion (see: Participation/Discussion below). Additionally, due to the virtual nature of the class, students are expected to have their webcams active at all times.

Required Reading:

- Deadline, Variety, The Hollywood Reporter

Highly Recommended Reading:

- Adventures in the Screen Trade by William Goldman
- Making Movies by Sidney Lumet
- Your Screenplay Sucks! By William M. Akers
- Easy Riders, Raging Bulls by Peter Biskind
- The Hollywood Assistants Handbook by Hillary Stamm & Peter Nowalk
- IndieWire, The Wrap, The Tracking Board, Puck, and The Ankler

EVALUATION

Several methods will be used throughout the course to determine your final grade. More detailed explanations of the specific assignments will be given at the appropriate time.

PARTICIPATION/DISCUSSION

This course will involve discussions on topics from the assigned readings and/or current events. These discussions will extend beyond class time for those with more specific questions and tie back into future classes. In order to adequately prepare for guest interviews, students may be expected to provide a written question in advance for consideration. These should be questions that spark conversation, not simple yes or no questions. Be prepared to actively participate in discussions. If I don't hear your voice, then you aren't participating.

INDUSTRY TRADES

In order to aid your understanding of the film industry, it is imperative you keep up with the latest industry news/trends. Students will be expected to read industry trades, such as The Hollywood Reporter, Variety, and Deadline, as well as trades, sites, or podcasts specific to their chosen field of interest, such as American Cinematographer (for DPs), Scriptnotes podcast (for writers), DGA Quarterly (for directors), etc.

INDUSTRY SKILLS

Students will complete assignments to prepare for aspects of the film and television industry:

- 1) Script Coverage (for feature-length film, one-hour TV drama, and half-hour TV comedy)
- 2) Knowledge of Los Angeles, New York, or Atlanta
- 3) Alumni Interview (informational Q&A session with a WKU Film alum)

FINAL PORTFOLIO

In order to prepare for careers, students will create a portfolio of materials to help with relocation, employment, and/or graduate school:

- 1) Reel (for directors, editors, cinematographers) or Visual Portfolio (for production/costume designers)
- 2) Résumé and Cover Letter or Artistic Statement/Graduate School Statement of Purpose
- 3) Moving Plan and Six-Month Budget
- 4) Mentor/Networking Plan

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Item	Point Value
Participation/Discussion	200 points
Industry Skills	500 points
Final Portfolio	500 points
Total	1200 points

Grade Scale: A = 90% – 100%; B = 80% – 89%; C = 70% – 79%; D = 60% – 69%; F = 59% or below.

Blackboard Grade Book: I will make my best effort to keep your grade up-to-date on Blackboard. Please consider the online grade book a courtesy to you, subject to errors given various upgrades and shifts in the software. I reserve the right to make grade book corrections to keep it consistent with the syllabus so that your grade reflects true performance, not software or user error. If you see something that doesn't make sense, please alert me!

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Regular and Substantive Interaction: The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about Regular and Substantive Interaction at WKU, please visit the Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online and Distance Learning webpage.

In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Weekly synchronous sessions between faculty and students,
- Weekly uploads of synchronous session recordings and lecture slides,
- Weekly emails of relevant industry news, and
- Timely and detailed feedback on assignments provided within one week of submission.

Attendance: Your attendance and on-time arrival for class, appointments and assignments are a critical part of being a professional. Attendance will be taken. Every second absence and/or every third tardy will result in your grade being lowered one letter grade. Any class spent with an inactive webcam will count as an absence

Work Standards, Deadlines and Submission: Assignments are to be submitted on the due dates before 12:00pm CT. **I gladly accept early work and never accept late work.** All work turned in for this course must be your own. Having another person complete your work for you, in all or in part, is academically dishonest, i.e. cheating, and may result in a failing grade on the assignment. All work turned in for this course must be original and produced during the current term.

Extra Credit: Extra credit may be received through two methods. First, successfully completing additional coverage assignments beyond the three required for class will result in fifty (50) points of extra credit on your final grade; “successfully” means the coverage would have received an “A” if graded for class. Second, being the first to correctly identify films and shows used on lecture slides will result in five (5) points of extra credit on your final grade. Both methods are repeatable.

Plagiarism: To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one’s own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his or her own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.

AI Tools: Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are not permitted for any type of work in this class. If you choose to use these tools, your actions will be considered academically dishonest and a violation of the WKU Student Code of Conduct.

Disposition of Offenses - Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the University Disciplinary Committee through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for disciplinary sanctions.

Student Disability Services: In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies: The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies.

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions, audiences, and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy: Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (#0.070) and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Executive Director, Office of Institutional Equity/Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir, 270-745-6867 or Title IX Investigators or Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

Inclusion Statement: Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to ensuring all members of our campus community have access to equitable and inclusive learning, working, and living environments. At the heart of our mission, we seek to provide holistic education and employment experiences that prepare students, faculty, and staff to become effective scholars, contributors, and leaders in our diverse and evolving communities. Consistent with our campus purpose statement and creed, this classroom will be a respectful space, welcoming all sexes, races, ages, national origins, ethnicities, gender identities/labels/expressions, intellectual and physical abilities, sexual orientations, faith/non-faith perspectives, income levels and socio-economic classes, political ideologies, educational backgrounds, primary languages, family statuses, military experiences, cognitive styles, and communication styles. If at any time during this course you are excluded or feel a sense of alienation from the course content, please feel free to contact me privately without fear of reprisal.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	
Week 1	8/23	FADE IN: Topic: Introductions, Syllabus, Coverage
Week 2	8/30	THE INDUSTRY Topic: Buyers, Sellers, and Everyone Else Asynchronous: A Brief History of Hollywood
Week 3	9/6	"PREPRODUCTION" Topic: Writing, Producing, Pitching and Selling Due: Half-Hour Coverage
Week 4	9/13	"PRODUCTION" Topic: Directing, Crewing, Producing Asynchronous: Script Guidelines
Week 5	9/20	"POST" Topic: Post Production, Film Festivals, The Next Project Due: One-Hour Coverage
Week 6	9/27	WORKING AS A CREATIVE IN FILM Topic: Lookbooks, Decks, Film Outlook
Week 7	10/4	WORKING AS A CREATIVE IN TELEVISION Topic: Directing, Staffing, TV Outlook Due: Feature Coverage
Week 8	10/11	GRADUATE SCHOOL Topic: Overview, Applying, Costs and Benefits
Week 9	10/18	LOCATIONS Topic: Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta
Week 10	10/25	STARTING YOUR CAREER Topic: Résumés, Cover Letters, Reels/Writing Samples Due: City Map
Week 11	11/1	STARTING YOUR CAREER Topic: Internships and PA Gigs, Applying, Interviewing, Advancing Due: Résumé and Cover Letter or Statement of Purpose

Week	Date	
Week 12		NETWORKING
	11/8	Topic: Getting Connected and Mentoring Due: Reel or Visual Portfolio (if applicable)
Week 13		MAKING THE MOVE
	11/15	Topic: Housing and Budgeting Asynchronous: Launch Plan Due: Mentor/Networking Plan (if applicable)
Week 14		Thanksgiving Break
Week 15		FADE OUT .
	11/29	Topic: Guest Interview and Wrap Due: Moving Plan and Six-Month Budget
Week 16	12/6	Due: Alumni Interview and Final Portfolio FYI: Final Grades Due by Noon CT on 12/12

FILM 486 STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

After you have studied the syllabus and other course materials, please read, sign, and date the following statement. This gives you another prompt to ask questions about any unclear issues and will save us both time and your confusion about course requirements.

I have received a copy of the course syllabus and materials.

I understand and accept their contents and will abide by the rules and requirements indicated.

Print name

Signature

Date