



MRTS 3230: Film Style Production

Fall 2026 Syllabus

Lecture: Tuesday 3:55 p.m. – 5:45 p.m., RTFP 184

Labs: Friday 3230.301 9:35 a.m. – 10:55 a.m. RTFP 184

3230.302 11:10 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. RTFP 184

3230.303 12:45 p.m. – 2:05 p.m. RTFP 184

Course Instructor: Brandon Gaesser (he/him), Office: RTFP 272A

Email: Brandon.Gaesser@unt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. or by appointment

Lab Instructors: Krissiha Lagos: Krissiha.Lagos@unt.edu

Cameron Wallace: Cameron.Wallace@unt.edu

Course Description: MRTS 3230 is a core film production course that builds upon fundamental technical and artistic training in MRTS 2210 and is specifically designed to prepare students for advanced 4000-level film production courses. Students will complete four (4) short film projects utilizing advanced cinema cameras and lenses, cinematic lighting, professional location audio, and editing equipment. Artistic elements of visual storytelling will be emphasized including composition, framing, lighting aesthetics, and creative post-production editing. The lecture component of this course will introduce students to different technical and creative concepts of production each week. The lab component of this course will enable students to practice what they learned in the lecture through hands-on exercises, workshops, and projects.

Course Objectives and Outcomes:

1. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the technical fundamentals of film production including camera operation, lenses, lighting, sound recording, and editing.
2. To be able to apply technical and artistic skills acquired in the course to multiple film styles, including narrative, documentary, and experimental film.
3. To gain an understanding of all phases of the filmmaking process including pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution, as well as an understanding of the various crew roles within each phase.
4. To generate meaningful, professional, and effective media material and to understand, as filmmakers, the responsibility for the messages our stories perpetuate.
5. Gain a fundamental understanding of career paths in the film industry.
6. Submit your student films to film festivals.

Safety: This course may involve potentially hazardous activities, the nature of which include working with and exposure to electronically powered equipment. Accordingly, the Department of Media Arts has slated this course within Category 2 (courses in which students are exposed to some significant hazards but are not likely to suffer bodily harm.)

Time Commitment: Enrollment in any film production course is a time-intensive commitment. Students should be prepared to spend several hours per week outside of lectures and labs working on course projects. Film production is a collaborative effort, and students will be working in crews. Therefore, time-management, scheduling, and coordination are extremely important. Please make note of other professional and personal obligations and plan accordingly. If you are unable to commit the time necessary for proper completion of this course, including full participation in lecture and lab sessions, please reconsider enrollment at this time.

Required Texts: There is no required text for this course.

Canvas: This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Communication and Office Hours:

- Course materials and guides will be uploaded to Canvas, so please be sure to check Canvas daily for any updates and announcements. I will provide sufficient notice if there are any changes or updates to the syllabus, course projects, or exams.
- Filmmaking is a collaborative process. The quality of communication can make or break a film production. If there are any challenges or issues affecting you, your film, and/or your crew, please reach out immediately so we can work as a team to find solutions.
- Please work with me to foster an inclusive classroom culture. This includes mutual respect and thoughtful communication in all our discussions and workshops. If you ever feel that our learning environment is not as supportive as it could be for all students, please stop by my office so we can discuss a path forward.
- Office hours provide you with additional time to ask questions and find support regarding course materials, assignments, and projects. If at any time you are having problems with the assignments or with your understanding of materials covered, please stop by during office hours; I am always glad to help you succeed! I am also always reachable by email, and I will respond as quickly as possible (within two business days). **Please only use your UNT email to contact me.**

Equipment and Editing:

Media cards, hard drives, and high-quality headphones can be checked out from the Media Arts Equipment Room.

For a Full List of Equipment for MRTS 3230, See the “MRTS 3230 Equipment List and Information” PDF on Canvas.

UNT has an online system for check-outs, and it can be found at <https://checkout.unt.edu/>.

OVERNIGHT EQUIPMENT CHECK-OUTS MUST be approved 48 hours in advance.
Please include in your email the **professor, lab instructor, and Ladaniel.Maxwell@unt.edu**
or **MRTSequipment@unt.edu**.

Please use the following email template for overnight approvals:

Subject Line: OVERNIGHT OR WEEKEND CHECKOUT 3230

Project:

Team Members:

Date/Time of Check Out:

Date/Time of Check In:

Production Location:

Equipment List (please list everything you need):

Reason for overnight:

Equipment Care:

Any report of late equipment returns or other violation of departmental procedures relative to the use of equipment or facilities will place you on “equipment suspension” by the Media Arts Department for a determined period of time. A copy of the Media Arts Department’s policy on the loss of checkout privileges for late equipment return is available in the Media Arts Equipment Room.

***Under UNT equipment policies, you are responsible for any equipment you check out from the Department of Media Arts.**

Editing: A Video Editing Lab with several digital nonlinear editing bays that utilize Adobe Premiere editing software is located in the RTFP Building Post-Production Lab, Room 180. Upon request you may use the Media Arts ProMax server to hold your footage and projects.
Ensure you back up all materials to your external Hard Drive.

Edit Lab Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Friday: 8 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Editing questions and/or one-on-one editing help: Marshall Johnson (edithelp@unt.edu)
Senior Media Technical Manager’s Office: 180A

Film Projects:

The emphasis in these film productions is your ability to tell a **visual** story. All projects for this course must be shot by the student(s) in the class. You may not use footage shot before this class began or footage shot by someone other than you or your crew members. The only exception is archival material such as photos, new footage, etc. that are critical to telling the visual story. The projects will be evaluated on both technical and creative levels. **A rubric of specific requirements for each project will be provided.**

Project 1: Single-Shot Film

Crews of 4 (you may choose your crew)

Target Length: 1-2 Minutes

In **one shot**, lasting about **1-2 minutes in length**, you must tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end. The visual story is the main point of this assignment, so focus on composition, framing, and angles. **Audio is not required for this assignment.** However, feel free to creatively incorporate ambient sound, music, or soundscape/SFX. **Artificial lighting is also not required**, but feel free to be creative with natural light and practical lights already available in the scene.

Project 2: Montage Film

Crews of 4 (same crew as single-shot film but different crew positions)

Target Length: 1-2 Minutes

In roughly **20-40 shots**, each lasting around **3-4 seconds**, **you will film the same story from your single-shot film.** Again, the visual story is the main point of this assignment, so focus on composition, framing, and angles. **Audio is not required for this assignment.** However, feel free to creatively incorporate ambient sound, music, or soundscape/SFX. **Artificial lighting is also not required**, but feel free to be creative with natural light and practical lights already available in the scene. You must convey a **mood or emotion**, and therefore **Color grading is REQUIRED for the Montage Film.** You may incorporate music to help convey the mood or emotion. Remember, any music must be original or non-copyrighted to use it outside of class.

Project 3: Non-Fiction Film (Documentary)

Crews of 4 (different crew from single-shot / montage films, and different crew positions)

Target Length: 3-5 Minutes

Project 3 will be a non-fiction film (documentary). Your film must include **interview footage and observational footage**. The non-fiction film can focus on a **person and a particular activity, profession, or hobby**. A good interview means that you are asking them to talk about more than a step-by-step of the activity itself. For example, you may ask why the activity is important to them, how they got interested in it, **and the significance it holds in their life**. There are no restraints as to the style of non-fiction film you create, but you must include some **interview and observational footage, on-location sound, and a followable visual storyline**. You should also find creative ways to incorporate sound (voice-over, interview dialogue, ambient sound, music, etc.). **The visual elements are the most important, and you should concentrate on getting a wide variety of angles, distances, and cutaways.** This documentary will involve the creative filming and skillful editing of a process or action not under your control, emphasizing a visual storytelling style. **You MUST utilize double-system audio and color grading.** Talent and location releases will be required if you distribute your film online or submit to a film festival.

Project 4: Narrative Film

Crews of 4 (free to select crew and crew positions)

Target Length: 5-6 Minutes

The final project will be a short narrative film produced in crews of 4. However, for this project you **MUST** incorporate scripted dialogue. **Your narrative films will involve extensive pre-production work, including location scouting, film proposal pitch and approval (see below), and cast and crew coordination.** Your film must demonstrate technically competent filming and editing. This project must also include some type of **ambient sound and/or music**. The complexity of your audio editing, along with appropriate visual storytelling will factor into the project grade. You must also employ the creative use of **cinematic lighting**, either natural, artificial, or both, and demonstrate a competence in setting up lighting components (such as lights, modifiers, flags, silks, etc.) and shaping light to fit the artistic aesthetics of your film. You MUST utilize **double-system audio** and **color grading is required.**

Pitch / Proposal / Pre-Production Packet for Project 4:

Crews of 4

The final project will be developed in consultation with the instructor and will be approved in lab before filming begins.

- **Pitch:** You will pitch your film ideas as a crew. Pitches should be concise, **1-2 minutes** providing an overview of the story (guided by your draft logline and draft synopsis). Focus on really selling your idea, as if you happen to be in an elevator with a studio executive. Remember, if you're not excited about your film, nobody else will be. You may also use visuals for your pitch such as photos of locations, screen grabs of films you want to emulate, etc.
- **Proposals:** After pitching your draft logline and draft synopsis, your lab instructor will provide feedback and work with you toward approval. Once approved, you may prepare your final proposal. The proposal will consist of your crew's **screenplay, approved logline, and approved synopsis.**
- **Pre-Production Packet:** While preparing your final proposal, your crew's **Producer** will compile a pre-production packet consisting of the following materials: **Filming schedule, equipment list, crew list, talent list and talent releases, and location releases (if applicable).**

****Proposals and Pre-Production Packets will be submitted as a single document via Canvas by your crew's Producer.***

Rough Cut for Project 4:

Crews of 4

Rough cuts of your final narrative films will be screened in Lab. You will be provided with constructive feedback as you progress into the final post-production stages of your films.

IMPORTANT: For the single-shot and montage film projects, you may act in your own films or find friends to act in your films. For your non-fiction (documentary) film project, you may participate in your own film, but you are strongly encouraged to find someone to interview and film with. For your final narrative film project, you may act in your own film, but you are strongly encouraged to go through the process of finding, auditioning, and casting actors. We will discuss finding actors and on-camera participants in class.

Submission Guidelines for Film Projects:

Projects **MUST** be turned in via the Canvas submission portal and must be labeled as follows: **Lastname.Lastname.Lastname.Lastname.3230.ProjectNumber**

Legal:

Talent and location releases will be available on Canvas in the “Files” section. Releases **MUST** be signed by all actors and identifiable participants in your films if you want to distribute your films publicly.

Mid-Term and Final Exams:

These exams will be based on the materials covered in class and in any supplementary reading. Reviews of materials will be conducted in class prior to each exam, as needed. The exams will be online via Canvas and are untimed and open-note.

Course Evaluation:

Project 1 Single-Shot Film	10 points
Project 2 Montage Film:	10 points
Project 3 Non-Fiction Film:	20 points
Project 4 Pitch, Proposal, Pre-Production Packet:	5 points
Project 4 Rough Cut:	5 points
Project 4 Narrative Film:	25 points
Mid-Term Exam:	15 points
Final Exam:	10 points
Total Points Possible:	100 points

General Grading Rubric (Film Project Grading Rubrics will be on Canvas):

A letter grade of “A” (90-100) reflects truly outstanding work, excellent attendance, and consistently active participation and engagement in classroom discussions.

A letter grade of “B” (80-89) reflects good work, excellent attendance, and a minimum level of participation and engagement in classroom discussions.

A letter grade of “C” (70-79) reflects fair or average work and a lack of attendance, participation, and engagement due to unexcused absences.

Letter grades of “D” and “F” reflect passing work and failure, respectively. Please refer to the UNT Grading System for additional details.

UNT Grading System: <https://registrar.unt.edu/grades/understand-your-grade-report.html>

General Course Policies:

Attendance:

You are required to attend each lecture and lab session during the semester. The lectures inform the labs, and the labs require your attendance to complete the projects. In our field, and in this class, BEING IN CLASS / LAB and BEING ON TIME are critical and expected. In film and media industries, being late or not showing up will often cause you to lose your job and reputation! Please plan ahead and organize the rest of your obligations to meet this same expectation for our class. If you are unable to attend class, please email me to let me know.

***Continuous unexcused absences may affect your final course grade. Please remember that all film projects in this class are group projects. Just like in the industry, you must always show up for your crew.**

Copyright Statement:

This course contains some copyrighted material, (images, video, and stills from the Internet) the use of which has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. I have determined this to be "fair use" of the copyrighted material as referenced and provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. If you wish to use any copyrighted material from course lectures for purposes of your own that go beyond fair use, you must obtain express permission from the copyright owner.

***Please note that this schedule, along with the syllabus as a whole, is subject to change if the instructor deems that changes need to be made for a better class and student experience.**

Lecture slides will be posted to Canvas > Files > Lecture Slides each week

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1, August 18, 21: Introduction to the Course; Elements of Story/Narrative/Character; Crew Roles

Lecture: Overview of syllabus; Overview of fundamental storytelling elements; Defining crew roles for projects large and small.

Lab: In crews of 4, begin developing a story for your single-shot and montage films. Your single-shot and montage films will be the same story filmed and edited two different ways.

Receive guides for Project 1 Single-Shot Film and Project 2 Montage Film
View examples of single-shot and montage films

Week 2, August 25, 28: Cinema Cameras and Single-System Sound

Lecture: Introduction to the Sony FX6, menu settings, white balance and Log Footage, tripod operations, and single-system audio.

Lab: Practice setting up Sony FX6 kits, tripods, single-system audio, and proper camera settings in the menus

Week 3, September 1, 4: Film Composition and Framing

Lecture: Overview of the principles of composition, framing, and angles; The 180-degree rule.

Lab: Camera workshop

Week 4, September 8, 11: Camera and Lens Operations

Lecture: Part 1: The exposure triangle: f-stops/t-stops, shutter speeds, and ISO;
 Neutral density filters; waveforms and histograms.
 Part 2: Zoom vs. prime lenses, focal lengths, lens compression, depth-of-field, and focus pulling/rack focusing.

Lab: Exposure and lens workshop

Week 5, September 15, 18: Post-Production Workflow, Color Grading, Intro to Double-System Sound

Lecture: Project setup, hard drive management, metadata, and how to apply basic LUTs and color correction to Log footage to affect mood and tone. Introduction to double-system location sound recording and timecode.

Lab: Double-system sound workshop 1

Receive handout for Post-Production Workflow and Color Grading

Week 6, September 22, 25: Documentary Filmmaking

Lecture: Making the modern documentary film, ethical considerations, similarities and differences in relation to narrative film, building a documentary camera rig and how to film a documentary scene, including lighting and recording sound.

View examples of non-fiction films
Assign Project 3 Non-Fiction Film.

Lab: Double-system sound workshop 2; Screen Single-Shot Films

Receive assignment guide for Project 3 Non-Fiction Film (Documentary)

Project 1 Due: Single-Shot Film Submitted via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 7, September 29, October 2: Lighting Part 1

Lecture: Fundamentals of lighting for film, color temperature, types of lights and modifiers, and common terminology.

Lab: Lighting demonstration and workshop; Screen Montage Films

Project 2 Due: Montage Film Submitted via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 8, October 6, 9: Lighting Part 2

Lecture: Fundamentals of lighting (continued); "Painting" scenes with light.

Lab: Lighting demonstration and workshop continued; Screen Montage Films (if needed)

**Week 9, October 13, 16: Development and Pre-Production; Midterm Review (as needed);
Midterm Online via Canvas**

Lecture: Planning the making of a film, writing a proposal, finding actors for narrative / participants for documentary; Location scouting; Explain Project 4 (Final Project)

Midterm Review as needed in class. Please come prepared with any questions.
Receive Midterm study guide.

**The midterm exam will open Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 p.m. and close on
Monday, October 19 at 11:59 p.m.**

**Please note that your midterm exam must be submitted, not started, by 11:59
p.m. on Monday, October 19 because Canvas will automatically close the
exam even if you are not finished.**

Lab: Form crews of 4 and begin developing ideas and loglines for Project 4

View examples of final project narrative films
Receive assignment guide for Project 4 Narrative Film

Week 10, October 20, 23: Project 4 Story Development

Lecture: **Story Development Workshop**

Lab: Pitch Project 4 with draft logline and draft synopsis for instructor feedback and approval.

Week 11, October 27, 30: Camera Blocking and Script Breakdown (Directing)

Lecture: Planning your scenes; Types of camera movements; filming non-linearly.

Lab: Screen Project 3 Non-Fiction Films. Continue work on Project 4 Proposals, Pre-production Packets, and script breakdown.

Project 3 Non-Fiction Film Due. Submit via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 12, November 3, 6: Advanced Topics

Guest Lecture: Discussion of advanced production technology and concepts

Lab: Advanced camera workshop; continue screening Project 3 Non-Fiction Films (if needed)

Project 4 Film Proposal and Pre-Production Packet due. Submit via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 13, November 10, 13: Deliverables, Press Kits, and Distribution

Guest Lecture: Discussion of getting your films out there into the world.

Lab: WORKDAY for Project 4 (No formal lab meeting)

Week 14, November 17, 20: Working in the Industry

Lecture: Introduction to freelancing vs. working for a production company; Discussion of career pathways and useful industry websites to find jobs.

Lab: Screen Rough Cuts in Lab and continue post-production feedback.

Project 4 Rough Cuts Due. Submit via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 15, November 24, 27: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

Week 16, December 1, 4: Final Exam Review, Final Project Due, Film Screenings

Lecture: Final exam review as needed. Please come prepared with questions. Receive Final Exam study guide.

Lab: **Optional** screening of Project 4 Films in RTFP 184, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Project 4 Due. Submit via Canvas by one crew member (Your crew's Producer).

Week 17: Final Exam (Online via Canvas)

Final Exam opens Friday, December 4 at 5:00 p.m. and closes Wednesday, December 9 at 11:59 p.m.

Please note that your final exam must be submitted, not started, by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, December 9 because Canvas will automatically close the exam even if you are not finished.