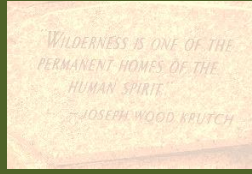


Adventure & Environmental Filmmaking



Nature, The Environment, Wildlife & Wild Pursuits in the Outdoors

Adventure & Environmental Filmmaking (MJD-219)
Nature, The Environment, Wildlife & Wild Pursuits in the Outdoors
T/TH 10:15-11:50 + [Occasional Field Labs + Screenings](#)
JEM MEDIA LAB#1: 142

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The Course:

This course is an introduction to the art of filmmaking about the outdoors and the environment. It is unique collaboration between the Department of Media Studies-Journalism-Digital Arts (**MJD**), Environmental Studies-Science (**ES**) and The Adventure Sports Program (**AS**) at SMC. It is also a great opportunity for you to examine a wide range of important issues related to the environment and the outdoors through active engagement in wilderness pursuits and the medium of digital filmmaking. The course has **THREE major focal points**:

- 1. Analysis & Criticism**— Throughout the semester, we will be reading about, screening, and critiquing films which have been made in-and-about the outdoors and the environment. This will include films, TV programs, and streaming videos which document important environmental issues, those which chronicle significant human achievements in exploration/adventure and those emphasizing the beauty and preservation of natural environments.
- 2. Environmental Issues**— The course will focus on important issues related to the environment, the outdoors, health, wildlife, adventure, and exploration. We will examine the ways in which these issues have (or *haven't* been) communicated. We will also explore the patterns, stereotypes, and narrative tropes or frames which are frequently applied to environmentally related issues and ideas.
- 3. Production: Field & Studio Work**— This course is an introduction to the specific—and sometimes extreme—technical, logistical, and conceptual requirements associated with filmmaking in the outdoors. Therefore, the course will combine both filmmaking and outdoor skills. We will learn by doing. We will be engaged in ALL aspects of planning, field forecasting, risk assessment and technical workshops along-side film story development, scripting, editing, post-production, and media distribution.

Requirements-Grading:

This is not your typical course and the requirements may be different from what you are accustomed to. These requirements are developed with your intellectual growth, safety and well-being in mind. We will be spending quite a bit of time talking about the formal and informal requirements for the course, but here are a few for starters.

- 1. Prompt and regular attendance (Class + Film Labs). (15%).** **Don't miss this class!** After one absence, your grade will be affected. Two cases of lateness equals one absence. We will have several outdoor **field shooting labs** along with **off-campus screenings**. These are important and **REQUIRED!**
- 2. Active, Intelligent, and Ethical Participation/Collaboration (Class, Outdoor Pursuits, Group Interactions, Responses). (20%).**
There are two important parts to this requirement: **First**, "**active, intelligent and ethical participation**" refers to **(1)** how well prepared you are for class (i.e., how carefully you complete readings/responses/screenings and verbally participate in discussions); **(2)** how much you ask and answer questions in class; **and (3)** how you conduct yourself when others are speaking. Second, **COLLABORATION** refers to your attitude and interactions with others in group and individual settings. This includes the ethical treatment of people both in-and-outside of class with the utmost integrity and respect no matter how the communication/interaction takes place (face-to-face, email, phone, texting, tweeting, etc.)
- 3. Projects/Research/Presentations (40%).** There will be a series of **MAJOR PROJECTS (3-4)** and several **smaller WIP assignments** due during the semester. Information about each will be handed out in advance. **PLEASE NOTE:** All projects must be **POLISHED**. They must be cleanly and clearly conceptualized, written, sharply shot and edited, and they must conform to standard scholarly practices with regard to style and acknowledgment of sources. **LATE projects will be penalized 10% for every day they are late! After one week, the late assignment converts to a zero (0).** **Any major assignment not turned in will count as a minimum TWO grade deduction from the FINAL OVERALL COURSE GRADE!**
- 4. Exams + Final Portfolio (25%).** There will be a **comprehensive mid-term exam** and **1 final portfolio**. The mid-term exam will cover all techniques, technologies, screenings, readings, outdoor demos, lectures, discussions, software, and hardware —pretty much **everything**. The final portfolio includes a full compilation of **re-edited** and polished projects along with your final personal journey story.

Readings, Screenings and Technologies

- ➔ **READINGS/TEXTS.** Throughout the semester you will be reading a number of short articles. The films, discussions, writing exercises, and exams for the course will directly focus on these readings/texts. **This means that if you miss a class, you've got to get the notes for that class from a classmate AND you'll need to get a copy of the article and exercise instructions from them as well.** Do this quickly.
- ➔ **SCREENINGS & Written Screening Guides.** We will be critically analyzing a number of film, TV, web, and multimedia productions every week. This will happen both in-and-outside of class. These screenings are required. It will be imperative that you take notes on the screenings. On many occasions, we will hand out screening guides for you to fill out, on others, we won't. So make certain, that when the lights go out and the Photographs-TV-Film-Computer screens are projected, you've got a pen and paper handy.
- ➔ **Adventure Outings.** As part of this course, you will be required to do 2 outdoor adventures (at least one with the Adventure Sports Program—See the *Guide to Adventure*).
- ➔ **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGIES:** For this course, you will need to purchase two things: (1) 1-2 fast 32GB SD cards for the camera, and (2) A USB3.0 External Hard Drive or Thumb Drive (500GB of Free Space). You will be storing and editing ALL of your films off of this drive throughout the semester. Your drive should have at least 300GB of memory. But even with this amount of memory, it will go quick, so you'll have to manage your files efficiently.

Schedule and Assignments

Time	Topics	Assignments
Week 1	Course Overview—Adventure & Environmental Filmmaking The Role of Film in the Communication of Environmental Issues The EXPLOSION of films about the outdoors Film/Media Skills – CAMERA BASICS and Preparing to Shoot/Film during WINTER.	☑ DUE: Screening + Written Comparative Analysis: 2 Different versions of <i>Under Northern Lights</i> (See CLASS WEB syllabus for links)
Week 2	Shooting in Outdoor Environments I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Skillsets: Filming in Outdoor Environments and Across the Seasons: Ice, Snow, Forest, Mtn, Rock, Water, Wet, Hot, and bone chillingly cold. Brrrrrr. • Camera Essentials and Editing Basics + Location Scouting 	☑ REQUIRED Outside Screening: BANFF Mountain Film Festival World Tour, University of Vermont Davis Center, Jan. 23, 24, or 25. Choose one night (or more). Buy tickets online at: https://sevendaytickets.com/organizations/skirack
Week 3	The Visual Semiotics and Story Concepts of Outdoor Films: What makes them different and unique? Story Development I: Conceptualization –Scripting→Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing Shot Sequences - • Getting good footage. • Shooting to Edit 	☑ DUE: Banff Films and Audience Analyses
Week 4	Films About WINTER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filmmaking in Water or in Wet Environments • Interviewing & Motivated B-Roll • Action Cams: 	🔥 Film #1 DUE!: WINTER
Week 5	Story Development II: Educating the Viewer Data, Stats, and Research on Film Communicating Essential Elements of Context	☑ Readings and Screenings Due
Week 6	Issue-Based Filmmaking I: Wilderness & Conservation Efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting an Issue to viewers 	☑ Readings and Screenings Due
Week 7	Issue-Based Filmmaking II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict and Controversy! Handling it on Film • Communicating “Research” on Film 	☑ Readings and Screenings Due
Week 8	Mid-Term Exam	🔥 Film #2 DUE:
Week 9	Personal Narrative: Techniques and Tactics	
Week 10	Spring Break: Travel to somewhere interestingly different?!	
Week 11	Multiple Voices: Working with Groups and Organizations	
Week 12	Film Markets: The Economics of Distribution & Development	🔥 Film #3 DUE:
Week 13	Advocacy Films I: Selling, Marketing, Promotional	Due: Research and Treatment for Film #4
Week 14	Advocacy Films II: Selling, Marketing, Promotional	
Week 15	Final Films Due!!! Significant Story—Environmental, Political, Advocacy	🔥 Film #4 DUE:
Week 16	Final Film Portfolios Due	

LINES OF ATTACK -- Words to the Wise

- ▶ **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:** Our classroom should be an inclusive learning environment for all students, and it is important that we work together to create and maintain an inclusive community for all forms of diversity: race, gender, class, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnicity, etc. Acts of hate or bigotry will not be tolerated. My intention is to present activities and materials that are respectful of diversity. If you have suggestions, please let me know.
- ▶ **ETHICAL COMMUNICATION/INTERACTIONS:** It is of absolute importance that you treat all of the people with whom you work with the utmost respect and integrity. This goes for your face-to-face interactions as well as ALL print, telephone, text, tweets, or other forms of communication.
- ▶ **CRITICAL SCREENINGS:** At the heart of learning to create excellent, interesting, and different films is the need to continually see and critically evaluate them. Screening is to film as reading is to writing. It is a central part of the creative process (screening both good and bad films and TV programs). For this course, we will be viewing a lot of different kinds of films and TV programs. Some screenings will be entire films, others will be just short clips. The styles and content of these films will vary drastically. Our focus will be more on the methods and tactics used to create these films (a little less on the specific content). Additionally, you will be critically screening films and TV programs outside of class as well. **Outside screenings are REQUIRED** for this course. In some cases, you'll have to fork out some small \$ for outside screenings. In other cases, I will be asking you to watch TV or online programs. Critical focus. Your principal job in anything you watch is to critically evaluate the production/performance techniques used to create that program. In order to do this you may have to retrain/re-condition your eyes and mind NOT to simply let the visuals "wash" over you. Moreover, you'll want to have pen and paper in hand so that you can take some notes about specific techniques and scenes.
- ▶ **TECHNOLOGICAL FLUENCY:** A good deal of this course involves technology and knowing how to use it effectively. There's just no way around it. In fact, the first part of the course is **technologically INTENSIVE**. Cameras, lenses, computers, microphones, software, cables, hard drives, network systems, etc. You'll have to become skilled with **all** of them. No one is by nature technologically fluent. It's a learning process. To a certain degree, this is DV Tech boot camp, plain and simple. Indeed, one of the central aims of this course is to help you develop the technical skills necessary to move well beyond the acts of passive button pushing. **Technological Fluency**--the ability to have honed the technical skills well enough that they become second nature, and ultimately, secondary to the creation of the stories that you are trying to tell. The more quickly that you dive into (and become comfortable with) the technologies of digital film/TV, the more rapidly you can focus on the depth, quality, and stylization of your content.
- ▶ **INNOVATIVE STORY TELLING:** However, make no mistake, this course is about innovative STORYTELLING. All kinds of story-telling--news, documentary, fictional, adaptation, performance art, improv, animation, etc. One of the toughest (and most important) aspects of story-telling we'll be working on here is being innovative, creative, and different. Learning to tell stories in a fresh way is one of the most sought after abilities in the film and TV industries today. GET/Shoot Off-campus! In order to help facilitate innovative story-telling, I will be requiring that you shoot a variety of your films OFF CAMPUS. This includes finding people to talk to and stories to shoot outside the 05439 area code. Do it! It is truly amazing and gratifying to shoot programs which have nothing to do with you or your immediate surroundings. If you plan to eventually work in the fields of film and TV, dorm films aren't going to cut it for your portfolio.
- ▶ **WRITING FOR FILM/TV:** At the very heart of good film/TV is excellent writing. In fact, before any shooting of a film gets done, often the first person hired is the writer. However, film/TV writing is different than writing for print (i.e., newspapers, magazines, literature, etc.) The central job of a film/TV writer is to create a story for the eye and the ear. Writers for film/TV pay special attention to how people talk and one of the skills they develop early on is to translate written, literary copy into words which sound right on screen. Throughout the semester we will be working on such skills and strategies.
- ▶ **COLLABORATION:** Film and TV are inherently collaborative projects. They almost always demand that more than one person be involved in a production. Just look at the credits of any film or TV program and you get the sense of just how many people are involved in film/TV production. Production crews can range from the miniscule (2 people) to the enormous (1,000+ people). One of the toughest skills you will need to develop in this course is learning to work in groups. Indeed, collaboration is a REAL skill. Working in groups is difficult. But it is implicitly expected on every film/TV set. For this course, you will be evaluated on your ability to work effectively in shooting crews. You will also be asked to evaluate others as they evaluate you.
- ▶ **PERFORMANCE:** Find some PERFORMERS! Become a performer. Search out good performances. Performance is central to Film and TV production. This is true whether you are talking about a feature film, documentary, news piece, or home video. Elements of "performance" are always there. For this class, this means two very important things. First, as a producer/director of a film, it is one of your main jobs to find good performers AND to elicit from them the best performances that they can give for FILM/TV (not the stage). This can mean tracking down good actors for your film, or, it may mean working closely with your interviewees so that they feel comfortable on camera. Second, at some point in the term you will also have to perform on camera. It may be short, sweet, or ugly, but it will be necessary. Film/TV performance involves a huge range of techniques to learn/know about, so that even if you detest the thought of acting for the camera, you are able to help "coach" those who love to ham for the camera.
- ▶ **MEMORY & TIME:** Memory is a good thing--both human and technological. Indeed it is essential. For this course you will need to be extremely systematic in where, how, what, and when you save your footage. The primary storage devices for this course will YOUR EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE! Save Times: Important--You've got to give yourself lots of EXTRA time to save or render your final digital video files. Saving or rendering edited DV files can often take a minimum of 2-5 times the amount of footage that you are trying to save/render. So if it's a 10 minute clip you're trying to save/render on CD or DVD, it will often take 20-50 minutes to render. During that time you will have to leave the machine alone. Ultimately, it means that you've got to factor this extra time into your production schedule.
- ▶ **SMART PHONES/LAPTOPS/TABLETS AND OTHER GADGETERIA...** Yes, these are essential media production tools. However, during class, this isn't the place for them. Make sure that when we start class your phone or other gadgets are OFF. Nothing should be vibrating in your clothing, pack, or purse during class.