

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course #: FILMTV X 476.39

Course Title: Making Your First Short Film (Online)

Reg. # Z0590

Units: 4.00

Quarter/Yr: Spring 2013

Day/Time: Online

Dates: 4/6/13-6/22/13

Instructor: Pirooz Kalayeh

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Course Description:

Always wanted to make your own short film and thought you had no experience and no money? In this class, get started using your own pocket camera, iPhone, or whatever similar tool you have at your disposal. You learn how to write, produce, direct, and edit a 3-5-minute short fiction film. Emphasis is placed on maximizing the on-screen value of the project using available resources. The first part of the class is devoted to the pre-production process, highlighting the role of the story, and provides an overview of affordable shooting equipment and editing technologies. You then develop and write your project, which is filmed outside of class. Instruction includes a primer on the fundamentals of shooting and directing actors, as well as the basics of editing and outputting the projects to DVD. The completed films are screened and discussed during at the last class.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, a successful learner should be able to:

- Write, produce, and edit a short film
- Know the building blocks of screenplay writing
- Communicate with actors effectively
- Understand the efficacy of storyboarding and preproduction
- Be aware of multiple means of distribution and an path forward for content

Welcome:

I'd like to wish each of you a very warm welcome to MAKING YOUR FIRST SHORT FILM (MYFSF) Online. The class is under way and is 12 weeks in length. To get started, go to the Syllabus area and read the entire syllabus. You will find all course materials organized by week behind the Weekly Materials button. Next, go to the "Link to the Autobiography" assignment, post a brief bio, and respond to your classmates.

We will have our first live lecture this Wednesday, April 10, 2013. We will cover *overcoming writer's block, hear pitch ideas, and then begin thinking about how to create strong characters*. You can access this live lecture via the [following link](#). We will be conducting the class via Spreecast. This will allow you to interact with me live by asking questions in the chat box or even joining me live on camera.

If you can't make the live lecture, have no fear. It'll be recoded and available to you throughout the semester at the [link I provided](#). Simply click it and watch at your leisure. (If everyone is signed onto Blackboard, we may switch our live lectures to that platform in the future, but I will let everyone know of that with plenty of time to spare.)

I have also provided a breakdown of the week, so you can see exactly what we're covering and plan accordingly.

WEEK 1 ASSIGNMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

This week we will be introducing the course and begin preconceiving what type of short film we would like to write. Specifically, we will be thinking about what we're inspired to write and how that can coincide with a budget conscious concept. We will also look at what we think makes a good short film and begin posting our initial ideas for a roundtable discussion on the discussion boards.

Please complete the following:

- Post bios (10 PTS)
- DQ1 (5 PTS)
- DQ2 (5 PTS)
- Read Lecture 1 and opening chapter of HOW NOT TO MAKE A SHORT FILM (p. 1-24.)
- **ATTEND Opening Lecture: Creating Strong Characters**
- LINK: <http://www.spreecast.com/events/week-2-lecture-myfsf>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Our first discussion board questions are already up. Once you finish reading our Week 1 Lecture and the first chapter of HOW NOT TO MAKE A SHORT FILM, you can get on the boards with your comments. (Each discussion question is worth 5 PTS to your score, while each ASSIGNMENT is worth 10 PTS.)

- **DQ#1 (Due Wed):** What makes a good short film?
- **DQ#2 (Due Sun):** Please post one of your script ideas for review by Instructor Kalayeh and fellow classmates and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates for credit

We will have two discussion questions per week to help you keep you on task to our ultimate goal of completing your first short film. The first discussion question is always due by Wednesday and the second is due by Sunday.

You are only expected to make a posting and respond to two of your fellow classmates for credit. Of course, we want these posting to be more than "great job" or "well done." Try to go into full detail in your responses. You may even want to come up with further questions or possibilities after reading of your classmates' postings.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS

If you have questions, you can post them in the Faculty Office, or through the email feature in the class. If you have technical questions, please feel free to contact Technical Support. I hope you have a great learning experience!



INSTRUCTOR'S PROFILE

Pirooz Kalayeh – Writer/Director/Producer

Pirooz Kalayeh received an MFA in Creative Writing from the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. He has been published in *Looking Back* (New Brighton Books, 2003); was granted a Zora Neale Hurston Award (Naropa University, 2002) and has published work in *Wigleaf*, *Ducts*, *Past Simple*, *Horseless Press*, and *No Tell Motel*. He is the founding member and proprietor behind the musical group, The Slipshod Swingers, and the records *Orange Lamborghini* (2006) and *Transistor Radio* (2008). He has also served as an Associate Producer and Post Production Coordinator with Weller Grossman Productions. Some of the television programs he has worked on include STRICTLY SEX WITH DR DREW (DISC), CRAFTLAB (DIY), and LOOK WHAT I DID (HGTV). In 2009, Kalayeh produced and co-directed THE HUMAN WAR (2011) into a full-length feature for Sangha Films. SHOPLIFTING FROM AMERICAN APPAREL (2011) is Kalayeh's second feature and first solo directorial feature released under his personal label [ILIKENIRVANA](#). Kalayeh is currently working on a documentary about Buddhist teacher Brad Warner, entitled BRAD WARNER'S HARDCORE ZEN (2013), along with several other narrative features and web series, including

the monster spoof, ZOMBIE BOUNTY HUNTER M.D.. He lives with his wife in Los Angeles and South Korea. He interviews various entertainers and artists on his blog, Shikow.

Required Text: (if any) include ISBN#

Required Readings:

How Not to Make a Short Film: Secrets from a Sundance Programmer

by Roberta Maria Monroe

ISBN: 1401309542

Byte-Sized Television by Ross Brown

ISBN: 978-1-932907-86-5

Recommended Readings:

Directing Actors by Judith Weston

Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen

Crafty TV by Alex Epstein

Direct Your Own Damn Movie by Lloyd Kaufman

Grading: Out of 100 points

A+	(98-100%)	B+	(87-89%)	C	(70-79%)
A	(94-97%)	B	(83-86%)	D	(60-69%)
A-	(90-93%)	B-	(80-82%)	F	(<59%)

A grade of 'C' or better is considered a passing grade. Certificate students must take 400 level courses for a grade.

Attendance: Perfect attendance is worth 10 points. One (1) attendance grade point is awarded per class if you make a main discussion post and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates.

Written Assignments: All students are expected to make a rough and final draft of his or her screenplay. Each assignment will receive 8 points each. Please be sure to pay attention to formatting rules as listed in Appendix 1 of our textbook, attach copies for review for all class members, and to also proof for specificity, adhere to the 4 C's of dialogue, and make your script read visually.

Short Film Assignments: All short film links to final edits are required to be posted to the Internet on a public or private site with password access. These links (passwords included if private) must be posted to our discussion boards for review. All students are required to make at least one main posting with a link included and respond to at least two classmates for full credit.

Screenings & Critiques: Each film will be screened, analyzed, and constructively critiqued by the instructor and participants. Written critiques will be exchanged via our discussion boards. Late delivery of short film links forfeits a critique. Make up critiques can only be given as time allows.

Tests: Take notes; material from readings and lessons will appear in our two Tests. Tests are only valid and available the week they are assigned and are worth 10 points each. No make up is available for missed tests and no points can be awarded after test week. Extra Credit: Each test will include at least one extra credit question worth one point.

Participation: Factors taken into consideration in the awarding of 10 participation points include attitude, class participation, and assignment completion.

Class participation is defined as actively raising or answering questions during class discussions. Students must substantially contribute and share their personal opinions, experience, and knowledge during these discussions. Points will be deducted for failing to participate or offer constructive (and written) criticism of classmates' films.

Discussion Board: All students are expected to make main posting responses to our two questions (by Wednesday and Sunday respectively) and respond to at least two fellow classmates for each thread. The discussion board will be available weekly for additional discussions outside of online class days. These will each be labeled with the week and number for ease and clarity of access i.e. **Week 1**.

Final Grades will be submitted to UCLA Extension the day after the final class. Outstanding materials must be delivered to the instructor no later than two weeks after the final class. After that date no further class materials can be accepted. Please note that **ALL COURSE GRADES ARE FINAL**.

If you experience trouble with **Blackboard**, it is your responsibility to contact Extension for technical assistance. The Blackboard shell is available to students up to 14 days after the course end date. To access the Blackboard shell for our course, do so *before* that deadline.

Student Behavior involving cheating, copying other's work, and plagiarism are not tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. Students are responsible for being familiar with the information on Student Conduct in the General Information Section of the UCLA Extension Catalog or on the website at www.uclaextension.edu.

COURSE OUTLINE

Flow of Activities

A short film will be written, shot, and edited for distribution. The breakdown:

- A1: Pitch
- A2: Rough Draft of Screenplay
- A3: Final Draft of Screenplay
- A4: Production
- A5: Rough Cut
- A6: Polished Cut

A7: Final Cut

- Viewing published Short Films and student Short Films from previous students
- Viewing and analyzing the openings of commercially released feature films
- Pitches – participants have the option of describing their story to the class
- Writing – participants will learn the finer points of creating short pieces and its differences from long-form screenplays
- Group Critiques—Each screenplay and Short Film will be screened, analyzed, and constructively critiqued among the participants.
- Guest—possible visits from guest/s (guest and date TBA).
- Final Screening—a group screening of participant’s films via streamcast.

The Assignments:

A1: The Pitch

The short film pitch can contain more than one possibility. As you formulate options before our second class, please be sure you consider the world of your characters, reality vs. believability, that you have memorable multi-dimensional characters, and a clear beginning, middle, and end.

A2: Rough Draft of Screenplay

A rough draft is just our beginning. Allow for possibilities to co-mingle as you adhere to the outlines you’ve devised. Pay close attention to the 4 C’s (character, concise, connective, and clear), that your script reads visually, and be open to feedback from your classmates and instructor. Please also be sure to post your rough draft to our **Week 2** Discussion Board.

A3: Final Draft of Screenplay

Please be sure to follow formatting guidelines and print copies for your classmates. We will be going through each script and providing comments on the paper copies that will, in turn, be returned.

A4: Production Summary

Summaries should provide an anecdote or two about the experience. Did you find a particular role useful? What were you able to observe that will be beneficial to you on future shoots? Please also be sure to post your rough draft to our **Week 6** Discussion Board.

A5: Rough Cut of Short Film

As you progress through post-production, try to connect elements as written in your script. If you find that an improvisation or additional element can be weaved into the mix, then be sure to keep common edit points between the script and final cut, so that you don’t run into organizational nightmares. Please be sure to deal with music and foley elements towards the end of your cut, so you don’t waste time on a scene that may eventually be cut in the long run. Please also be sure to post links to your rough cut in our **Week 7** Discussion Board.

A6: Polished Cut of Short Film

During your final polish, you will be able to incorporate sound elements. Pay attention to how texture can change a viewer's experience, but try not to go overboard with any one element. Remember, foley is an art form in and of itself, so stay on the minimal side of things when a certain texture seems out of reach. Please also be sure to begin piecing together end credits with bloopers and begin working on an idea for a Main Title. Please also be sure to post links to your rough cut in our **Week 8** Discussion Board.

A7: Final Cut of Short Film

Are all your elements in place? Please be sure to make sure everything is synced and watch down your final output before uploading. Although this is a final cut, there will be an opportunity to create last minute changes before our Final Screenings with guests. When we watch links down in class, please be sure to make notes on audio and picture for final tweaks. Please also be sure to tag appropriately if posting straight to a distribution site, and remember that posting on multiple sites will only help increase exposure. Please make sure to post links to your rough cut in our **Week 9** Discussion Board.

Production Groups: Students can work individually or in production groups of four filmmakers each. If a student decides to work individually, then he or she is still expected to meet all requirements to receive credit. Please also be aware that filmmakers who choose to work individually will more than likely have more work in the organization and execution of final projects, so plan accordingly.

Specifications applying to final Short Films:

- Final Short Films are to be posted to the appropriate weekly discussion board.
- All films to have a Main Title and End Credits.
- Music releases or permission must be obtained for all music.
- You are welcome to appear as an actor in your own Short Film or to cast fellow classmates as characters if working in a Group.

Topics:

Topics include detailed training on screenwriting development (effective dialogue, and memorable characters), producing cheaply and effectively, casting and directing actors, post production elements involved with editing and audio, casting and budgeting, dealing with locations, actors, and music releases, bargain hunting for equipment, directing and composition, acting and improvisation, editing, making Main Titles, and end credits, dealing with the unexpected, and distribution.

Pre-requisites:

Participants must provide their own digital cameras (such as Mini DV, HD, or FlipCam), have access to editing equipment and software (such as iMovie or Final Cut Pro), and be able to upload content to the Internet. Refined audio and video equipment is not necessary—a basic digital camera/phone and built-in mic are acceptable. This class does not provide training in the use of camera equipment, lighting techniques, or advanced editing software.

Course grades will be based the on the completion of exams, assignments, and classroom participation as follows:

Attendance:	10
A1: Pitching Script	10
A2: Rough Draft of Script	10
A3: Final Draft of Script	10
A4: Production Summary	10
A5: Rough Cut	10
A5: Polished Cut	10
A6: Final Cut	20
Exams (2)	20
Discussion Questions	120
Participation:	10
Total points	240

Class	Date	Topics & Lessons	Assignments & Readings
1	4/6	Introduction to Course Pitch Concept Characters	Obtain a copy of <i>How Not to Make a Short Film</i> by Roberta Maria Monroe Reading: <i>Keep It Fresh</i> , p. 1-24. Answer Week 1 DQ's
2	4/14	Revise Concept/Characters Pitch Pilot Story Script Elements Review Appendix 1: Screenplay Format Tutorial, p. 200-208	Read: <i>Why 43 Minute Shorts Never Work</i> , p. 24-45. Answer Week 2 DQ's A1—Pitch Due.
3	4/21	Workshop First Drafts Check for 4 C's of Dialogue Does script read visually?	Read: <i>The Pilot—Script</i> , p. 67-84. (from <i>BYTE-SIZED TELEVISION</i>) A2—First Draft Due. Create a main posting that includes an attached rough draft of your pilot and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates on our Week 3 discussion board. Answer Week 3 DQ's
4	4/28	Workshop Revised Drafts Production & Casting Planning Assign Job Responsibilities Preproduction & Casting Communicating with Actors	Read: <i>Practical Concerns</i> , p. 92-101. (from <i>BYTE-SIZED TELEVISION</i>) A3—Revised Draft Due. Please be sure to bring in copies of the final draft of your script for each class member. Answer Week 4 DQ's
5	5/5	Review equipment, sound, and lighting choices. Dealing with releases, props, and unforeseen roadblocks. Formal Production Meeting Directors Present Shot Lists and Updates	Read: <i>Preproduction</i> , p. 103-116. (from <i>BYTE-SIZED TELEVISION</i>) Take Test #1 this week. Production dates and times should be solidified and underway. Answer Week 5 DQ's

6	5/12	Production Week Post and Offer Feedback to Production Experience	Read: <i>Production</i> , p. 119-132. A4—Production Summary Due. Create a main posting that includes a link to production stills and summary of experience (pros and cons) and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates on our Week 6 discussion board.
7	5/19	Test #1 review. Post and Offer Feedback to Rough Cuts of Pilots. Creating a Main Title Adding Music	Read: <i>Postproduction</i> , p. 131-140. (from <i>BYTE-SIZED TELEVISION</i>) A5—Rough Cut Due. Create a main posting that includes a link to the rough edit of your pilot and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates on our Week 7 discussion board.
8	5/26	Post and Offer Feedback to Polished Cuts of Pilots. End Credits Bloopers Guest Lecture.	A6—Polished Cut Due. Create a main posting that includes a link to the polished edit of your pilot and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates on our Week 8 discussion board.
9	6/2	Fine Cuts	A7—Final Cut Due. Create a main posting that includes a link to your final edit of your pilot and respond to at least two of your fellow classmates on our Week 9 discussion board. Read: <i>Distribution</i> , p. 147-173.
10	6/9	Pitch Further Script Ideas Guest Lecture.	Read Sundance and the Film Festival Circuit, p. 173-199. Take Test #2 this week.
11	6/16	Test #2 review. Distribution & Monetization Publicizing & Marketing Adding Tags	Read: Posting Your Show on the Internet, p. 156-165. (from <i>BYTE-SIZED TELEVISION</i>)
12	6/22	Final Screening!	