

HPSC0066 Science and Film Production

Course Syllabus

Term One 18/19 session | Bex Coates | r.l.coates@ucl.ac.uk

Course Information

This module focuses on film creation. It combines critical theory of the representation of science in cinema and television with practical skills in scriptwriting, production (filming, lighting, sound recording, interview technique, presentation, narrative, documentary and docudrama genres) and post-production (paper, film and sound editing). The module establishes a social, cultural and intellectual context for production, and offers a strong critical foundation for the effective realization of production work. The module will be delivered via two-hour seminar/practical class per week. Some hours will be lecture-based, focused on critical theory and interpretation. Other hours will focus on practical skill development in pre-production, production, and post-production processes.

Basic course information

Course website:	
Moodle Web site:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=38869
Assessment:	Group Film (5-6 minutes) 50% Essay (2000 words) 50%
Timetable:	www.ucl.ac.uk/timetable , or tinyurl.com/hpsc3046
Prerequisites:	None.
Required texts:	
Course tutor(s):	Bex Coates
Contact:	r.l.coates@ucl.ac.uk
Web:	
Office location:	Department of Science and Technology Studies, 22 Gordon Square, Room B14

Schedule

UCL Week	Topic	Date	Activity
6	Module Overview and Introduction to Framing	03/10/2018	Discussion Seminar.
7	Camera Kit Practical Workshop – standard composition and movement repertoire	10/10/2018	Practical activity; group camera practice.
8	Interview Styles and Production Workshop	17/10/2018	Practical activity; lighting and audio.
9	Documentary Pre-Production Workshop; finding a story, scriptwriting and planning for a shoot.	24/10/2018	Discussion Seminar.
10	Narration and B-roll Workshop	31/10/2018	Group activity; Shooting B-roll.
11	Reading Week	07/11/2018	
12	Group Film Presentations	14/11/2018	Group activity; Groups will present their film treatments for review and feedback. Not assessed.
13	Editing Workshop	21/11/2018	Group activity; Editing practice.
14	Critical Film Analysis	28/11/2018	Discussion Seminar.
15	Production Troubleshooting Session	05/12/2018	Student-led discussion, questions and troubleshooting.
16	Film Screenings	12/12/2018	Each production team will screen their finished films with an accompanying presentation. This will be assessed by the first and second markers.

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback
Essay	Critical analysis of a film or television programme that engages with science	19/12/2018 5pm	2000	08/01/2019
Film	Group Film (5-6 mins length)	12/12/2018 5pm		08/01/2019

Assignments

Essay

For the essay you will be required to write a critical analysis of a film or television programme that engages with science. It can be a production from any era or indeed a new release but you must engage with critical theory and contextualization in the manner learned in the module. I will help you identify sources if necessary. You can also talk to me about the essay title if you're stuck for one because it needs to be such that you can write a critical analysis of the subject and not just a descriptive piece.

Film

You will create a film on a topic based in science. Film topic suggestions will be discussed in class however the genre is your choice. The duration must be 5-6 minutes, inclusive.

Groups: You will be assigned to a group by the module tutor.

This project will be assessed based on the submitted film. All students within the group will receive the same mark. This is because groupwork also requires skill development in project management, cooperation, communication, and teamwork. This is meant to reflect real-world work experiences.

Two items must be submitted as the "film". First, the script. This must be uploaded via Moodle. Second, the film. This must be uploaded via YouTube. Both must be uploaded by no later than 5pm on the due date.

Criteria for assessment will relate to all element of film pre-production, production, and postproduction. Also, your ability to work as a group will be assessed. Specific criteria for assessment will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.

Each team will screen its finished film and each member of the team will give a two-minute presentation on the making of the film and his/her role in the production. The films and presentations will be marked by first and second markers.

In general, films will be assessed based on the following criteria for assessment. Specific guidance

will be offered in class.

Specific Criteria for Assessment for this Module:

Critical Analysis Essay

Your essay should be 2,000 words long and will be assessed against the general criteria for assessment as set out in the STS Student Handbook. An added emphasis will be placed on the following specific criteria:

Research skills:

- The essay makes use of appropriate and relevant primary sources;
- It provides evidence of the student's ability to evaluate primary sources and to critically select information.

Critical analysis:

- The essay is not just descriptive of primary material and summarising existing scholarship but demonstrates the ability to critically engage with primary material and secondary sources for the purpose of building an argument.

Methodological awareness:

- The essay demonstrates awareness of specific methods of analysis related to the object of their analysis.
- The essay demonstrates the ability to choose appropriate methods depending on the aims of the analysis.

Structure of argument:

- The essay is clearly written in order to demonstrate a point. It is argumentative in style and appropriately structured to be convincing.
- In particular, the essay demonstrates the author's capacity to anticipate criticism, through bringing evidence of being critically reflective about their own argument and aware of possible counter claims to their theoretical standing.

Appropriate references to relevant scholarship:

- The essay makes use of relevant scholarship to support the argument
- The literature cited in the essay is referred to in a consistent and appropriate manner (any established reference style is fine - Harvard, Chicago, APA...).

Bibliography:

- The bibliography demonstrates an authentic intellectual engagement with a reasonable range of secondary sources relevant to the topic and the argument.

Something Extra:

- This can be an original angle, evidence of strong and extensive research or literature search, a creative idea, a very good writing style...

Film

<u>Category</u>	<u>Expectation</u>
Script	A well-written script that flows naturally and carries the story.
Editing	Editing that complements the genre, whether documentary, drama, presenter-led, etc. Any visual anomalies between shots should be corrected at the editing stage.

Sound	Sound that brings the movie to life. Music and live action sound levels will rise and fall appropriately with the visual content and also convey the emotive qualities of the movie.
Narration/voiceover	Good, clear, well enunciated narration. The narrator's voice should match the style of production, for example, 'newsy', 'mysterious', 'confident' etc. It should carry the story and should not be the dominant feature of the production. Good narration is 'easy listening'. The use of more than one narrator, for example, a male and female voice can be very effective and powerful but should match the genre.
Performance	Performance, as in drama or drama documentary that reflects the script.
Presentation	Presenters who appear comfortable, confident and fluent in front of the camera and put the audience at ease. Use of a presenter can be a very effective way of linking movie scenes. Presenters can also interview expert witnesses.
Cinematography	Camera work that interprets the script, and is creative, visually exciting, emotive, and lit in a way appropriate to the mood of the action.
Direction	Direction that interprets the script sensitively and intelligently. A good director visualises the script and plans shooting accordingly.
Visual effects	Visual effects that complement the genre and are not being used for the sake of 'effect'. Library film footage, still images, graphics, captions, and other 'bought in' material should fit naturally into the production as if they were shot to order.
Overall creativity	Overall creativity (often termed production design) that demonstrates production planning so that the whole movie comes together as a structured and well-designed piece.

Aims & objectives

Aims:

The module aims to give students an understanding of how science is represented and communicated in film, television and other media platforms, and practical skills to produce their own programmes.

Objectives:

Primary learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Critically engage with representations of science in cinema and television;
- Understand elements of social, cultural and intellectual context for production;
- Apply critical tools for the effective realization of production;
- Be able to produce – from concept to YouTube – a short film which engages with a science topic.

Secondary learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate research and writing skills appropriate to year 3 STS modules;
- Demonstrate the ability to work in teams as well as independently;
- Demonstrate time and project management, working to tight deadlines, and with initiative.

Reading list

You will be expected to read more widely during the research for your movie and for your essay. A selection of books are listed below covering film production, science and film, and critical film analysis. They are not overly expensive and you may wish to purchase some of them if you find them particularly inspiring, however they are all readily available through the UCL Library.

Best General Introductions:

Film Production Literature

- Steven Ascher & Edward Pincus, *The filmmaker's handbook: a comprehensive guide for the digital age* (PLUME, 2013). [↗](#)
- Max Thurlow and Clifford Thurlow, *Making short films* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

Critical Film Analysis

- Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (Longman, 2014).
- Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction* (Laurence King, 2011).

- Professor David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Dr Jeff Smith, Film Art: An Introduction (McGraw-Hill Education, 2016).

Science and Film

- Vincent Campbell, Science, Entertainment and Television Documentary (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)
- Tim Boon, Films of fact: a history of science documentary on film and television (Columbia University Press, 2008).
- David A Kirby, Lab coats in Hollywood: science, scientists, and cinema (MIT Press, 2011).
- Sydney Perkowitz, Hollywood science: movies, science and the end of the world (Columbia University Press, 2010).
- Jaap Willems and Winfried Gopfert, Science and the Power of TV (VU University Press & Da Vinci Institute, 2006).
- Declan Fahy, New Celebrity Scientists: Out of the Lab and Into the Limelight (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

Lecture Readings: