

CINEMATIC STORYTELLING

A 12-session experiential learning course for youth
designed for the Driftwood Theatre School with availability
September–December 2024

Target Audience: Youth aged 11 to 18

Course Duration: 12 weekly sessions (2 hours each)

Objective: This course aims to introduce youth to the essentials of digital cinematography, focusing on capturing and creating dramatic performances. By the end of the course, students will have a foundational understanding of cinematic techniques, camera operation, lighting, sound, and editing, enabling them to produce short films and capture performances effectively.

Session Breakdown:

Session 1: Introduction to Digital Cinematography

- **Overview:** Introduction to the course objectives, schedule, and key concepts. Discussion on the importance of cinematography in storytelling and dramatic performances.
- **Activities:** Ice-breaking activities, overview of the filmmaking process, and safety briefing.

Session 2: Basics of Camera Operation

- **Overview:** Introduction to different types of cameras and basic camera operations, including framing, focus, and exposure.
- **Activities:** Hands-on practice with various cameras, exploring different shots and angles.

Session 3: Composition and Framing

- **Overview:** Exploration of composition rules and framing techniques to enhance storytelling visually.
- **Activities:** Practical exercises in framing and composing shots using storyboards and real-life setups.

Session 4: Lighting for Cinematography

- **Overview:** Basics of lighting, including three-point lighting setup, natural vs. artificial lighting, and the role of lighting in setting the mood.
- **Activities:** Hands-on practice with lighting equipment, creating different lighting setups for dramatic effect.

Session 5: Sound Recording and Design

- **Overview:** Introduction to sound recording techniques, including microphone types, placement, and the importance of sound in enhancing performances.
- **Activities:** Practical exercises in recording dialogue and ambient sound using various microphones.

Session 6: Storyboarding and Scriptwriting

- **Overview:** Basics of storyboarding and scriptwriting for film, focusing on visual storytelling and dramatic narrative structure.
- **Activities:** Creating storyboards and writing short scripts for their own dramatic scenes.

Session 7: Directing Actors for the Camera

- **Overview:** Techniques for directing actors on camera, focusing on performance, blocking, and delivering emotional scenes.
- **Activities:** Practice directing fellow students in short scenes, experimenting with different directing styles.

Session 8: Filming Dramatic Scenes

- **Overview:** Practical session focused on filming the scripted scenes, applying camera techniques, lighting, and sound recording.
- **Activities:** Students work in groups to film their scenes, taking turns in different roles (director, camera operator, sound engineer).

Session 9: Introduction to Editing

- **Overview:** Basics of video editing, including an introduction to editing software, cutting, and assembling footage.
- **Activities:** Hands-on practice with editing software, starting with simple cuts and transitions.

Session 10: Advanced Editing Techniques

- **Overview:** Exploration of advanced editing techniques, including colour correction, sound editing, and adding special effects.

- **Activities:** Practical exercises in applying advanced editing techniques to their footage.

Session 11: Post-Production and Final Touches

- **Overview:** Overview of the post-production process, including final edits, sound design, and adding music.
- **Activities:** Finalizing their edited scenes, focusing on polishing the final product.

Session 12: Screening and Critique

- **Overview:** Screening of the final projects, followed by a critique session. Discussion on challenges faced and lessons learned.
- **Activities:** Presenting their short films, receiving feedback, and reflecting on their learning experience.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

- Understand the fundamentals of digital cinematography and its role in storytelling.
- Be able to operate cameras, frame shots, and set up lighting for dramatic scenes.
- Develop skills in sound recording, directing actors, and editing footage.
- Gain hands-on experience with industry-standard equipment and software.

- Collaborate effectively with peers to produce and edit short films.

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the art of digital cinematography, empowering youth with the skills and knowledge to capture and create compelling dramatic performances.

About the Instructor:

Michael Gurney has produced and broadcast video productions for many types of audiences — corporate networks, community groups, and theatrical audiences. He is a graduate of the University of King's College journalism program, where he specialized in radio and television production. In his work as Director of Communications for Alpha Ministries Canada and Manager of Corporate Communications for the Prince Rupert Port Authority, he created video and interactive digital experiences to promote and educate. Michael is an exuberant newspaper arts and culture writer, communications consultant and software architect who loves fusing different disciplines to create artistic integrity.

Application Process:

Prospective students must complete a short questionnaire about relevant filmmaking interests and provide a letter of recommendation.