

Teaching Portfolio

Kurt Paulsen, MFA

Philosophy of Teaching

Philosophy of Teaching

I have had the privilege of engaging in various teaching and learning experiences within academia over the past 20 years. At the core of my teaching philosophy lies a deep empathy for learners, which I believe is essential for crafting curricula that not only resonates with students but also fosters meaningful, experiential growth. I do not use "experiential" as an educational buzzword; rather, I see it as the transformative process by which students evolve over the duration of a program, proving its efficacy. In an age where information is widely accessible and technological assistance is pervasive, instruction should focus on mentorship, guidance, inspiration, and the cultivation of wisdom through real-world experiences. A great instructor excels at designing these pivotal, challenging moments for students and ensures that every learner is met where they are in their journey.

I believe that education is not simply the transfer of knowledge but a dynamic process that requires deep engagement and adaptability. Students bring diverse experiences, expectations, and aspirations into the classroom, and it is the instructor's role to recognize and incorporate these into the learning process for each new semester. Teaching is a reciprocal activity; just as instructors inspire students, students challenge and inspire instructors to continually refine and evolve their methods. This iterative process enhances not only the students' growth but also the professional growth of the educator.

Instructional Approaches

I approach my courses using one of three methods, depending on the format:

1. **Lecture-Based Courses:** For lecture courses, my primary goal is to foster interactivity and a personal connection to the material. Engagement is paramount, especially in courses that require significant retention of information. I am an active and dynamic instructor, often moving around the classroom to change spatial dynamics and maintain student attention. I enjoy surprising students with questions to keep them alert and involved. This approach transforms lectures into interactive sessions where students feel connected to the material and the instructor. By incorporating discussions, visual aids, and small group activities, I aim to make even dense content accessible and engaging. This active participation ensures that students are not passive recipients but active contributors to their learning experience.
2. **"Making" Courses:** Hands-on courses involving equipment, tools, or software require a different strategy. I start with simple, foundational processes that students can master before progressing to more complex challenges. This method encourages students to take risks, fostering an environment where failure is not only acceptable but integral to the creative process. By normalizing failure early, I help students overcome anxieties associated with open-ended challenges, enabling them to experiment and innovate freely. These moments of failure often lead to unanticipated discussions and solutions, enriching the learning experience. I encourage students to reflect on their mistakes and use them as stepping stones for deeper understanding and skill development. While I maintain clear objectives, I allow the organic flow of discovery to guide class sessions, often finding innovative ways to achieve our goals as a group. This flexible approach helps students develop confidence and adaptability, critical skills in any creative field.
3. **Online Courses:** Teaching an online course undeniably requires a rethinking of course content and approach. I have taught asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid courses, each requiring a unique balance of strategies from my lecture-based and hands-on teaching methods. Engagement remains one of the primary challenges in online learning, as students often need to take more initiative in directing their education. Inspiring students to dig deeper than the provided course content is crucial for achieving meaningful outcomes, encouraging them to connect the material to their personal interests and professional goals. Over the years, I have observed that while interpersonal issues among students in online courses are often diminished, the connection between students and faculty remains critical for success. Establishing this connection can make a profound difference in students' engagement and overall experience. To this end, I believe all online instruction should include initial live introductions between faculty and students, as well as midterm check-ins. These touchpoints create opportunities for meaningful interaction and personalized guidance, which can transform a passive "lurker" into an active, engaged leader. Additionally, I emphasize creating opportunities for collaborative projects and peer discussions, fostering a sense of community even in a virtual environment. By blending robust content delivery with intentional interpersonal engagement, online courses can achieve the same depth of learning and connection as face-to-face instruction.

Encouraging Agency and Collaboration

I firmly believe in empowering students to take ownership of their learning. Undergraduate creative programs should not merely follow a rigid curriculum of prescribed information and solutions. Instead, students should actively seek out alternative sources of knowledge, bringing these back to the classroom for discussion, evaluation, and integration. This collaborative

approach not only diversifies ideas within the classroom but also reinforces critical thinking and discernment, essential skills for developing personal taste and professional judgment. My role is to serve as a content coach, information guide, and mentor in this process.

Agency is critical to student success. Encouraging students to become independent thinkers and problem-solvers prepares them for challenges beyond academia. When students take initiative in seeking knowledge and proposing solutions, they develop a sense of ownership over their work. I create opportunities for students to lead discussions, present research, and critique each other's projects, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. This process builds confidence and a sense of community among students, enabling them to learn from one another as well as from me.

Students and parents are often very concerned about the employment prospects of a program, and one of the most effective ways I have found to bridge the gap between students and industry is by integrating real-world clients into classroom projects. By partnering with organizations, businesses, and industry professionals, students gain firsthand exposure to the expectations, pressures, and workflows of their chosen fields. These collaborations allow students to work on meaningful projects that not only build their technical and creative skills but also provide concrete, professional examples for their portfolios. This experience becomes invaluable when students transition to job-seeking or advanced academic opportunities. It is often possible to find clients who are willing to adapt to the timelines and limitations of student skillsets while still achieving impressive creative outcomes. Although these projects can introduce some variability from semester to semester, they inject a sense of dynamism and relevance into the curriculum, ensuring the program remains aligned with current industry trends and professional practices. Furthermore, these experiences often enhance student confidence, as they see their efforts result in tangible, impactful outcomes that prepare them for future challenges.

Personal Attention and Community Building

The most holistic way to describe my teaching philosophy is with two words: personal attention. Having taught all aspects of the video production workflow and a range of related courses for many years, I recognize the diversity of backgrounds and skill levels students bring to the classroom. This diversity requires a tailored approach, where I focus on identifying students who may need one-on-one support to overcome specific challenges while simultaneously nurturing and encouraging those who are already excelling. By offering personalized guidance, I ensure that every student has the opportunity to grow at their own pace and achieve their fullest potential. This approach not only supports academic success but also fosters a deeper sense of connection and trust between the instructor and students.

I strive to build relationships with my students by understanding their goals, interests, and backgrounds. This knowledge allows me to craft assignments and team roles that align with their individual aspirations, fostering engagement and a sense of purpose. Developing these connections invariably leads to improved attendance, stronger engagement, and even increased enrollment in specific majors. These relationships also create continuity within programs, as connections with students often persist beyond the classroom, strengthening the overall learning community. Advising starts in the classroom and personalized instruction naturally leads to more a more encompassing mentorship.

I also recognize the importance of creating a supportive classroom culture. By fostering mutual respect and encouraging open communication, I ensure that students feel safe to express their ideas and take creative risks. This sense of belonging is essential for cultivating a productive and inspiring learning environment. I regularly solicit feedback from students to understand their perspectives and adapt my methods to better meet their needs. This iterative process of reflection and adjustment keeps my teaching practices relevant and effective. There may be times when mentorship also includes coaching students through interpersonal conflicts with other students. Especially at the undergraduate level, the value of a student's education should also take into account their growth as an open-minded and tolerant individual.

Summary

In sum, my teaching philosophy is grounded in empathy, engagement, and empowerment. By fostering an interactive, supportive, and challenging environment, I aim to inspire students to achieve their full potential while equipping them with the skills and wisdom to navigate their creative journeys. Education is a transformative process that thrives on collaboration, innovation, and personal connection. Through thoughtful mentorship and a commitment to lifelong learning, I strive to make a lasting impact on the students I have the privilege to teach.

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

Over the course of my academic career, spanning multiple institutions, I have been privileged to engage with an exceptionally diverse cohort of students. Growing up in rural Minnesota, my initial cultural exposure was limited; however, I was consistently drawn to multicultural and cross-cultural exchanges—experiences that have profoundly influenced my worldview. As an undergraduate, I deliberately sought environments that challenged my perspectives, attending a community college in downtown Minneapolis where I immersed myself in a predominantly minority community. My curiosity about global cultures led me to Cambodia, where I participated in a traditional wedding in a remote village, an experience further enriched by my role as the best man. This immersive experience highlighted the importance of stepping out of one's comfort zone to foster meaningful connections and deepened my understanding of global cultural traditions.

One of the most impactful aspects of my professional journey was serving as lead instructor for a summer exchange program with United International College in Zhuhai, China. Over six years, I led immersive five-week programs, each involving 20-30 international students. These programs extended far beyond conventional pedagogy, incorporating cultural immersion activities such as home visits, communal cooking events, and collaborative art projects. These experiences were transformative, not only for the students but also for me as an educator. They reinforced my belief in the importance of creating educational environments where diverse voices are celebrated and new perspectives are explored. As a minority in these contexts, I was both a learner and a teacher, continually expanding my understanding of diverse cultural paradigms while fostering reciprocal growth among participants. These moments emphasized the necessity of cultural humility and active listening in both teaching and learning.

My commitment to diversity extends beyond international engagement to encompass the multifaceted diversity within the United States. At Bethany Lutheran College, I mentored students from low-income Minneapolis neighborhoods, many of whom were recruited through scholarship programs designed to expand access to higher education. Supporting these students as they navigated the cultural transition to a small private college in Mankato offered me profound insights into the systemic challenges and triumphs experienced by underrepresented communities. I worked closely with students to develop strategies for academic success, while also addressing the personal and cultural adjustments they faced. Additionally, my role as an instructor at Minnesota State University has allowed me to work with students representing a broad spectrum of socio-economic statuses, racial identities, and gender expressions. This diversity of experience continually reinforces my belief that inclusive environments are vital to fostering intellectual and creative excellence. Each student brings their unique story, and I strive to honor those stories by integrating their lived experiences into the classroom environment.

In my pedagogical practice, I frequently integrate discussions on gender and sexuality into both visual art and classroom discourse. By encouraging students to critically examine how their identities influence their creative processes, I create a space that supports self-exploration and artistic authenticity. These conversations have enabled me to build meaningful connections with students across the full spectrum of gender identities and expressions, underscoring my commitment to nurturing their journeys of self-discovery through art. These discussions are often enriched by real-world examples and historical contexts, fostering a deeper understanding of how identity shapes creative expression. By addressing sensitive and complex topics, I aim to challenge students to think critically about societal norms and their roles as artists in shaping cultural narratives.

I regard diversity as an essential catalyst for creativity. Distinct backgrounds, cultural perspectives, and identities are the wellspring of innovation and imagination. Within my classroom, I emphasize the importance of understanding how one's lived experiences inform their creative work. By fostering this awareness, I aim to cultivate an inclusive, empowering environment where students feel emboldened to explore their full creative potential. Without diversity, creativity risks stagnation; the two are intrinsically linked, a principle that guides both my philosophy and practice. I continually seek opportunities to learn from my students and colleagues, recognizing that my growth as an educator is intrinsically tied to the diversity of experiences and ideas I encounter. This dynamic interplay between teaching and learning ensures that my classrooms remain vibrant spaces where innovation and inclusivity thrive.

Courses Taught

Bethany Lutheran College

MART197 Audio/Video Production Basics (3)

Students receive instruction and hands-on experience with equipment for audio and video production. This introductory course emphasizes working within the various production phases utilizing widely available technologies.

MART290 Introduction to Animation (3)

While exploring the unique communication potentials of animated video, students practice various animation forms and techniques, including digital animation, narrative drawn animation, stop-motion animation, and experimental animation. Viewings and criticism of relative works from the field will accompany the production work.

MART297 Audio/Video Production (3)

Students learn and practice camera techniques, lighting schemes, audio design, and interviewing and writing skills in the process of scripting and creating media productions in the Bethany studio and field. Additional fees may be required.

MART313 Light Design & Control (3)

This course covers the theory and practice of lighting techniques for single camera photography and video production.

MART314 Advanced Camera Techniques (3)

This course will address the technical and aesthetic aspects of cinematography with an emphasis on developing techniques and operating methods that will prepare each student to transition to a professional working environment.

MART325 Stop Motion Animation (3)

An introduction to camera-based animation techniques. Students will learn how to work with 2D, 3D, miniature and life-scale materials for the purpose of creating the illusion of motion through time. Physical craft skills are developed alongside technical training in digital equipment.

MART330 Motion Graphics Design (3)

This course introduces fundamental concepts for motion graphics, including graphics and promos for television, film titles and advertising. Design presentation and development, screen composition, graphic transitions, and content are emphasized. Students are expected to have a strong understanding of design and motion theory prior to this course.

MART397 Advanced Audio/Video Production (3)

An advanced version of MART297 with expanded requirements for students with extensive production backgrounds.

MART435 Digital 3D Design and Animation (3)

This course introduces several techniques for digital 3D modeling and animation using industry standard software in the field of motion graphics. Students will visualize and execute still and motion media designs for a variety of applications. Coursework includes technical and design exercises in addition to a final project.

MART465 Editing for Film and Video (3)

Media production theory and practice with an emphasis on post-production. Students write, produce, edit, and prepare for distribution an audio/video production using non-linear editing technology.

MART475 Avant Garde/Experimental Film (3)

Students will explore the groundbreaking and uncommon film and video experiments from the past century. This exposure to both contemporary video art and historic film artifacts will inform the student's hands-on experiments and projects. Special consideration is given to the theoretical context in which these historic films were created.

MART496 Media Arts Capstone I (2)

Media Arts fall-semester capstone senior project.

MART497 Media Arts Capstone II - Capstone Exhibition (2)

This course is a spring-semester continuation of MART496 and is intended to prepare the student for the public exhibition of their capstone project.

MART499 Media Arts Internship (1-4)

Media-related field experience with an approved agency fulfilling an individual learning contract negotiated with student, faculty advisor, and worksite. An internship (1-4 credits) is strongly recommended for all students majoring in Media Arts. Media Art majors only, by consent of the instructor.

Courses Taught (Cont.)

Minnesota State University

Film 217 Introduction to Film Production (4)

Introduces fundamentals of film production: writing, producing, directing, lighting, shooting, and editing, through lecture, critiquing the work of other filmmakers, and hands on production. By the end of this course students will be ready to pursue their own film projects.

Film 317 Advanced Film Production (4)

Designed for students who have prior experience and want to make an experimental, narrative and/or documentary film. Students will move from screenplay/proposal to production and post production of short films. Pre-req: ENG 217 or permission of instructor. May be repeated.

Minneapolis College of Art and Design

GWD 7415 Motion Design (3)

This course focuses on movement with a time-based application of established graphic form to enhance communication delivery. Through broadcast, video, and web technology-based practices, students advance their capstone project proposal as part of a multi-faceted design approach. Animation and motion graphics are utilized as practical solutions to ongoing design challenges.

Dordt University

ART 295 Motion Graphics (3)

This course is an introduction to the art of 2-D and 3-D digital graphics animation and interactivity for video, Web, and DVD. Students will gain knowledge of digital animation and its history. Projects are centered on getting hands-on experience and will integrate learning with real-world video production. The course also focuses on planning, design, and production using lectures, demonstrations, workshops, and screenings. Students will focus on using the most popular software programs.

Select Course Project Examples

Animation



I hold a strong belief in fostering media and technique agnosticism within students' creative skillsets. While many students naturally gravitate toward a specific craft by the time they reach their capstone projects, I designed the Media Arts Major at Bethany Lutheran College to provide comprehensive exposure to both physical and digital animation techniques, spanning 2D and 3D approaches. This curriculum not only broadens their technical proficiency but also encourages them to think critically about how to select the most effective medium for their creative objectives. By exploring diverse methods, students gain the confidence and adaptability necessary to navigate the ever-evolving demands of the media industry.

This foundation equips students with the versatility to address creative challenges with solutions tailored to the unique demands of each brief, whether in animation or live-action formats. The interdisciplinary nature of the program ensures that students are not confined by a singular approach but instead embrace a mindset that values flexibility and innovation.

Select Course Project Examples

Animation

Midnight on the Interstate

Client: Trampled by Turtles

Classes involved:

- MART 496 Media Arts Capstone I (BLC)

I created a fruitful relationship with the music agency Thirty Tigers based in Nashville, TN. They were excited to pair some of their artists with my students. The first project we worked on together was for the Minnesota-based band Trampled by Turtles. I had two very talented and motivated seniors who took this song on as one of their two capstone projects. We had some feedback rounds with them through the process, but otherwise I acted as their producer to monitor progress and schedules but otherwise released all creative control to these seniors.

Link: [Midnight on the Interstate](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Animation

Lonely Street

Client: Mason Jennings

Classes involved:

- MART 497 Media Arts Capstone II (BLC)

The second project with Thirty Tigers was a project for an artist named Mason Jennings. He was less well-known than Trampled by Turtles at this point and the students decided they would pursue this project brief using flat animation on multiple planes. To accomplish this they commissioned a custom welded table with tempered glass sliding shelves that could be articulated with motion control systems. They wanted to explore a new technical process while delivering something completely new in style for the artists. Mason Jennings was extremely pleased with the result.

Link: [Lonely Street](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Animation

By the Light of the Moon

Client: Dave Simonett

Classes involved:

- MART 325 Stop Motion Animation (BLC)

After developing the relationship with Dave Simonett as the lead singer of Trampled by Turtles, he approached me to create another music video for a song he was releasing independently. I involved my Stop Motion Animation class as a team to build the props, puppets, and sets. Several students took the lead in animating the main character's while other students took on the tasks of rigging and operating the custom robotic camera systems; planning out their motion control paths through the Dragon stop motion software.

Link: [By the Light of the Moon](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Animation

The Appendix Song

Client: Fort Wilson Riot

Classes involved:

- MART 497 Media Arts Capstone II (BLC)

Yet another capstone that exemplifies the variety of techniques at the disposal for an open minded creator. This student worked with peer illustrator to create the elements that he would later animate in 2D space. He modeled and animated the 3D robot that was composited together with the digital 2d and paper stop-motion elements.

Link: [The Appendix Song](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Animation

Nature Gives No Choice

Classes involved:

- MART 497 Media Arts Capstone II (BLC)

One exemplary student chose to complete her capstone project with an emphasis on Photography, while integrating a motion element to meet the interdisciplinary requirements of the Media Arts Major. Her final work featured a massive digital image displayed as a stunning 20-foot-long installed print, which was also brought to life as an animated, immersive environment. This ambitious project highlighted her ability to skillfully combine diverse techniques to explore the complexities of femininity, using Camille Paglia's writings as a lens to examine themes of power, beauty, and societal expectations surrounding the feminine form. Her work exemplifies the program's ability to support innovative, multifaceted artistic expression by encouraging interdisciplinary approaches and providing students with the resources to experiment across diverse mediums.

Link: [Nature Gives No Choice](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Video Production



I have the most experience instructing courses in digital film production. These courses have proven to be in high demand, not only from curious students but also from external organizations looking to partner with student production teams. The beauty of video production is its versatility and ability to be utilized for art, entertainment, or commercial purposes. I have had the good fortune to instruct courses catering to all three.

Many of these courses are taught in a studio setting, with controlled lighting and ample access to equipment, while others are conducted in the field to give students hands-on experience in packing out and organizing productions on location. As production is inherently a crew-oriented industry, I frequently structure classes to function as a single production unit, with each student taking on specific roles tailored to the current project. This collaborative approach naturally fosters communication, patience, tolerance, and an openness to others' ideas, providing students with both technical and interpersonal skills essential for success in the industry.

Select Course Project Examples

Video Production

Tankathlon

Client: Wargaming.net

Classes involved:

- MART 330 Motion Graphics (BLC)
- MART 397 Advanced Audio/Video Production (BLC)
- FILM 317 Advanced Film Production (MNSU)

This production was a great chance for students to leave the classroom and practice their skills in the field. They faced environmental, technical, and interpersonal challenges beyond anything they had experienced before and they succeeded in spite of it all. It wouldn't have been possible without the seamless teamwork of students, professional alumni, and current Bethany faculty and staff. I was not surprised when the Wargaming.net coordinators told me they were very pleased with how we handled the production process.

Link: [Tankathlon Video](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Video Production

Tankathlon was a promotional video shot on location at Drive-a-Tank in Kasota, MN and featured 12 significant social media influences from around the world. Beyond the cast and clients, I also managed a group of 17 production students and alumni who made up the entire production crew. I functioned as the project director as well as student instructor. It was shot over the course of two days in three locations with a total of 24 cameras rolling concurrently. The final video was released on YouTube by the World of Tanks team.



Select Course Project Examples

Video Production

The Box

Classes involved:

- MART 313 Light Design & Control (BLC)
- MART 314 Advanced Camera Techniques (BLC)

Students from two specialized production courses collaborated to create this short film as part of a one-week assignment. The primary challenge for the crew was the construction of the “box” set, which required them to develop practical construction skills despite their limited prior experience. Through resourcefulness, teamwork, and guided instruction, they gained valuable insights into both the technical and creative aspects of set design. This project not only enhanced their practical knowledge but also encouraged innovative problem-solving within a compressed timeframe. The simplicity of the story, set, and cast allowed the students to focus more specifically on the lighting and shot compositions.

Link: [The Box](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Video Production

Kodoka: TV Series Promos

Classes involved:

- MART 497 Media Arts Capstone III (BLC)
- MART 314 Advanced Camera Techniques (BLC)

A media arts senior directed these promos for her senior capstone project. Working with a student in the Advanced Camera Techniques course, she sourced all of the props and the model for this series of three short TV bumper/teasers.

The visuals reference the screenplay for complete pilot episode of Kadoka, a post-apocalyptic television series set in the Badlands. She authored the screenplay as part of her English Minor in support of her Media Arts Major.

Link: [Kodoka](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Video Production

Everything You Need

Client: The Lonely Wild

Classes involved:

- MART 290 Introduction to Animation (BLC)
- MART 297 Audio/Video Production (BLC)
- MART 496/497 Media Arts Capstone (BLC)

This music video defies easy categorization, which is one of its most compelling aspects. Its production mirrored the scale of a typical film project, encompassing multiple settings both on location and in the studio. The cast and elements were human-scale, yet the techniques employed were heavily influenced by animation principles, resulting in a unique and innovative final product.

The project brought together students from various disciplines, highlighting the collaborative spirit and interdisciplinary approach essential for modern media creation. Students from the Introduction to Animation course contributed 2D illustrated animations, a student from the Fine Art Sculpture program designed and crafted the masks, and participants from the Audio/Video Production class supported the on-location shoots.

This project exemplifies the diverse skill sets I believe are crucial for today's media creators. By leveraging expertise across fields, the production served as both a creative and educational milestone, demonstrating the power of collaboration and the adaptability required to excel in contemporary media industries.

Link: [Everything You Need](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Motion Graphics



My first teaching experience in higher education was in Motion Graphics at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Since then, I have focused on multimedia approaches, emphasizing both technical skills and artistic expression. While I teach industry-standard software, I encourage students to "think like a camera" and imagine how painters or sculptors may approach the visual challenges.

Motion design is particularly suited to students with graphic design backgrounds due to shared tools and principles. This overlap helps students transition into motion graphics, creating work that combines technical precision with conceptual depth.

At the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), I have worked with students from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a range of unique and innovative projects. Their work often blends traditional techniques with modern tools, showcasing personal artistic visions.

As an instructor, my goal is to provide students with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the motion design industry. By fostering curiosity and creative exploration, I help them unlock their full potential in this dynamic field.

Select Course Project Examples

Motion Graphics

Silo - Main Title

Classes involved:

- GWD 7415 Motion Design (MCAD)

Project Brief

A title sequence is a method by which films, documentaries, or television programs present their title, key production people, and cast, utilizing conceptual visuals and sound. You will use your title sequence to establish the setting and tone of your topic. It may consist of live-action, animation, music, still images, and/or graphics. Your topic could be from one of three categories: a new topic or related to your capstone piece. As always, you will be creating a storyboard and mood board for your topic, if you are unsure of what direction you want to take, develop a few boards to further investigate.

Things to remember:

Create a 1-minute video

Research a topic from credible sources and feel free to explore a topic that you have vested interest in or completely new material. It could be based on fiction or non-fiction sources, but your research should be in-depth and robust, you will have several weeks to work on this. The following is an overall outline of what your finished product should include.

- Photoshop, Illustrator, or video assets
- An animated title
- Narration/Music/audio (as needed)

Link: [Silo - Main Title](#)



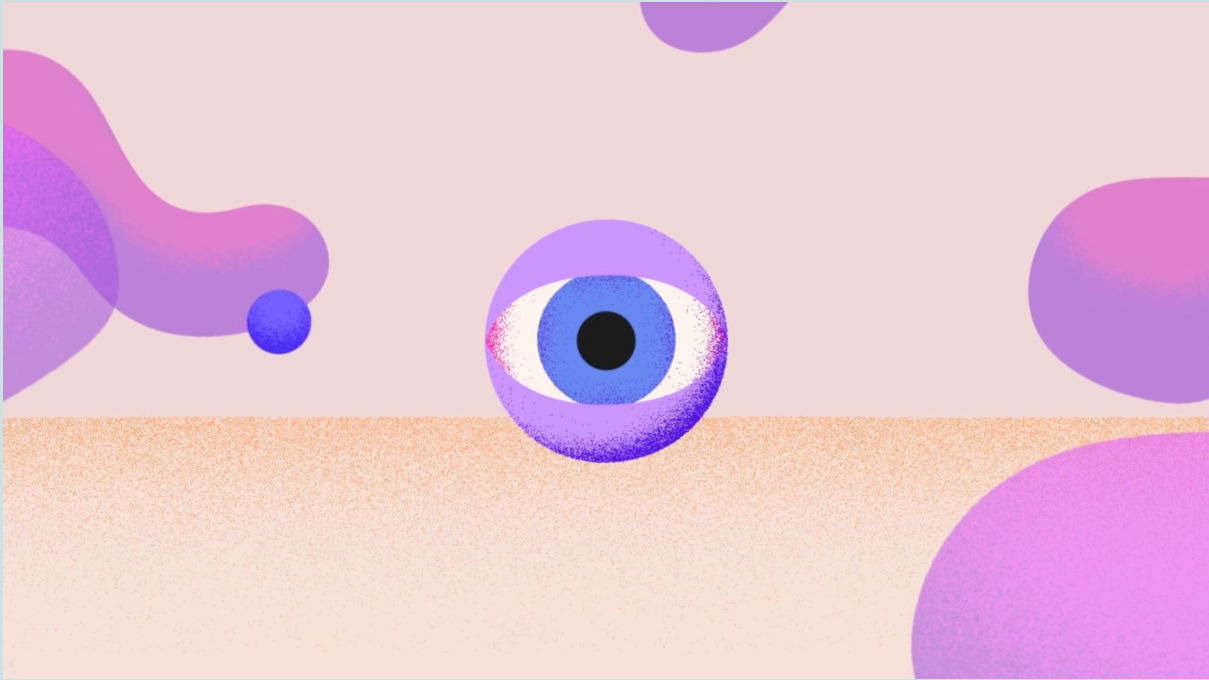
SILO

Select Course Project Examples

Motion Graphics

Final Course Reels

Link: [2022 Example](#)



Link: [2023 Example](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Motion Graphics

Final Course Reels

Link: [2024 Example](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Industry and Community Engagement

Speechless Film Festival

Classes involved:

- MART 499 Media Arts Internship (BLC)
- FILM 317 Advanced Video Production (MNSU)

“The mission of the Speechless Film Festival is to inspire individuals from different countries and cultures to communicate with one another through the universal medium of visual storytelling.”

I founded the Speechless Film Festival held annually in Mankato, MN. This was an initiative supported by my institution, but not *funded* by my institution. I was able to secure an array of sponsors and grants, local and abroad, to support the expenses of the festival through cash sponsorship or resource donation (venues, food, etc). This was a juried festival with cash prizes that received entries from around the world and had guests attend from as far away as Poland. As part of the festival, a series of talks and portfolio reviews were arranged for any students interested. The festival was open to the public and was embraced by the community and municipality. It also functioned as an institutional recruitment tool with several future students noting that it was the festival that determined their decision to attend BLC.

To give the students more direct access to the attending filmmakers and to allow them to understand the practical aspects of processing large quantities of media, student internships were open to any students from the Mankato area colleges and universities. The festival branding and motion media was created entirely by students under direct supervision by faculty. Although to an attendee, it was similar to other small international festivals, students were involved in almost every phase.

The 3-day festival ran for 8 years before shutting down during the Covid Pandemic.

Link: [Year 1 Venue Loop](#)



Select Course Project Examples

Industry and Community Engagement



Select Course Project Examples Industry and Community Engagement



Student Interns

Select Course Project Examples

Sample Syllabus

Instructor: Kurt Paulsen
Phone: 344-7732
E-mail: kpaulsen@blc.edu
Office: Honsey Hall 231

Course Description:

Through critical viewing of landmark films and a study of film theory, students expand their understanding of film as a central aspect of communication in our era (BLC catalogue).

Critical Viewing; Film Theory; Communication: Our primary approach to films in this class (and an approach that I hope you continue to use after this course) will be to consider films as texts (not unlike other kinds of texts—novels, stories, poems, advertisements, etc.) that can be “read” critically, and that a critical reading of filmic texts can be a challenging and rewarding process that will tell us a great deal about ourselves, our culture, our time, and our values and beliefs. In order to aid our critical viewing, there are three primary categories that we will use to open up the potential meanings of the films that we view:

1) Technique: Film is an art form that brings together a number of different components in the creation of the final product: scripts, acting, directing, camera work, editing, musical scores, production, and others, all of which have to cohere, and, at least, appear to work in concert. During the course we will develop a working vocabulary and familiarity with some of the technical devices used to make films.

2) Theory: How did artists and thinkers, producers and consumers respond to moving pictures in the 1890s? How has film as an art form developed since its beginning, and what role does film have in our contemporary culture? Are movies products of their culture or do they shape that culture? How do audiences react to and interpret what they see? Theorists (philosophers, literary critics and scholars, cultural studies scholars, linguists, and film scholars) have posed and attempted to answer these and other questions about the artfulness of film and the relationship between film and the societies and cultures that interact with and are impacted by the medium. We will engage with a number of different theoretical perspectives, which will help us to gain a philosophical and historical context as we attempt to answer the above questions as well as others that we will frame in regard to the specific films we view.

3) Aesthetics: How are the films we will view artful? How do the various techniques used combine and coalesce to create a complex and challenging text? What kinds of stories are being told and how are they being told in the films we will view? How do they communicate their particular messages? In all of the films that we view, we will attempt to answer the above questions.

Select Course Project Examples

Sample Syllabus

Landmark Films: While some of the films we will view might be considered “landmark” films, others I have chosen are not (although, arguably, all of them attempt something beyond the formulaic constraints of their particular genres). I chose the films, in part, because of my own interests and my familiarity with the particular films. I also chose them because of the ways in which they are atypical examples of films within particular genres—most of them amalgamate two or more genres (with varying degrees of success), which, in and of itself, should provide some interesting topics for discussion and analysis. In addition, the techniques they employ are often experimental and innovative, and the “visions” of each are complex and rich, so that their analysis in a course like this is warranted. Finally, I think all of the films operate in a way that will likely make us a bit uncomfortable (challenging our notions of what a film should be, of the purposes that art should serve, presenting challenging visions of humanity and reality), which is an ideal place to be in order to learn and grow.

BLC Institutional Objectives

By graduation, a Bethany Lutheran College student will:

1. Demonstrate intellectual, creative, and problem-solving skills.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of personal and public responsibility.
3. Develop habits of thinking that apply to a fulfilling life of learning.

Course Learning Outcomes:

The following are Communication Program Learning Outcomes intended to be addressed in various courses and at varied levels of demonstration. While multiple outcomes are introduced, developed, and mastered in each course, highlighted are those outcomes specifically addressed and measured in this course:

1. **Presentations: Increased confidence and competence in public presentations.**
2. Relationships: Knowledge of the manner in which communication creates, maintains and transforms relationships and the ability to engage in effective and productive relational communication.
3. **Contexts: Knowledge of the crucial role communication plays in community, professional and civic contexts, and the ability to use communication behaviors ethically and effectively in various contexts.**
4. Diversity: Knowledge and respect for the role of culture and diversity in communication, and the ability to effectively communicate within and across cultures.
5. **Influence: Competency in the construction and analysis of arguments and discourse intended to influence beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices.**
6. Technology: Ability to effectively use communication technology and to critically evaluate how technology affects communication.
7. **Research: Competence in systematic inquiry, including the process of asking questions, systematically attempting to answer them, and understanding the limitations of the conclusions reached.**

Select Course Project Examples

Sample Syllabus

Objectives:

At the end of this course students should be able to:

1. **Identify the formal elements of a narrative film.**
2. **Describe the interactions of the formal elements with the narrative elements.**
3. **Demonstrate a working knowledge of film specific terminology.**
4. **Summarize the major film genres with specific examples.**
5. **Translate a film into its textual and sub-textual elements.**
6. **Evaluate the effectiveness of a film in meeting its presumed purpose.**
7. **Write a personal criticism of a narrative film based upon the formal and narrative elements.**

Course Procedures:

The course will follow a consistent weekly routine of watching a film on Tuesday and discussing the film on Thursday. Readings will be regularly assigned and there will be periodic quizzes and tests. For an exact schedule refer to the most recent course schedule.

Learning Resources:

Required Text:

Looking at Movies – An Introduction to Film, 5th ed. - Barsam, Richard; Monahan, Dave
Writing About Movies: 4th Ed. - Gocsik, Karen M.; Barsam, Richard; Monahan, Dave

Supplemental Readings: Throughout the semester I will provide you with additional readings (both critical and popular) in connection to technique, genre, and theory.

Learning Demonstrations:

1) **Quizes**

2) **Chapter Presentations** Pairs of students will be assigned a chapter of the book. They are to present the content of that chapter in a concise and interesting way to reinforce the reading for that day. Presentations should be no longer than 25 minutes.

3) **Midterm Analysis Paper** A 2-3 page paper that breaks down a scene from a movie into its formal and narrative elements and interprets the relationship between those elements.

4) **Final Analysis Paper** An 8-10 page paper that offers an analysis or “reading” of a film of your choosing. The film must be cleared by the instructor before you begin. The goals of this paper are to describe and contextualize the film and to utilize the filmic vocabulary we will be learning. As you describe the film, you will need to use appropriate terms in order to discuss editing, mis-en-scene, cinematography, sound, etc. You should adopt a critical framework to help focus your criticism of the films thematic elements.

5) **Attendance and Participation:** Your presence in all of your courses is important—it is especially crucial in a course like this. It is important to me that we view the films in a relatively controlled environment and that you are always actively participating in the course. In order to do this effectively you must be here. *Every unexcused absence after two will result in the deduction of a letter grade and six or more absences is an automatic F.*

Select Course Project Examples

Sample Syllabus

Grading Points

Discussion Participation	100points
Quizzes	150 points
Chapter Presentation	100 points
Midterm Analysis	100 points
Final Paper	<u>250 points</u>
Total	700 points

Grading Scale

A	=	.934 - 1.000
A-	=	.900 - .933
B+	=	.867 - .899
B	=	.834 - .866
B-	=	.800 - .833
C+	=	.767 - .799
C	=	.734 - .766
C-	=	.700 - .732
D+	=	.667 - .699
D	=	.634 - .666
D-	=	.600 - .633
F	=	.599 and less

A word on academic integrity:

The MLA Handbook* has defined plagiarism as follows:

1. repeating another's sentences as your own
2. adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own
3. paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own
4. presenting someone else's line of thinking as though it were your own.

In short, to plagiarize is to use someone else's work as your own, without crediting or citing the source. Direct word-for-word copying is permissible if the material appears in quotation marks and if the source is cited.

Rephrasing and summarizing is permissible if the source is cited.

Select Course Project Examples

Sample Syllabus

Recording and Privacy:

In this class, software will be used to record live class sessions. As a student in this class, your participation may be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class. The intent of the recordings is to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content presented during the current semester in which the recording is made. You may not download, share, replicate, or publish the recording, in whole or in part, or use the recording for any other purpose without the written approval of the instructor. Recordings are for personal academic use only, where personal academic use is restricted to the personal study use of the individual. Any violations to this policy must be reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and may result in disciplinary action, including expulsion from the college. All recordings that contain identifiable student information will be deleted by the end of the course. If you have any concerns about being recorded during class, please discuss your options with your instructor or express your concerns to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require that “no qualified person shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied access to, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of services, programs or activities or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

If you have a disability, or feel you are in need of accommodations, please contact Kristi Ringen in the Academic Resource Center (kringen@blc.edu, 507-344-7730).

The instructor reserves the right to fail any student involved in plagiarism.

* *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, Dissertations* (New York, Modern Languages Association, 1977)

Date	Viewing/Assignment	2-Nov	Apocalypse Now
24-Aug	Juno	4	Chapter 9: Sound
26	Donnie Darko	9	Seven Samurai
31	Pan's Labyrinth	11	Chapter 10: Film History
2-Sep	Chapter 1: Looking at Movies	16	Psycho
7	Citizen Kane	18	Writing Workshop
9	Chapter 2: Principles of Film Form	23	Chapter 11: Filmmaking Technologies
14	The Maltese Falcon	25	Thanksgiving No Class
16	Chapter 3: Types of Movies	30	Do the Right Thing
21	American Beauty	2-Dec	Writing Workshop
23	Chapter 4: Elements of Narrative	7	Writing Workshop
28	Blade Runner	9	Final Paper Due/Presentations
30	Chapter 5: Mise-en-Scene	15	Final Period Presentations
5-Oct	Moulin Rouge		
7	Chapter 6: Cinematography		
12	Dancer in the Dark		
14	MIDTERM NO CLASS		
19	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest		
21	Chapter 7: Acting		
26	Run Lola Run		
28	Chapter 8: Editing		