The Mind’s Eye Syllabus Spring 2009

Instructor: John Vaughn

Weekly Conference Hours: TBA

Contact Info: Mobile: 331 504 6883  Email: Vaughn@hws.edu  Web site for our class: http://math.hws.edu/vaughn/

Texts/Resources: Text: Shut Up and Shoot by Anthony Q. Artis. Additional handouts, tech sheets, readings, movies, etc will be assigned as the semester unfolds.

Format: Class sessions: Monday 9-12 am. Some outside sessions are planned, weather permitting. All extra curricular film and video screenings at the Scuola are required attendance as well.

Purpose: The intention I have for this course is for each student to learn the basic theory, mechanics, and explore the creative process involved in making movies and video clips. You may choose to continue learning this kind of material after you have left Rome and even after college or not but I hope this experience begins a process of critical appreciation and enjoyment in making or viewing video in the future. Learning to design and create some simple video projects will make apparent just how involved and challenging it is to make “professional” quality film and video projects with no guarantee of artistic success. You will view enough video segments and movies while doing this so that you will develop a critical eye to judge video and film footage. You should become increasingly aware of the “man behind the curtain” and no longer ignore how the magic is done. There are lots of movies, images, and sounds in your future life to experience, I hope you will become an aficionado of the clever, thoughtful, beautiful, technically skillful, and inspired moments found in film and video.

Process: This class will consist of alternating tutorials on simple theory, technique, technical material and exercises for you to master the subjects of the tutorials. The exercises will result in your completing a number of more comprehensive projects, described below, that you will want to share with your family, friends, post on YouTube, showcase for the Colleges community, and beyond. These exercises and projects run the gamut from initial idea/concept formation to storyboarding, location scouting, audio recording, video recording, video transfer, editing using video/audio editing software, and burning DVDs of your finished projects to keep and share with friends and family.

We will also be watching a number of video clips and films, both short and longer features, so you can gather in a number of specific examples of techniques to inform your own creative process. This is in addition to the movies the Scuola is planning on showing this semester as well. Go to them all, it is part of doing your homework for this course as well. A group visit to the famous Italian film studio Cinecitta’ is also planned.

Materials/Equipment: I have brought to Rome a small but reasonably complete collection of video and audio equipment for you to use in this course. This includes three full kits: video camera, tripod, microphones, cables, etc which you will use throughout the semester. So, on any given day, three teams of students can be out and about collecting audio and video material for projects. As part of our learning process everyone will have to take turns at concept formation, site planning, directing, camera operation, recording audio, editing, etc. People naturally turn to parts of this they like best but we should all use the tools at least once.

We will begin our video editing using freely available programs such as Windows Movie Maker and iMovie 8. If you have a laptop computer with you it has one or the other of these programs on installed already. I have ordered a small number of copies of Adobe Premiere Elements and
Apple Final Cut Express that we will use for more complex projects toward the middle and end of the semester.

**WARNING ABOUT EQUIPMENT** Nothing rains on your parade more that losing equipment through theft or negligence. Like any major urban area on this planet, there are professional pickpockets and thieves throughout Rome. Lost equipment usually means you cannot finish what you began and even may compromise your entire project and others in the class as well! You must be vigilant and well organized when shooting on site so equipment is not lost or damaged! Organization here is absolutely essential. **Someone(s) must make sure the equipment is safe and protected at all times.** I will repeat this until you are heartily sick of it but don’t overlook this vital aspect of making your best project possible.

**Materials:** Other than the textbook, you will probably not need any additional video supplies or materials for this class. If you want to burn lots of copies of your work to send to family or friends, you may need to buy some recordable DVD disks.

**Exercises/Projects:** I will assign an exercise and/or project every class session, sometimes to be done during class, but most often you will need to work with a group outside class time to do these activities. These projects range from simple storyboarding of a scene to making a complete commercial or music video to planning and construction of a mini-documentary concerning some feature of Rome. In each case I will try to give you specific directives, deadlines, forms of presentation, etc but you should begin providing the creative spark and artistic touch as we go along. One possible project under consideration involves working with some Italian university students to design, shoot, and edit a commercial.

**Journal/Sketchbook:** You will need to keep a running journal of your ideas, designs, storyboards, evaluations, reactions to movies, and short essays during the various projects in this class this semester. You can use any standard notebook or sketchbook so all your work is collected in one place.

**Grading:** You will be graded on your participation in class and on location, completion of various exercises, proactive participation in projects, journal, and creation of a photographic, video and print portfolio by the end of this semester.