

TOPIC: Lesson 1: Filmmaking

Designed by Open Media Group

Objectives

"In feature films, the director is God, in documentary films God is the director!"

Alfred Hitchcock

The objectives of Filmmaking lessons are:

- to provide basic knowledge on video production and documentary filmmaking (terms, definitions, processes)
- to develop script for short video connected to Roma culture and experiences
- to implement all parts of preproduction and gain needed skills
- to shoot the video in semi-professional manner and amateur manner
- to edit the video (sound, image, special effects)
- to upload the video on social networks
- to encourage participants to continue to make videos after the end of the PAL Art Lab

Short Description

Filmmaking PAL Art Lab will provide opportunity to learn how to make video or short documentary from the very beginning to the end of the process. The learners will develop a script as a team and plan the production and postproduction. Also, they will define locations, deal with makeup, costumes and scenography.

The production part will include shootings at the locations with the persons featured in the documentary video. They will shoot with professional equipment with the help of professionals but also with their smart phones.

The postproduction will include editing of image, sound and titles in English. They will learn how to use free of charge video making applications but will also be part of professional editing as observers in order to get the grip of the sound and image editing (grading, coloring, sounds adding)

Main exercises

- Mini lecture: How to make a documentary/video
- Writing a script
- Finding location
- Planning production
- Makeup, costumes
- Shooting video with professionals with professional equipment
- Shooting video with smart phones
- Editing videos (sound and image)
- Some notions on distribution

Materials Needed

- Flipboard, pens and pencils
- Makeup, costumes

Equipment

- Chairs, tables
- Laptops, smart phones
- Cameras, microphones, cables, tripods
- External hard disks for data storage

Time Needed

1st day (8 hours)

Mini lecture on basics of video/documentary making (30')

Preparation of video script (7 hours with breaks)

2nd day (8 hours)

Finishing video script (2 hours)

Defining location (6 hours)

3rd day (4 hours)

Planning the production

4th day (8 hours)

Shooting

5th day (8 hours)

Postproduction

6th day (4 hours)

Postproduction and notions on distribution

Steps in the Implementation (please add references to materials and add photos):

1. Mini lecture on basics of video/documentary making

Essential components of film production

Pre-production

1. *Pitching – the skill of presenting ideas*

Many good ideas remain unrealised because the persons who have them are not capable of presenting them to others. Pitching has its rules that, if properly used, can encourage important people to eventually turn a good idea into a good movie. It is most important to prepare a brief and clear description of the objectives, main actors and target groups.

2. *Script writing*

Whether it is a feature or a documentary (experimental and similar) film, the idea should first be transferred to paper (elaborate text). The feature film assumes a scenario, and the documentary treatment (scenes), and each story has important elements to be composed so that the story can be interesting for viewing.

3. *Recording planning*

Knowledge of all important technical and organizational elements of production is important for good planning. During production and post-production, good planning comes for payment – either for the benefit or the damage, but everything well done is visible, and everything bad done cannot be hidden.

Production

1. *Recording the picture*

Almost everyone has a camera, but only in the hands of a good cameraman can every camera become a professional tool.

2. *Recording sound*

Sound is one of the essential components that is often neglected during production, and can ultimately judge whether the recording and final product are usable.

3. *Conducting interviews*

When all technical preconditions for recording are met, another important component remains: how to prepare a person for an interview and how to ask questions. It is important to be civilized, patient and compassionate, and sometimes firm and persistent if we do not get direct answers to direct questions.

Post-production

The post-production includes examination and selection of materials, installation of picture and sound, and sometimes special effects. Photography directors and cameramen can significantly raise the quality of their work if they learn how to edit, because this will make it clear how much usable and quality their recorded materials are. It is desirable that all other filmmakers learn at least the basics of the editing.

2. Preparation of video script

1. Brainstorming in the large group – what we want to cover in video/documentary
2. Work in pairs – negotiating one issue, each pair comes out with one issue; 2 pairs form group of four – negotiating the issue, each group comes with one issue; groups of eight – repeating the procedure; final negotiation in large group – defined issue
3. How to prepare a script:
Questions to be answered:
 1. Is there a nice guy we can identify with?
 2. Do the procedures and behaviour of the character look convincing and true?
 3. Does the main character (protagonist) have the goal it seeks?
 4. Is the main bad guy (antagonist, can he be illness, disaster, etc.) a worthy opponent of the protagonist?
 5. Is there enough conflict, tension?
 6. Is the conflict defined early enough?
 7. Is one of the main characters the bearer of the conflict?
 8. Is the development of character shown?
 9. Does the story have a dramatic center?
 10. Does a hero solve a moral dilemma correctly?
 11. Are the side characters well orchestrated (do they contribute to the whole story)?
 12. Does the work touch us on an emotional level?
 13. Is the emotional component satisfactory?
 14. Is the location of the action recognizable and/or interesting?
 15. Is there a visual energy; a sense of movement?
 16. Will the visual parts be an eye feast?
 17. Are the events interesting and surprising?
 18. Are the stakes high?
 19. Does the conflict have an upward trajectory?
 20. Does all the complications and crises lead to a peak?
 21. Do side trips and small moments build the context of the whole story?
 22. Is the plot coherent (are all the elements in place)?
 23. Do all scenes lead to a satisfactory conclusion?

<u>The nation!</u>	<u>Picture</u>	<u>Sound</u>
<p><u>IVAN</u> (John's voice) I go to two high schools: classical high school and music school.</p> <p>Sometimes it's hard for me, but out of love for music, I endure everything.</p> <p>In high school, I prefer Latin and English. I like to write songs in English, and that's my motive to learn English as best I can.</p>	<p>Art: Ivana's room (INT – interior EXIT – exterior sequence location)</p> <p>Ivan is sitting at a desk in his room. There's a bunch of books, notebooks and notes in front of him.</p> <p>I'LL have Ivan's eyes moving around the room. Ivan closes his eyes with a smile on his lips. (Type of plan, i.e. personnel, e.g. CU - Middle Plan, crash-up LS – half-total, long shot MS - medium plan, Midium shot ECU — Details, Extreme close-up)</p> <p>MS Ivan takes a notebook in which he writes his songs. Crossing: (transition sequences)</p> <p>EXT: the construction of the high school that Ivan attends.</p>	<p>Ambient sound</p> <p>FX: indistinct murmur in the school hallway during rest. (FX – sound effect or Folly)</p> <p>MUSIC: “little night music” in Ivan's performance.</p> <p>Ambient sound of urban traffic</p>

3. Defining location

Field trip to chosen locations (2 teams at different locations); taking photos, planning the shooting; final decision on location

4. Planning the production

Group work according to the templates provided, division of roles in the group on set

5. Shooting at the location

The location has to be prepared according to the plan.

Explanation on the basics of shooting

Thanks to modern technologies, video cameras and computers used for video editing are more accessible than ever, every new smart phone has camera and can record video.

Cameras and shooting are the most important part of film production with small budgets, because when the editing occurs after shooting, it can become (painfully) clear that the principle that cake cannot be made of sand is still valid. In the hands of an experienced cameraman and the cheapest camera can become a professional tool, and in the hands of an inexperienced cameraman and a top camera can be *of no use*. Fortunately, the most important principles for quality recording are simple and can be adopted quickly, but practice alone is a master and everything cannot be learned in one day, because recording experience is needed in various situations. That is why it is very important to have patience in the adoption of the theory, and more importantly to have patience in the recording, because the recording conditions are very rarely (if ever) ideal, and the camera is much less adaptable than the human eye. It is precisely this important item in understanding technology and optimal use of the camera: an experienced cameraman will learn how the camera “sees” through the lens, which is different from what he/she sees in his/her naked eye, and that is the difference to which we need to adapt.

- Select recording quality



- Blende opening (exposure)
 - Determination of white balance
1. Tone goes, camera goes – action!

Good practice

1. Use manual settings.
2. Determine the white color before filming begins.
3. Use a static with a moving head.
4. Keep cadres for at least 15 seconds.
5. Avoid “charger” by camera (zoom and snorkel – except when well planned and performed).

Bad practice

1. Automatic settings.
2. Automatic determination of white color.
3. Shooting from the arm (without support).
4. “Correction” camera left-right, up-down.
5. Constant (rapid) zoom.

One of the most important rules of shooting is: to fixate the camera and hold the frame – not to “tap” and not zoom in (especially not at the same time)! It is really not possible to emphasize precisely this discipline and refrain from zooming, because the cameraman has too many fun precisely with these buttons for approaching and removing objects in the frame. The result is nausea among spectators, who, after a series of unstable personnel, feels like he's on a ship in the middle of a storm. Besides static, which is the best solution, there are several simple techniques for stabilising the camera. One of the best techniques is to keep cameras with both hands, with elbows on a solid base (table, chair, roof of car...). Keeping cameras like that makes them look like they were taken from static. Another good technique is leaning on a wall, a tree, a door -- which is already nearby. If it is a tree or if the shoe soles are not dirty, the cameraman can further stabilize if he bends one leg into his knee and leans it on the background. Of course, we can put the camera down and hold it on the table if it allows good personnel, but it is best to keep the camera in hand for safety and faster reaction if it wants to change the frame.



For the width of the frame, the measure is human size and the names are as follows (terminology is not universal and there are deviations):

Detail (Extreme close-up) – a small part of a whole (human eye, title of a book...) or a smaller object (cup, pen...) is displayed.

Big plan (gross plan, medium close-up) – the whole face of a man or objects of the appropriate size is in the frame.

Close Plan - the bust of a man.

Middle Plan (Medium/Full/Shot) – frame covers the human figure from the waist up, and if it's only knee-deep, it's the so-called "American plan".

Half (long or full Shot) – the cadre is bigger than man, but only a part is visible, not the entire environment, e.g. a part of the street that people in the cadre pass through.

Total (fire long Shot, establishing shot) – the frame includes an ambient whole, for example, a whole house with a yard, a playground, a lake...

The most frequent mistakes that happen are those mentioned as weaknesses in HD/SLR cameras (lights, set design, wardrobe), but the most painful mistakes that cannot be seen but heard are: problems with sound due to lack of equipment and/or experienced tone by the master. Sound recording equipment also falls in prices and there are significant quality shifts in digital sound recorders, but microphones, like objects, hold the price and this is one of the areas where not much can be saved if good quality is to be achieved, and without good sound there is no visible film. Namely, there are some limits to tolerance among viewers and, if these boundaries are exceeded, the viewer cannot live in the film, that is, if they live, will soon be returned to the (unpleasant) reality due to technical errors in the film. These are the basic and most important guidelines for the good organization of the film set: everyone on the set read the screenplay at least once and knows what are the essential determinants of the film (what kind of "tone" is to be achieved in the film: brighter and well lit for comedies, more contrast to dramas). The mizanscene (spatial placement of actors in the ambient during the performance of the scene) and the scenography are the result of teamwork, for which the most responsible director and artistic director (arranger set) are the set, but the director of photography and lighting master must contribute, because they know what looks good for the camera and not just for the view of the naked eye.

The ten most important tips that can also be applied to video

1. Golden cut: avoid center of objects and persons photographing and try to create an interesting composition respecting the golden incision rule (smaller part refers to the larger part as a total).
2. Light source: be careful where your strongest light source comes from, because you need to be your greatest friend, and it can become your biggest enemy (when a person in a frame of light comes from behind, it is highly likely that we will get only silhouette – excellent if you want to). When you photograph a person and sunset, the solution to the problem in the background is in flash – put it on obligatory trigger and... Rule 3!
3. Get closer: one of the oldest and most important rules is still valid, especially if you have an "idiot" and you're trying to photograph someone in a dark enclosed room (the flesh will not be able to cover a large surface).
4. Use the flesh (following points 2 and 3): in order to use the flesh in the best possible way, it is necessary to experiment and see at which distance and with what natural illumination it gives the best results.

1. 5. Descend to their level: when you photograph children, animals and objects that are lower than our eye, you will get much better results if you descend to the height of their eyes, or to the level of half the height of the object.
2. Lock the exhibition and/or focus: when you are on automatic settings and half the staff is heavily illuminated, and the darker part is more interesting to you, you can direct the camera only towards the dark part and press the trigger to half – when you hear the “bip”, the camera has determined a good exposure and now you can cover the entire frame. The focus is similar to zoom in and Zoom.
3. Use an inconspicuous background: a person, animal or any non-living object will more appear on a single-color and/or background outside the focus. The bigger the zoom, the camera opening, and the bigger the sensor, the more shallow the focus, the more cloudy the background.
4. Use interesting angles (exception for rule 5): when photographing architecture and you want to emphasize grandiosity, use a frog or bird perspective whenever possible (sometimes it takes additional effort and time to descend or climb to the desired location).
5. Direct your photos: there's nothing wrong with setting up photos, especially when it comes to more children and/or friends, family members... It just needs to be creative and take advantage of an interesting angle, composition, moment...
6. Use the program for photography processing: “photosimulation” received a mostly negative sound, but digital photo processing is not a fraud – indeed, and analog photography is processed during film development. With several basic tools (contrast, saturation) and little time you can significantly improve your photo.

4. Postproduction

Video editing observation of professionals – groups of 4 people for 1 hour observing professional video editors doing their job and explaining what are they doing

Video editing on free applications for amateurs – editing of the videos shot by smart phones of the participants with the help of professionals

Video editing is one of the most interesting and most fun things that can be done on a computer, but since it is a very demanding process for a computer, one should look out for a few important technical and organizational assumptions in order for entertainment, for a longer period, to be complete – and useful, why not! A simpler installation can be done on an average computer, without additional investment or adjustment of the operating system, but the more complex the project is, the more likely it is to go wrong the greater. That is why, for starters, it is good to invest a bit of time in preparation to avoid frustration and spending time solving problems when things get complicated in work.

One of the most important presumptions for pleasant operation is the ergonomic position for the computer so that the forearms are parallel to the floor and the screen is in height of the eyes. It is desirable that the room be clouded and the monitor calibrated (each operating system and monitor come with calibration instructions, so it is advisable to invest the necessary time and ask for online instructions if necessary).

Second, but not least, is that, if possible, a separate disk partition is created and a “fresh” operating system installed on it, installing only those programs used for installation, that is, for material preparation (programs for image processing, sound processing and change of formats and codecs).

Third and equally important is that all materials used in assembly are on a separate solid disk inside the computer casing or external disk. Who is not screened for hardware upgrade of computers, partition of disks and installation of operating systems and programs should leave it to someone who knows that. In newer and higher quality programs it is possible to determine the so-called *Scratch disc* – space on a hard disk that serves as temporary memory when the work memory is filled. *The Scratch disc* is also better set on a separate disk because the computer works faster when the “master” hard disk is determined for operating system and programs only. A lot of free disk space is needed to process a video: 100 GB is filled in very quickly, and the simple principle is: as much free space as possible, the better, and the same goes for working memory (RAM).

Formats, formats, formats

The computers are powerful enough to install a video, and even a high-resolution material (HD 1920 × 1080 pixels). Fast technological development and a large selection of cameras and other equipment have a negative side, which is almost an undetectable number of different formats and video codecs. The problem is that even the best professional assembly programs do not support all formats and codecs – therefore, the installer must resort sooner or later to some of the conversion programs.

It is a good practice that all the material that is planned to fit into the video is previously prepared, that is, converted into a format that the assembly program supports. Even when the program supports highly compressed formats such as jpeg and mp3, it is better to transfer them into uncompressed formats, such as PNG, wav and aiff, for a more stable and faster assembly. Therefore, it should be recalled that MPEG Streamclip (www.squared5.com/svideo/mpeg-streamclip-win.html) programmes, which can solve most of the problems with different formats and codecs, are free of charge.

An excellent overview of various programs, their possibilities and prices can be found on Wikipedia's website (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_video_editing_software) and it is not a bad idea to install and try some of them, including those that should normally be paid, but can be used for some limited time free (e.g. *Adobe Premiere Pro*: www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=premiere_pro). In principle, the greatest difference between professional, semi-professional and free programs is in their stability, the number of supported formats and the ability to add tools (*plug*) to other software creators. Stability is cited as the first characteristic of significance, although it may not seem that way at first sight, but anyone who tried to install something, and every once in a while the program "collapsed", knows exactly what it is. The value of programme stability is expressed in large and complex projects on which several people are working, and when a short deadline for drafting is added, everything becomes even more clear. Therefore, professionals cannot avoid paying higher prices for programmes and equipment, which will enable them to focus on creative work, rather than solving problems with tool functioning.

It is not imperative to study free tutorials at *YouTube* (e.g. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-y-bjo1pKA & *feature = relmfa*).

First cut

Anyone who ever embarked on the processing of recorded material had to meet some program, which, when he first started it, did not know how to handle or what to do to achieve any change in his photograph, illustration or video. Mounting programs often have such a discouraging effect during the first (attempt) use, which is particularly true for those who have never done anything similar before. However, whoever follows a few simple instructions from the very beginning, nothing should discourage him, even if he embarks on working with a professional tool, such as *Adobe Premiere*. What is more, anyone who learns the basics of *Premiere* will find it easier to deal with any other program because they all function according to a similar logic: importing files, viewing content, selecting the desired parts and putting them in sequence. After harmonizing the basic parts of the project (rough editing), everything can be worked out, effects added, transitions, music, the nation... But before that, a few words about the organization.

A good organization is a prerequisite for a successful and pleasant installation and it is always necessary, although it is primarily a relatively simple video. It is better to learn on other people's mistakes than on their own, because otherwise sooner or later they realize that more time is spent on searching and organising files than on effective editing. The first and most important step is to pre-classify the files into appropriate boxes (folds) by type (video, photographs, music), and then within them into subfolders (e.g. video interviews, *B-roll*, interiors, exteriors...). Whoever has been working on a project for a long time, the number and type of folders and files will grow and therefore it is important that a consistent system of appointments and groupings (by dates, persons, events) be determined in advance.

Notes to the teacher

Video production is complex and require team work. Build the team and not just a group of participants during the Lab.

For the shootings you will need professional cameraperson and sound director.

For the postproduction you will need picture and sound editor. It is important that you choose people who are good at transferring knowledge and who can explain what are they doing in simple terms.

Make sure that at least four participants have smart phones with decent cameras at the day of shooting.

During the whole lab, and especially during the shooting and postproduction, emphasize that you get better through practise and encourage participants to continue with their filming efforts after the end od the Lab.

Notes to the learners

Video producing is fun. It is a great skill that can be very useful in everyday life. You have gone through the simplified version of video production from the scratch to the end and glorious product.

It was fun, hopefully. And you learn the basics. All of that can be improved either through self-education (internet is great) or through joining the organized local clubs dealing with filmmaking or videos. If you are really inspired, there is always education in secondary schools and university.

In whatever way, keep making videos that are not technically embarrassing.

Appendices

Add text.