

## RTA 312: Production: Intermediate Digital Media

### Fall 2014

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## About the Course

### Course Description:

This course offers intermediate-level skills in digital content production with a focus on motion graphics, animation, and the web. The course includes group-critiques, in-class workshops, production exercises and tutorials, and requires students to have a basic familiarity with computers and digital tools.

### Course Goals:

The goal of this course is to further develop your digital media skills from both a creative standpoint and a technical perspective. By the end of this course you will have created a professional-quality video clip that is suitable for broadcast, using a combination of After Effects and whatever other digital media tools and techniques you choose to focus on.

The course will be modeled after a real-world production process. Students will be split into four “production houses”. Each student will take on the role of an independent artist within each production house, which can be thought of as a collection of like-minded artists. Each production house will manage its own slate, and each production house should have its own identifiable style or production method. For example, your production house could choose to focus on a monochromatic look, or perhaps stop motion, or rotoscoping, motion graphics, programmatically generated imagery, etc.

The final output will be both a web based presentation and a theater based presentation of your production house’s projects to the class. Although members of your production house can help with various aspects of your own individual production, each student is responsible for their own project and will be graded as an individual.

This year we have a special opportunity to contribute to a real-world documentary, “Kids on Gender: Out There, In Here” directed by Laurie Petrou in collaboration with RTA 4th year student, Zac Schwartz. The film explores children’s thoughts on gender with respect to feelings, play, and challenges using excerpts of recorded interviews alongside visual imagery that we will create to represent the audio. While there is no guarantee that your project will be used in the final documentary, if the work is exemplary there is a good chance that it will be included. With that in mind, the highest level of technical and conceptual work is expected. Dr Petrou’s most recent creative project was picked up by Upworthy and the Anti-Defamation League in NYC, among other places, so there is definitely an audience for her work, and yours, should it be incorporated. We are modeling a professional approach and expect you to take a professional attitude about the work being done in this course. The material for “Out There, In Here” is sensitive and involves children, and thus you are expected to treat the material with respect, and cannot use the audio for any other purpose.

You are not obliged to work on the documentary project. If you have a burning passion to create a video clip to support some other audio, that is fine.

By the end of this course, students will:

- Know how to break a creative project down into its component parts.
- Pitch creative ideas to colleagues and gain their support.
- Plan, revise, and plan again for professional quality creative productions.
- Contribute to the formation and guidance of a “production house”.
- Produce an “animatic” and “look / feel” pitch materials.
- Create a professional quality piece of digital media, ready for broadcast.
- Promote yourself and your work methods via frequent blog posts.

## Weekly Outline

Week	Topic/Activities:	Assignment Due:
1	Discuss syllabus & assignments. Describe documentary project. (** Laurie Petrou to join via Skype.) Split class into four “production houses”. Sign up for audio clips. Download from Blackboard under Documents. Put up a blog post (WordPress). Add your URL to the shared document, listed under your production house.	Blog post
2	Present 3 pitches to your production house. They will select which pitch you should move forward with. Each production house needs to get their slate approved by the instructor. Identify skills you need to learn and discuss approach with instructor. Production houses work together to study/practice required technical skills. Each group must show the instructor an example of their work at the end of the session. Put up a blog post.	3 Pitches Blog post Concept approval

3	<p>Present a rough “animatic” and “look / feel” shots to your production house.</p> <p>Work session. Incorporate notes from your production house.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Rough animatic and look / feel shots.</p> <p>Blog post</p>
4	<p>Present your final animatic and look / feel shots to the class.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p> <p>Schedule individual production meetings with instructor.</p>	<p>Final animatic and look / feel shots.</p> <p>Present to class.</p> <p>Blog post</p>
5	<p>Work class.</p> <p>Individual skill development with instructor. Each student must show evidence of technical skills developed so far.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Blog post</p>
6	<p>Work class.</p> <p>Production house check-in. Get help from colleagues if required.</p> <p>Individual skill development with instructor. Each student must show further evidence of technical skills developed so far.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Blog post</p>
7	<p>Present director’s cut to your production house.</p> <p>Take notes from colleagues.</p> <p>Work session.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Director’s cut</p> <p>Blog post</p>
8	<p>Present producer’s cut to your production house.</p> <p>Work session.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Producer’s cut</p> <p>Blog post</p>
9	<p>Work class. Focus on title animation, audio mix, color grading and other final details.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Blog post</p>
10	<p>Each production house reviews their slates, gives last minute notes.</p> <p>Work session.</p> <p>Put up a blog post.</p>	<p>Rough mix &amp; online</p> <p>Blog post</p>
11	<p>Each student presents their projects and blogs to the class.</p> <p>Take notes from class (and Laurie Petrou, if available).</p>	<p>Completed blog</p>
12	<p><b>** COMBINED CLASS. BOTH SECTIONS IN THEATER. TIME TBD</b></p> <p>Each production house presents their final projects to both classes.</p>	<p>Completed project on USB key or hard disk.</p>

## Evaluation

Each student will be evaluated based on the following materials, according to the following weighting:

Blog	10%
Concept Approval	10%
Final Animatic & Look / Feel	10%
Director's Cut	10%
Producer's Cut	10%
Final presentation to class	5%
Participation	5%
Peer Evaluation	10%
Final Video	30% (* to be co-graded by David Green & Jamie Waese)

### Project / Assignment Details:

Blogs (10%):

- Should be done with WordPress, though if you already have a blog on another platform the instructor may permit it.
- Should be well designed with a proper landing page and easy navigation system so we can easily find your posts relating to this class.
- Should be customized in some way to reflect your own personality and identity.
- The exact topics of your blog posts will be up to you. We would like you to document your creative process as you develop the idea for your production, learn the skills you need to produce it, assemble the elements, contribute to your production house, produce your work, take notes from colleagues, and reflect on the audience's reaction.
- All videos (animatic, director's cut, producer's cut, final cut) should be embedded on your blog and hosted by Vimeo, not YouTube.

Concept Approval (10%):

- Concepts will be evaluated based on originality, technical challenge, feasibility, thoroughness of the pitch, and overall cleverness.
- Your production house will choose which of your 3 pitches you will present to the instructor.
- Each production house must agree to work with the same interview question (questions 1-7 for Jamie's group, 8-14 for David's group) so there is a common style for each child's response. Each artist will animate one child's response to the question in the clip title. If it is very short and you don't have enough material for 15 seconds of animation, you may combine a few responses. We would like to avoid multiple artists working with the same audio but it may be unavoidable.

Final Animatic & Look / Feel pages (10%):

- All professional animation begins with an "animatic" to help the team confirm if the creative concept will work as intended, as well as to lock down the timing and establish what elements are needed for production.
- Look / Feel pages are a common tool in production environments for conveying the creative direction you have in mind to the rest of your team. Feel free to create your own look / feel pages if you like, however this is the one time in this course where it is appropriate to use other people's work as well.

- You will produce your animatic with After Effects. You can use hand drawn story boards, rough Photoshop frames, or whatever other images you like. It must include the original audio clip that you are working with.
- It should be rendered as an h264 Quicktime, posted to Vimeo, and embedded in your blog in advance of the class. To reduce the time associated with uploading files for presentation, you will present the final animatic from your blog.
- Your look / feel pages should consist of 2 or 3 images, plus a blog description of what you have in mind for your own project.

#### Director's Cut (10%):

- The director's cut represents the creative vision of the director without interference from the producer or production house.
- Some elements may still be rough around the edges, but this cut should represent the director's best efforts to deliver a finished product within the time allotted. The director's cut rarely includes sound effects, music, color grading or any of the "sizzle" that is typically only added once the producer declares a picture lock.
- This cut should be rendered as an h264 Quicktime, posted to Vimeo, and embedded in your blog by the end of the Week 7 class.

#### Producer's Cut (10%):

- The producer's cut represents the version that will be shown to the studio or paying client. Clients will often have further notes at this stage, but this cut should be as close to perfect as the production house can make it.
- Once again, sound effects and color grading are typically not added until the producer's cut is approved by the studio or client.
- You will be evaluated on how well you incorporated notes from your production house in preparation of the producer's cut. Please list the notes you received and how you addressed them in your blog post.

#### Final Presentation to Class (5%)

- Each production house will present their slates to the class.
- Each student will have 5 minutes to present their work and discuss their creative process, approach and technical challenges.
- You will be evaluated individually on your presentation style here, not on your final production. A poorly produced project can get full points from an excellent presentation, and an excellent project will get low points from a weak presentation. We want you to think about how to present your work, separate from the work itself.
- To reduce the time associated with uploading files for presentation, you will present the final production from your blog.

#### Participation (5%)

- Half the participation grade will be based on attendance.
- The other half will be based on your contribution to class discussion and overall engagement with other members of your production house.

#### Peer Evaluation (10%)

- Peer evaluations are due in the Week 11 class as a private email to your instructor. The email subject heading should be "Peer Evaluation" plus the name of your production house.

- The evaluations should list each member of your production house with a brief comment about their performance as a member of the collective, and a score out of 10.
- Failure to submit this peer evaluation document will lead to getting 0% in that category, even if everyone on your team adores you.

#### Final Video (30%)

- The final project must be technically challenging, creative, and well executed. It must be a minimum of 15 seconds long, excluding title animation and credits. It should have synchronized sound (e.g., lip sync, or some other animation that is timed to the sound track).
- Each project must also include a motion graphics title sequence. If you are working on the documentary project, this title animation should display the question each child is answering. It should stylistically pertain to the creative concept described by the project director. This title sequence should be a minimum of 5 seconds and a maximum of 20 seconds long.
- Because it is worth so much of your final grade and to ensure the greatest amount of objectivity possible, the final video will be evaluated by David Green and Jamie Waese and an average of their two scores will be calculated.
- For your final delivery, please bring a 1080p uncompressed Quicktime movie suitable for professional broadcast on a USB key or hard drive to the Week 12 class. Specifications:
  - 24fps, 1920 x 1080 pixels, CD quality audio.
  - Filenames should follow this format:

ClipNumber.Question\_ProductionHouse\_YourName.mov

(e.g., 11.Are\_There\_Toys\_Boys\_Shouldnt\_Play\_With\_AntHillProductions\_JohnSmith.mov)

\*\* Files that do not follow this naming format EXACTLY will automatically lose 5%.

- All video deliveries should be slated at the beginning with your name, production house and audio clip number followed by 1 second of black.
- At the end of your clip, you may elect to add 3 seconds of credits.

## Resources

### Required Supplies

- Your Ryerson Student Card (One-Card) in order to access the building and computer lab after hours, and to sign equipment out of the Equipment Distribution Centre (digital cameras, sound effects, etc.).
- A portable data storage device such as a USB key, portable hard drive, or other portable storage medium such as an iPod. Note that SanDisc drives sometimes cause problems with computers in the lab; we recommend another brand.

### Other Resources

*Software:* We will be using Photoshop, After Effects, and some optional software (such as stop-motion animation packages). There is, however, a great deal more software available to you on the computers in the lab, and we encourage you to explore whatever you can. If you want to purchase software, the Ryerson Bookstore offers discounted educational-packages from Adobe.

*Laptops:* We have a limited number of MacBook and MacBook Pro laptops which you can sign out. These are primarily to be used for Stop Motion/Object animation work, but you can install other software on them for more experimental projects. Note that you should not install any illegal or unlicensed software on these machines. Speak to us if you want to sign one out for a weekend; they are due back Monday mornings.

*Blackboard:* Please check the Blackboard site for this course at least once a week for announcements, updates, readings, recommended articles and links, etc.

*Video Tutorials:* FCAD offers a free subscription to the excellent video-learning site “Lynda.com” which we will be using for this course. All tutorials are videos from the After Effects CS6.0 section of Lynda.com. To create your free account, you need to:

1. Be connected to a computer in RCC (Through WiFi or Ethernet) -- You can't sign up from any other location because our Lynda.com account is restricted to FCAD's users and the IP addresses in our schools are used to confirm your affiliation with FCAD. Once you create your account, however, you can log in from anywhere (eg: at home)
2. Go to [iplogin.lynda.com](http://iplogin.lynda.com) in your web browser (note: No www in that address).
3. Use your @ryerson.ca email address as your user name when setting up your profile (you can't use a email address that is not from Ryerson)

Note: After creating their profile (for subsequent access to lynda.com), users should go directly to [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com) and login using the credentials they created when setting up their profile. This can be done from anywhere (home, library, cafe, Ryerson, etc.) with access to the Internet, even via mobile device. Only the registration requires the use of a FCAD connected computer. Please contact the FCAD helpdesk if you need further help at: [fcadhelp@ryerson.ca](mailto:fcadhelp@ryerson.ca). <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

*Recommended Books, Web Sites, etc.:* The Ryerson Library has a host of books on After Effects, Flash, Photoshop etc. (although some may refer to older version of the software, they still can be helpful). Also note that some of these books are available as “e-books”, meaning you can access the whole thing from your computer. Just do a search from [my.ryerson.ca](http://my.ryerson.ca)..

Creative Cow <http://library.creativecow.net/> also hosts many great tutorials on all common creative motion graphics software packages.

Other good sites are <http://www.videocopilot.net>, <http://www.lynda.com> and <http://www.motionographer.com>  
Also: Google is your friend. There are literally thousands of tutorials for all of these packages on the net. You just need to know enough to properly phrase your question.

*Equipment:* In addition to standard camera/audio gear available to you through the cage, there is a specialized set of gear available to you through the Mixed Reality Cluster Lab through Barry Weatherhead (RCC357F, 647.383.7070, M-F 9:00 – 4:00). This includes DSLRs, iPhones/iTouches/iPads, web-cameras, Macbook laptops, screen-recorders, etc. The complete list is here:

<http://www.rcc.ryerson.ca/media/MixedRealityClusterCatalog.pdf>

Use this form to sign out equipment: <http://tinyurl.com/ryerson-mrcl>

## Appendix (General information for all RTA students)

### **Student Codes of Conduct**

All students are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct (see <http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol61.pdf> ) and the Student Code of Academic Conduct (see <http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol60.pdf> ).

### **The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar**

This is your resource for all information relating to academics, including curriculum, course descriptions, significant dates (including last date to drop a course without academic penalty), academic standings, The Student Code of Academic & Non-Academic Conduct, etc. The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar is available online at <http://www.ryerson.ca/undergraduate/calendars/>.

### **RTA Website**

At [www.ryersonrta.com](http://www.ryersonrta.com) you will find information about the curriculum, course outlines, scholarships, student groups, staff & faculty, studios & facilities, etc.

### **Blackboard Course Website**

Blackboard is an online course tool which may include an online discussion board, course documents such as the syllabus and lecture notes, announcements, an area where your grades are posted, etc. If your instructor has set up a Blackboard site for this course, you'll find it at <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

### **RTA Online**

RTA Online is an Organization on Blackboard that contains templates for storyboards, production paperwork, etc., as well as online tutorials for software and equipment used in classes and labs. Find it under 'Organizations' on your my.ryerson.ca homepage.

### **Your Ryerson Email Account:**

The RTA School of Media will often send you important information by email (e.g. scholarship information, reminders of important dates, notification of meetings and/or events, internship opportunities and job postings, etc.). Correspondence from RTA and from your instructors will be sent ONLY to your Ryerson email account. It is your obligation to ensure that you activate your account and check it regularly, or have it forwarded to an account you check regularly. Please use only your Ryerson account for sending emails to staff & faculty. See below for accessing your Ryerson email account.

### **Activating Your Ryerson Online Identity**

To access many of Ryerson's online resources, you must first activate your Ryerson online identity by completing a series of web forms available via <http://www.ryerson.ca/accounts/>. During the activation process, you will obtain a username and create your initial password. Once activated, your Ryerson online identity provides you with access to:

- Google Apps
- Ryerson email
- The Central Computer Labs including the Library and KHW71
- The my.ryerson portal and learning system
- RAMSS (via <https://my.ryerson.ca>)
- Other servers and applications needed

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:**

Students with any disability (e.g. learning, medical, physical, sensory), illness, or condition that requires academic adaptations should discuss the situation with the instructor and/or contact the Access Centre (<http://www.ryerson.ca/accesscentre>).

**English as a Second Language:**

Ryerson University offers support to students who may require improvement in their overall English language communication skills. Please visit **English Language Support** at [www.ryerson.ca/student-services/els/](http://www.ryerson.ca/student-services/els/)

**Accommodation of Student Religious Observance:**

At the start of the term, students who have religious observance obligations which will lead to absences from campus or academic activities during the semester should download the “Student Declaration of Religious Observance” form from <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. Present a copy of the form to the instructor **within the first two weeks of classes**. The instructor and student will then consult to reach an agreement on a reasonable means to address the situation.

**Learning Success**

Learning Success (<http://www.ryerson.ca/learningsuccess>) helps students make the transition to university learning, develop sound learning strategies through tutoring options and course-based study groups, and achieve their academic potential by providing services in both traditional and virtual learning environments. Learning Success offers free workshops for students such as: Note-taking, Managing Tasks and Time, Ways of Learning, Critical Reading, Test Preparation and Test Anxiety, etc.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is defined by the University as “claiming the words, ideas, artistry, drawings, images or data of another person as if they were your own.” (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2). According to the Code, plagiarism includes:

- i. copying another person’s work (including information found on the Internet and unpublished materials) without appropriate referencing;
- ii. presenting someone else’s work, opinions or theories as if they are your own;
- iii. presenting another’s substantial compositional changes to an assignment as your own;
- iv. working collaboratively without permission of the instructor on an assignment, and then submitting it as if it was created solely by you; or
- v. submitting the same work, for credit, in two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructor(s). (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2.)

Usually one associates plagiarism with written works but it can include any work such as photographs/artwork, Internet materials, video, audio, and digital media. **The University penalties for plagiarism can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.** Please note that you may be required to submit some or all of your written assignments to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

**Useful links to help you understand and avoid plagiarism:**

Ryerson’s Academic Integrity web site: <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/>  
Student Code of Academic Conduct policy: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>

**Cheating:**

Cheating is defined by Ryerson University as:

- i. using materials or aids not expressly allowed by the instructor in an examination or test;
- ii. copying another person's answer(s) to an examination or test question; copying another person's answers to individually assigned projects;
- iii. consulting with another person or unauthorized materials outside of an examination room during the examination period (e.g. discussing an exam or consulting materials during an emergency evacuation or when permitted to use a washroom);
- iv. improperly submitting an answer to a test or examination question completed, in whole or part, outside the examination room unless specifically permitted by the examination format;
- v. resubmitting altered test or examination work after it has already been evaluated;
- vi. presenting falsified or fabricated material, including research results; or
- vii. improperly obtaining, through deceit, theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, access to examination paper(s) or set of questions, or other confidential information.

(Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2)

**The University penalties for cheating can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment or test up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.**

#### **Use of Laptops, Cell Phones, and Other Mobile Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Students are advised that because various learning & teaching activities may be enhanced or diminished by use of mobile devices, it is up to each instructor to determine when & how such devices can or should be used by students during any given class.

Students may not take pictures, video recordings, or sound recordings in class without express permission from the instructor.

#### **RTA Policy on Offensive Materials**

RTA School of Media desires to foster an environment that promotes and embraces the principles of freedom of expression, academic inquiry, and creativity. Within this context we all have a responsibility to respect the rights and freedoms of others, including the right to study and work in an environment which is free of offensive materials.

The term offensive may be used to refer to material that:

- is overtly sexual, and/or
- contains profanity, and/or
- perpetuates stereotypes (e.g. racial, gender, sexual, religious, etc.), and/or
- depicts violence, and/or
- denigrates members of marginalized groups based on various factors such as sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability, etc.

Should you not be sure if your content is offensive, please follow up with your instructor before proceeding with your project. Please review the full policy which can be found in the RTA Student Handbook on our website: [www.ryersonrta.com](http://www.ryersonrta.com)