



UNIVERSITÀ  
CATTOLICA  
del Sacro Cuore



**Franklin University Switzerland  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Forum-Nexus Program  
Course Syllabus**

**JOUR 491-SIS  
Travel and Adventure Filmmaking**

**Course Description**

Students in study abroad programs like Forum-Nexus are passionate about discovering new cultures, breathtaking landscapes, amazing cities, and unique experiences. Many desire to acquire the skills to capture these experiences through compelling video productions that can be shared on social media or published professionally. The purpose of this course is to provide the fundamentals of travel and adventure filmmaking, encouraging students to view filmmaking as storytelling and develop their own style and identity as travel filmmakers.

This Supervised Independent Study (SIS) course will guide students through the basic principles of travel and adventure filmmaking, while providing the opportunity for an independent exploration of the subject using modern mobile and traditional techniques.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Utilize smartphones and mobile accessories to create professional-quality travel films
2. Craft compelling narratives that capture authentic cultural experiences and personal journeys
3. Create content optimized for various platforms (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, traditional film)
4. Understand composition, movement, and technical aspects across different filming scenarios
5. Master techniques for filming action, movement, and spontaneous moments while traveling
6. Incorporate natural sound, music, and narration to enhance visual storytelling
7. Use modern editing tools and mobile apps to create polished, engaging content
8. Film effectively in diverse conditions from urban landscapes to natural settings
9. Approach filming people and places with respect and genuine curiosity
10. Develop efficient systems for shooting, organizing, and sharing travel content
11. Create content tailored to specific audiences and sharing platforms
12. Navigate consent, representation, and responsible documentation practices

## **Course Requirements**

This course requires independent research, organization, and academic discipline. Students are expected to complete the required and additional readings in pace with their assignments and the course outline. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and eight independent cultural visits (ICVs). Students are expected to meet with their SIS Coordinator regularly throughout the course for consultation and assistance. Please note that your SIS Coordinator may ask you to attend a regularly-scheduled class when that material is relevant. Grading will consist of four essay assignments, a midterm, an oral presentation, and a final, handwritten exam.

### **Participation in "Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar"**

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country, gain an understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

## **Assignments and Grading:**

### **Essays**

After completing the reading assignment for the unit, students are expected to write 900-1300 word essays responding fully to the prompts listed below. Students are expected to make explicit reference to the readings and to cite their references properly (Chicago footnotes style). An essay should have an introduction and conclusion.

### **Assignment #1 – Filmmaking Foundations Essay**

Write a comprehensive analysis addressing TWO of the following topics:

- Technical foundations: Camera basics, movement techniques, and equipment choices
- Visual storytelling: Composition, shot variety, and narrative structure for travel films
- Audio and sound design: Recording, music integration, and sound considerations
- Platform optimization: Creating content for different audiences and sharing platforms
- Cultural ethics: Respectful filming practices and consent across different countries
- Editing and workflow: Mobile editing, organization, and professional presentation

Deliverable: Written essay of 600 words maximum analyzing each chosen topic and describing how you anticipate applying these filmmaking concepts during your European journey.

### **Assignment #2 – Barcelona: Mastering Mobile Filmmaking Basics**

Create a 2-3 minute film showcasing foundational mobile filmmaking skills:

Choose ONE of these storytelling approaches:

- **Cinematic Style:** Dramatic shots with music/voiceover focus
- **Vlog Style:** Personal, talking-to-camera documentary approach

- **Interview Style:** Feature conversations with locals mixed with b-roll

#### **Required Elements:**

- **Variety of Shots:** Wide, medium, close-up, and detail shots
- **Movement Techniques:** At least 2 different camera movements (pans, tilts, tracking)
- **Audio Quality:** Clean sound recording with minimal background noise
- **Basic Editing:** Smooth cuts, basic transitions, appropriate pacing

#### **Deliverable:**

- Final video file (2-3 minutes)
- Technical reflection document explaining shot choices, challenges encountered, and lessons learned
- No complex color grading required - focus on getting it right during filming

### **Assignment #3 – Rome/Italy: Advanced Composition and Storytelling**

Create a 3-4 minute film demonstrating advanced visual techniques:

#### **Technical Focus:**

- **Advanced Composition:** Rule of thirds, leading lines, depth of field
- **Lighting Mastery:** Golden hour, challenging light conditions, artificial lighting
- **Movement and Action:** Capturing bustling city life, transportation, daily activities
- **Continuity:** Smooth transitions between scenes and maintaining visual flow

#### **Storytelling Requirements:**

- Choose a specific theme or story angle (local culture, architecture, food, daily life)
- Include multiple locations or perspectives within your chosen city
- Demonstrate clear beginning, middle, and end structure
- Show cultural sensitivity in approach to filming people and places

#### **Deliverable:**

- Final edited video (3-4 minutes)
- Shot list and story outline used during planning
- Behind-the-scenes reflection on storytelling decisions and cultural interactions

### **Assignment #4 – Final Portfolio Project: Your Travel Film Masterpiece**

Create your capstone travel film combining everything you've learned (3-4 minutes maximum):

#### **Main Film Requirements:**

- Tell a personal story about your European journey or focus on one meaningful experience
- Demonstrate technical growth from your previous videos
- Include variety: different shot types, smooth movement, quality audio
- Show cultural awareness and authentic storytelling

#### **Platform Versions (Choose 2):**

- Long-form: Your main 3-4 minute film for YouTube/Vimeo

- Short-form: 60-second version for TikTok/Instagram Reels
- Story format: 30-second vertical version for Instagram Stories

### **Portfolio Collection:**

- Select your best 3-4 video moments from all assignments
- Create a 60-90 second "greatest hits" reel showing your growth
- Write brief artist statements (2-3 sentences each) for your main videos

### **Keep It Manageable:**

- Quality over complexity - focus on good storytelling
- Use techniques you're comfortable with, don't try everything new
- Plan your shoot but stay flexible for spontaneous moments
- Edit efficiently - perfect is the enemy of done

### **Deliverable:**

- Main film (3-4 minutes)
- Two platform-optimized versions
- Portfolio reel (60-90 seconds)
- Artist statements and reflection on your filmmaking journey

## **Presentation**

Deliver a 15-minute presentation showcasing your filmmaking journey and portfolio:

### **Required Components:**

- Creative Evolution: How your filmmaking style and vision developed
- Technical Mastery: Before/after examples showing skill progression in filming and editing
- Cultural Documentation: How filmmaking enhanced your understanding and connection with places visited
- Platform Strategy: Demonstrate understanding of how content works across different platforms
- Portfolio Showcase: Present 3-4 of your strongest pieces with the stories behind them
- Future Vision: Plans for continuing filmmaking beyond the program

## **Midterm & Final Exams**

The midterm and final exams will assess your overall progress throughout the study abroad semester. You will be asked not only to demonstrate knowledge based on the readings, but also to make connections between the various course units and reflect holistically on the knowledge you have gained in this independent study.

## **Required Equipment**

Suggested Camera Options:

- Smartphone with 4K video capability
- Mobile gimbal/stabilizer for smooth movement
- External microphone for improved audio quality

## **Required Reading**

### **"The Smartphone Filmmaking Handbook" by Neil Philip Sheppard**

Second Edition, Independently Published, 2025  
(Available as digital/Kindle edition)

### **"Smartphone Cinema: Making Great Films with Your Mobile Phone" by Bart Weiss**

Routledge, 2024  
(Available as digital/eBook edition)

## **Recommended Readings**

### **Lonely Planet's Best Ever Video Tips**

by Lonely Planet  
Publications Pty Ltd, 2015  
(Kindle version recommended)

### **The Explorer's Guide to Travel Photography and Destination Video**

by Shutterstock, 2016  
PDF available online: [shutr.bz/2EfEBOD](https://shutr.bz/2EfEBOD)

### **Filmmaking in Action: Your Guide to the Skills and Craft**

by Adam Leipzig, Barry Weiss, and Michael Goldman  
Bedford/St. Martin's, 1st Edition, 2016

### **The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age**

by Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus  
Penguin Group, 2013

## **Online Resources**

### Essential Apps & Tools:

- CapCut - Free powerful mobile video editing with AI features
- LumaFusion - Professional mobile editing for iOS/Android
- Filmic Pro - Advanced mobile camera controls
- Ferrite Recording Studio - Professional mobile audio recording
- DaVinci Resolve - Professional video editing, color correction, visual effects

### YouTube Channels (minimum 2 hours weekly viewing):

- Sam Kolder - Cinematic travel filmmaking and advanced editing techniques
- Christian LeBlanc (Lost LeBlanc) - Travel filmmaking business and creativity
- Film Riot - Comprehensive filmmaking techniques and tutorials
- Justin Odisho - Daily editing tutorials focused on Premiere and After Effects
- Gaston Luna - Stunning travel cinematography and color grading
- Matti Haapoja - Creative storytelling and editing techniques

### Instagram/TikTok Accounts for Inspiration:

- @samkolder - Cinematic travel content and transitions
- @bradengunem - Authentic travel storytelling

- @jordanhammond - Creative filmmaking techniques
- @matthaapojja - Behind-the-scenes filmmaking content

## **Course Outline**

### **Module 1: Mobile Filmmaking Foundations**

- Understanding smartphone capabilities vs traditional cameras
- Essential accessories for mobile filmmaking
- Mobile camera apps and manual controls
- File management and backup strategies
- Platform basics for YouTube, TikTok, Instagram

### **Module 2: Visual Storytelling and Composition**

- Rule of thirds and basic composition principles
- Camera movement techniques and stabilization
- Shot variety and establishing visual flow
- Working with natural light and golden hour
- Creating smooth transitions between scenes

### **Module 3: Audio and Sound Design**

- Mobile recording with smartphone microphones
- Capturing ambient audio and natural sounds
- Music integration and royalty-free resources
- Basic voiceover and narration techniques
- Audio editing and level balancing

### **Module 4: Mobile Editing Essentials**

- CapCut fundamentals and AI features
- LumaFusion for advanced mobile editing
- Creative cuts and transition techniques
- Basic color correction and visual consistency
- Adding titles and graphics effectively

### **Module 5: Cultural Documentation and Ethics**

- Approaching subjects and building trust
- Consent and permission across different countries
- Cultural sensitivity and respectful representation
- Capturing genuine moments vs staged content
- Non-verbal communication and universal storytelling

### **Module 6: Platform Optimization and Portfolio Development**

- Vertical video for TikTok and Instagram Stories
- Horizontal content for YouTube and traditional viewing
- Cross-platform content repurposing strategies
- Portfolio curation and professional presentation
- Future opportunities in travel filmmaking

## **Components of Final Grade**

Essay #1	10%
Essay #2	10%
Essay #3	10%
Essay #4	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Presentation	20%

## **Grading Scale**

93-100 %	A
90-92.9 %	A-
87-89.9 %	B+
83-86.9 %	B
80-82.9 %	B-
77-79.9 %	C+
73-76.9 %	C
70-72.9%	C-
67-69.9 %	D+
63-66.9 %	D
60-62.9 %	D-
Below 60 %	F

## **Academic Integrity**

Franklin University Switzerland, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore place a high value on the integrity, good conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.

## **AI Policy**

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your creative ideas for specific writing assignments;
- Finding information on relevant topics related to the course;
- Checking spelling on your writing assignments and presentations.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Generating a draft of your writing assignments and final presentation.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or responses to complete class assignments.

In sum, any content that you hand in must not be generated by AI software, but it has to represent your intellectual contribution. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course and will result in a failing grade on the assignment.