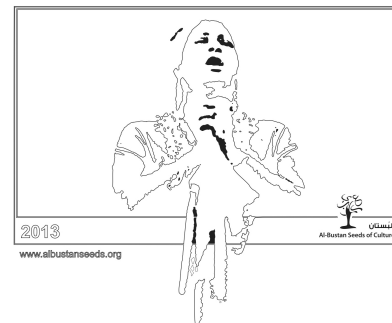


Al-Bustan Camp - July 2013

Video Teacher: Nadia Awad

Teen Video Class Curriculum



This year's teen video was inspired by the satirical news show, *The Daily Show*, and Bassem Yousef's *al Barnamaj*. The students had a distinct interest in comedy and narrative film, which was evident from the first class, and they created the concept, drafted script, shot the video with a greenscreen, and edited it using found footage and graphics.

Our class focused on three different threads: understanding the significance of Egypt to world cinema, in particular Um Kulthum's unique historical role; cultivating a critical media lens by looking at experimental, documentary, and new media pertaining to Egypt and the latest uprisings; and learning technical skills in video production and postproduction. Each day we focused on a specific topic - lighting, point-of-view, camera angles/shots - and addressed each topic from these three threads.

For the first week, we focused on understanding and looking critically at media and building basic technical skills with camera and sound. The second week, the students conducted research for their video. We discussed the ways in which comedic narrative film can provide an effective commentary on current events. We watched various news clips from different geographical regions and read articles pertaining to the recent events in Egypt. After scripting and rehearsing the story, the students worked out a shot list and delegated roles. Each student participated in acting or crewing up for the shoot. We watched the footage together and discussed ways to approach this in editing.

I see our video as a culmination of our discussions, analysis and technical skill-building. The video speaks to the students' critical understanding of current media as well as their tremendous creativity and talent.

Learning Objectives

- To provide basic technical skills in video production and postproduction
- To give students an overview of the video production process (i.e. composing a shot list, shooting from different points-of-view, recording sound)
- To acquire an historical understanding of Egypt's role in film history, Um Kolthom's role, and media production since the uprisings
- To cultivate critical tools for analyzing media and thinking about the purposes of media, especially focusing on questions relevant to youth experiences and stories

Goals

- To practice visual storytelling through daily exercises and a longer group project
- To produce one completed, longer video project or two short ones that reflect youth experiences and identity, depending on the needs and decisions of the class

Materials Needed:

2 cameras

Tape stock

Newsprint paper

Pens or markers

Computer

Projector

Cables for connecting camera/computer/projector

Photographic images for montage exercise (I will bring these materials)

Handouts as listed (I will bring multiple copies of these)

PLAN

Day 1: *Intro to Camera*

10-15min *Introducing ourselves and ground rules for working together*

20-30min *Learning about Frames and Shots*

Filmmaking is the act of bringing images and sounds together to make meaning. Students pass around camera as it is hooked to projector and we practice going through different kinds of shots and talking about them. We write/draw frame of shots on newsprint for future reference.

Discussion: What is a shot? What is a frame? What does it show or leave out? What is a sequence? When have you seen this (i.e. close-up, extreme wide shot) in media you have seen?

30min *Intro to Sound*

I will show the students how to record sound into the camera. Everyone will take turns recording sound for different kinds of shots. What are the different sounds make meaning in video (i.e. diageitic sounds, wild sounds, voice over).

60min *Shots, Sounds, and Meaning*

Students are given an emotion or idea (i.e. power, love, beauty, fear) and shoot as many different kinds of shots as possible to reflect this. Students will also record as many different kinds of sounds that they feel reflect these emotions or idea. They do not have to be linked. The idea here is to record as many things as possible from

Discussion & Viewing: We will look at some of the footage. What kind of shots are we seeing? What worked best?

-- short break --

45min *Storytelling and Point-of-View*

Students divide into pairs, preferably with someone they have not yet worked with. Students share a story about something they feel passionate about, are interested in, or enjoying doing. The other person will listen, ask questions if it is helpful, and share the story with the rest of the group.

Discussion: What was it like to share your story then hear it told? What did it feel like to listen to another's story? What was important to you about relaying the other's story to the group? What is point-of-view? What images and sounds come out of the stories that you told?

15min Wrap-up Discussion – What was important about the work we did today? What did we learn?

Additional Materials for Day:

Camera Usage Check List Handout:

- White balancing
- Checking battery
- Remembering to put a “head” and “tail” on each shot
- Zoom/focus tools

Day 2: Representation and Storytelling

10min Recap

45-60min *Images of Arabs and Middle Eastern Societies*

We will see numerous photographic images on the wall of Arab and Middle Eastern societies. Students are asked to quietly view them then pick an image that speaks to them on some level. Some images will be of Um Kolthom among political leaders. Others will be recent images of uprisings in Egypt.

Discussion: We will share why we are affected by the image. What is happening in the image? How does it affect you? What does it do? How is it framed? Does it have a point-of-view? What does the image attempt to say about the place, the moment? Who is the audience and how do we know? Would does the image's power shift if it were taken by someone represented by it? What does it mean to represent a community through film? What does it mean to document?

45min *Interviewing: Brainstorming*

Short clip from “Garbage Dreams,” a film by Mai Iskander, or “Words of Witness”

Morgan Spurlock interview clip or Errol Morris

Discussion and Writing: What might the questions have been? What is being shown? How does the interviewer's “belonging” to the community or being “outside” of the community affect the interaction? Does it? How does the camera positioning (hand-held, tripod) affect how we experience the interview?

60min *Interviewing*

What issues are important to our communities? Students will brainstorm and at least three questions that come to mind. We will then conduct on-the-fly interviews with individuals on the street.

15min Wrap Up Discussion – What was challenging about this? Writing on newsprint, what did we learn? What are some things that worked when we were shooting? What didn't? For tomorrow, students are asked to bring in photographs of the things or people that are important to who they are.

Additional Materials for Day:

Camera Usage Check List Handout:

- White balancing
- Checking battery
- Remembering to put a “head” and “tail” on each shot
- Zoom/focus tools

Audio Check:

- Test sound and headphones before recording
- Make sure boom is not in shot before shooting

Day 3: *Pre-production Work*

30min Check-in and Review

We are going to do a “memory brainstorming” of some of technical material we learned and the conceptual material we learned.

30min Viewing Interview Footage

Discussion: What are some of the responses? What kinds of questions produced the more interesting responses? How did our camera and boom work affect our interview? What issues did our interview subjects bring up? What story is getting told here? What themes came out?

45-60min Thinking Through Narrative

We are going to look the pictures we brought in and take time to write a few sentences about why they are important, what they are depicting, what they mean to us, what memory is associated with them. Then in groups, we will share our pictures and start to think through them filmically. What are some themes connecting our stories? How are they linked or different?

We will divide a piece of paper into two vertical columns– sound and image – and draw or write what might happen at each point. What words, images, and sounds are essential to the story?

60min Creating Storyboards and A Shot List

Students will work to create storyboards of the video. They will make storyboards and consider locations. We will also discuss improvised elements and scripted elements during this process. I will

introduce them to different ways of storyboarding and creating shot lists as well as the concept of “coverage.”

15min Wrap up and next steps: What pieces do we want to explore more deeply? Would we like to approach this from a more narrative perspective or a documentary perspective?

Day 4: *Speaker/Project Work*

30min *Um Kolthom Documentary*

We will watch a documentary excerpt on Um Kolthom. What do we learn about her? How is the story told? What is the POV of the director? How does sound help tell the story? We will learn about the concept of montage through a shot analysis of part of this film.

60min *Speaker on Media in Egypt*

90min *Project Work*

We will go over the steps in typical video productions and review what we have shot that may be useful to our projects. We will continue developing our projects and also shoot material.

Day 5: *Experimental Elements/Project Work*

30-45min *Experimental Elements and Visual Storytelling*

We will watch a video art work that employs experimental storytelling techniques and briefly discuss what is happening. How is the story getting told? What is the point-of-view?

150min *Project Work*

15min Wrap up Discussion/Check in

Day 6: *Project Work*

15min Wrap up Discussion/Check in

Day 7: *Project Work/Intro to Editing*

60 min Shooting projects

30min Intro to iMovie

- How to bring footage & stills into iMovie
- How to do basic audio
- Discussion of a rough cut vs. a fine cut
- Includes a hand-out with reference to shortcuts in iMovie

90 minutes Shooting and Loading Footage, depending on group progress

Day 8: *Editing/Rough Cut*

10 min: Check in on progress

110 Editing work or Reshooting certain scenes, if technical issues arise or if it is desired

60min *Rough Cut**

We will view rough cut's and discuss what story is coming across. What do we need to know to make the story stronger? What might be good to add or leave out? What images are strongest? Discussion of "finding the silences" in editing.

*Contingent on where we are and if group desires this.

Day 9: *Editing*

Day 10: *Wrap-up and Screening*

Thinking Satire: Preproduction work

Materials:

Laptop
Projector
Newsprint
Markers

Resources:

Videos:

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/>
<http://www.youtube.com/user/bassemoussefshow>

Articles:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13315719>
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/05/opinion/brooks-defending-the-coup.html?_r=0
<http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/warning-against-exaggerated-hopes-egypt>

Critical Thinking & Viewing: (60min)

Creating an effective satire requires research into what topics are presented (or not) and how they are presented. For this exercise, students build on the critical media skills we developed to start creating a commentary on media.

Students read the editorials provided and analyze material, writing their responses and thoughts on newsprint, according to the following rubrics:

- What is “the story” being told?
- What are the key arguments?
- What specific words or phrases are used to indicate the author’s view on the subject?
- What does the language of each article tell us about the author’s view on Egypt, his/her location with regards to what they are writing, and knowledge of their subject?
- If each author were to write three research questions pertaining to the subjects of their article, what would they be?

Media inherently “mediates” how we view the world and how we talk about the world. We discuss how every “story” represents a point-of-view and discuss how this is reflected in the video work we did with camera placement. We discuss what it means to frame a story and “frame” an image.

We watch two satirical news clips – one from the Daily Show and one from Bassem Youssef’s Al Barnamaj.

On newsprint we will discuss what the “story” is that both shows play off of and what the “story of the story” is. We will also deepen our discussion of “the reveal” in film by introducing the notion of the straight man – a person who maintains a level of seriousness or earnestness to enhance the joke.

- Every joke has a “butt,” a person or thing being made fun of. Keeping in this mind, what is the “butt” of the joke?
- What is being made fun of?
- Who is the audience?
- How does the show reveal its perspective on “the story”?
- What visuals and sounds are at work?
- What role does seriousness or earnestness play in the joke?
- Who is the straight man and what are they doing?

Brainstorming and Writing: (90min)

Visual Tropes and News Cliches:

For ten minutes, students list as many visual tropes (i.e. wide shots of protestors, use of “expert interviews”) and news clichés (i.e. interview with “average American”) on a piece of paper.

Thinking about the articles we read and current media that we consume, what are some themes and messages are connected, given the topic at hand (Egypt’s uprisings), to the visual tropes or clichés that we see?

Students are encouraged to write down as many ideas as possible or draw out ideas if that helps.

What’s Funny?

We have a brief discussion about what makes something funny in a satire. What needs to be known? What can be implied? We discuss a central tenet in acting– playing the opposite is playing the truth. This applies especially to comedy.

- How does playing the straight man involve “playing an opposite”?
- Given our visual tropes and list of clichés, what are some unexpected “opposites” that could be played (i.e. an “average American” or “onlooker” who is surprisingly well-informed or an expert who knows nothing about the topic)?

Creating a Scenario: Getting Specific

We now brainstorm our scenario and characters based on the visual tropes and news clichés that we have collected. The more specific the character and setting, the funnier it can be. Students then create character sketches that answer these questions:

- What does s/he eat for breakfast?
- What is his/her favourite movie and why?
- What do they do on a Sunday afternoon?
- What is his/her favourite childhood memory?
- Where do they want to be in ten years?

After this is done, students take on one character and have them interact in a mundane scenario (i.e. the budding news reporter sees the “average American” at the zoo and wants to do an interview). Two students will take notes on this and observe the interaction. What works? What doesn’t? The broader group will also make suggestions regarding next steps (i.e. the two actors see a zookeeper feeding a giraffe).

With this process, we begin to craft multiple scenarios that will then we used for the initial draft of our script. We also work to establish a collaborative working group.