


Professor Brian Fuller Classroom Observation 
EART 456 Narrative Filmmaking
Observer: Suzanne Proulx
October 20, 2022, 6:30pm

Professor Fuller started EART 456/Narrative Filmmaking at 6:30. He had previously emailed the class with the plan for the evening, had given them a prompt to prepare ahead of time, and the syllabus was projected on the screen. It appeared all the advanced students in the class (from the email I was copied on) were present, and he offered students Asian pineapple cakes. The classroom was professional-looking, (many Doucette Classrooms have cobbled-together furniture) with matching chairs labeled “Cinema”, and Prof. Fuller had displayed framed posters of films former students had worked on professionally. A student was receiving a call, and Prof. Fuller handled the awkward faux pas by mentioning etiquette while on a professional filmset, and setting a phone into airplane mode so it doesn’t disrupt production. Professor Fuller asked the students to share their responses to his earlier prompt, “What surprised you most about the work we've done so far?” One student offered that it is was easier with fewer people. Another discussed that filming is difficult if you have limited space, such as a cramped apartment, compared to higher production films where ideal spaces can be acquired. A student offered challenges in setting up shots, another brought up continuity issues, and now to avoid discrepancies in costumes, props and setting etc. Some shared technical challenges, and the group discussed the importance of being familiar with one’s equipment in order to be well-prepared on the set. Discussion followed about common technical issues with formatting SD cards. Professor Fuller’s teaching delivery was professional and conversational, the atmosphere was comfortable and productive, and there was a good rapport among Prof. Fuller and the group, as they shared jokes and stories related to their production mishaps. A student shared his “rough cut” on the large screen. His film showed a scene between a drunk young man and woman bickering. Prof. Fuller asked for first reactions. Students caught an error in light that was too low and a problem with a shot that was “warped”, a camera jiggle. A student pointed out an abrupt shot. Prof. Fuller had the student share the “assembly”, which maps the narrative and early version of filmed scenes before the “rough cut”. Prof. Fuller reviewed the pace in relation to the narrative. They compared it to the edits in the earlier version in the assembly. The students pointed out some un-necessary cuts and an awkward angle. They discussed how a high angle shot makes someone appear weaker, and how the angle is now improved. Prof. Fuller mentioned how a

drawback was how an important hand gesture was lost, but a student brought up how the timing of the dialogue was better in the new version. It was clear the students were well-versed in technical issues, and how technical and framing choices affect the narrative.

My initial impression of the student film was that it had had many strengths, but that it lagged a bit, the humor was hit and miss and dialogue un-natural at times, but I have no formal film background, and I could not pinpoint all the reasons for my impressions. Edinboro no longer has a theater program, and students do not usually have money to hire trained actors, so student film-makers usually must work with untrained actors. After Professor Fuller led the discussion further, I better understood causes for some of the flaws, as he teased out potential ways to address them. He suggested having more overlapping dialogue instead of alternating dialogue to heighten the feeling of the couple talking past each other and help underscore the emotional disconnect, quicken the pace and make the dialogue feel more natural. He found places where the overlapping dialogue could happen using existing footage. He brought up current contemporary comedy films in which the editing makes the dialogue funny as much as the actor's delivery. He also caught some issues with continuity. Continuity involves matching elements such as frames, body positions and walking pace from one frame to the next. Prof. Fuller discovered a shot that had a boom light stand in view, and students laughed.

Prof. Fuller introduced the term "saccade". This is when you hear something before you see it. The sound gets the person to look, and the saccade is the eye movement as they scan to the source of the sound. He explained what happens to the brain and eye when the eye moves across a span of space to pay attention to a new thing, and the brain turns the eye off as we switch our attention. He talked about editing to mimic this process, bringing in communication theory, and how cutting audio before video can be effective. He also discussed Phi phenomenon, also from the science of perception. He brought the conversation back to the student's rough cut, and elaborated how further cuts could advance the narrative and the audience's natural curiosity. He discussed how you can "make acting better" through editing. Professor Fuller called a break. Based on the plan he shared earlier in the day via email, after break they would check one student's color grading, another's music samples, a third student's dialogue editing, and the Foley (sound) work of another.