



Department of Communication Studies
COM 2000: Sundance Film Festival, 1 unit
Spring 2026
Section 1, Students meet with the professor during office hours
Final Exam: Finals Week Project Submission

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Sundance Film Festival Course

This course is a survey of the aesthetic, technical, economic, social, theoretical, and philosophical-spiritual dimensions of independent films and filmmaking. This will include explorations of film production technique, content, financing, exhibition and distribution, and the moral and ethical dimensions of film in our society. This course will include attending the 2024 Sundance Film Festival (SFF) in Park City, Utah and the Windrider Summit.

Required Texts

Materials posted on Canvas. In addition: required films and various recommended readings and handouts distributed by both the professor and peers

Recommended:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013. Print.
Hayward, Susan, and Susan Hayward. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2000.

For more Information:

<https://www.windriderinstitute.org/summit>
<https://festival.sundance.org/>

Media Communication Program Learning Outcomes

1. Examine and understand past and present production strategies of media across multiple modalities.
2. Incorporate individual creativity within a team dynamic in the process of designing, constructing, and producing media projects.
3. Create scripts, audio projects, and visual narratives according to industry-specific standards.
4. Display critical thinking when comparing, evaluating, and interpreting diverse media content.

Program Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the program in Media Communication will be able to:

1. Demonstrate skills in the theoretical and/or historical critique of media. This includes the integration of a Christian worldview and ethical framework for viewing, interpreting, and critiquing media messages.
2. Demonstrate scriptwriting skills for radio, TV, film, internet, church media, and/or corporate media industries.

3. Demonstrate production and/or performance skills in radio, TV, film, internet, church media, and/or corporate media industries.
4. Demonstrate professional socialization skills in a radio, TV, film, internet, church media, and/or corporate media internship.

Course Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, the student will be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of writing, producing, and the aesthetics of film production;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of independent film financing, film development, exhibition, and distribution;
3. Display the ability to analyze and interpret film images and narrative using film theory and terminology;
4. Display an understanding of how a Christian worldview and faith perspective is applied in filmmaking and film consumption; and
5. Conceptualize and write a short film script.

PLNU Mission: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send: Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

State Authorization: State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

Course Policies and Requirements

Attendance: *Attendance is required. Missing class for other than medical emergencies or excused absences will affect your grade, as per the University Catalog.* **PLNU Attendance and Participation**

Policy: Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

Class Preparation: All assignments must be completed prior to the assigned due date and time. Some assignments will be discussed in class while others will be completed individually but not discussed.

Class Participation: *Regular* contributions to class discussion are expected, including but not restricted to discussions of weekly readings, related experiential exercises, and open dialogue. Despite the size of the class, I want everyone to feel compelled to share their thoughts on course assignments. Enthusiastic and responsible participation in assigned group projects (in-class and outside of class) is expected of all.

E-Mail: Please use e-mail (not Canvas email) for simple, logistical questions or clarifications. Write:

“COM2000” in the subject line. Allow 24 hours/ 1 business day for a reply.

Canvas Messages: Please use Canvas messages (not Canvas email) for all information regarding assignments submitted to Canvas.

Smart phones and laptops: may be used for classroom related activities only.

Public Discourse: Much of the work we will do in this class is cooperative, by nature of the class discussions and general feedback given to written work and/projects; thus you should think of all your writing and speaking for and in class as public, not private, discourse. By continuing in this class, you acknowledge that your work will be viewed by others in the class.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy: Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one’s own when in reality they are the results of another person’s creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy: You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) in this course. Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. Please use the following sources to guide your citations when using AI.

[Chicago Manual of Style: Citing Content Developed or Generated by AI](#)

Spiritual Care: Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy: PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student’s eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student’s request. PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes. Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student’s responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to

protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging: Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination: In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

Final Examination Policy: Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning: I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In COM 3000 all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include optional rated "R" content. Students may select an alternative film if they so choose. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of media communication, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning: I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences.

This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In COM 3000, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include optional rated “R” content. Students may select an alternative film if they so choose. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of media communication, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

PLNU Copyright Policy: Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification: In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

Assignments: Each task and associated point total is listed in Canvas.

Grading Scale

94-100	A	78-79	C+
90-93	A-	74-77	C
88-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-87	B	60-69	D
80-83	B-	0-59	F

Grading

10%	Pre-Festival Assignment: Attend Intro. To Film Art Lecture
10%	Pre-Festival Assignment: Research Sundance Film Festival (2 pages)
30%	Five (5) 1-1.5 page (325-375 word) Sundance Film Reports
20%	Two (2) 1-1.5 page (325-375 word) Windrider Forum Reports
30%	Sundance Term Paper or Sundance Film Project

Assignment Descriptions: Note Canvas assignment due date times.

Paper Format: Papers must be written in Chicago Style. Papers must be typed and double-spaced. Submit assignments in black ink on 8.5”x11” white paper. Use a non-decorative 12-point font, such as Times New Roman, and use 1” margins, .75” at the bottom. Do not include title pages. Include page numbers.

Course Assignments

1. Attend the field trip to the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah and participate in all regular (ticketed) SFF screenings and the additional group screenings and forums sponsored by The Windrider Summit.
2. Complete pre-festival assigned readings and attend a brief lecture as follows:
 - During week 2 we will meet as a team to discuss logistics and assignments
 - 1.5 page history of Sundance and .5 page history of Windrider: single-spaced cut-and-pasted online material with a Works Cited. Note: assignments that do not meet the word/page count requirement will receive a "0."
3. Write and submit **five (5) 1-1.5 page Sundance Film Reports** and two **(2) 1-1.5 page Windrider Forum Reports** by 11:59pm on the day the assignment is due. Your reports will highlight your reflections and learning. Your reports are to be posted online to Canvas. You will post these during Sundance (Week 4). Note: assignments that do not meet the word/page count requirement will receive a "0."
4. Write a four (4) page **Sundance Term Paper** that includes a focused analysis and critique of one or two films and displays an understanding of the different course topic areas included in the course objectives. This will be due by/before spring break (at the end of week 8). Note: assignments that do not meet the word/page count requirement will receive a "0."
Or complete a **Sundance Film Project**:

Students will demonstrate knowledge and skill in shooting video footage for a short documentary about the Sundance Film Festival. This includes one or more of the following documentary production styles: poetic mode, expository mode, participatory mode, observational mode, reflexive mode, performative mode, and experimental film mode.

Course Schedule

Subject to Change -- the below was modified during week 4 of the semester

Week	Schedule // Theme	Assignment Due
1-2	Film Narrative Lecture and Festival Preparation	And attend the 1.5-hour pre-departure meeting 1.5 page history of Sundance and .5 page history of Windrider: single-spaced with Works Cited
3	<i>Attend the Sundance Film Festival</i>	Monday: Report 1 Tuesday: Report 2 Wednesday: Report 3 Thursday: Report 4 Friday: Report 5 Saturday: Report 6 Sunday: Report 7
4-8	Complete Term Paper or Film Project	Complete term paper or film project and meet after spring break to discuss the course.