

Getting Started with the UIL Film Festival



Purpose and Format of the Festival

To provide students with the opportunity to explore the art of **cinematic storytelling**.

The films shall focus on storytelling using the **techniques and tools found in the cinematic arts**.

What can you do with film that you can't do onstage?

- Manipulate the audience's **spatial** relationship and **point of view**
 - Earliest films had a “proscenium look” until different **types of shots** and **camera movements** were introduced
- Shoot multiple takes to get the **best performance**
- Move quickly from scene to scene
- Add visual and audio **effects** easily
- Highlight real stories of **real people** in documentaries
- Use **editing** techniques creatively
- **Experiment** with the story, **revise** easily after feedback using non-linear editing
- Animation!

The Categories

Each school may submit three (3) films in each of the following four categories:

1. **Narrative** (3–7 minutes)
2. **Documentary** (3–7 minutes) (does not include Broadcast News or PSAs)
3. **Computer/ digital Animation** (30 seconds–3 minutes)
4. **Traditional Animation** (30 seconds–3 minutes)

Definitions in Handbook

Narrative

Narrative is generally accepted as possessing two components: the **story** presented and the **process** of its telling, or narration, often referred to as narrative discourse.

Story is a series of **represented** events, characters (or agents for some), and actions out of which the audience constructs a **fictional** time, place, and cause-effect world, or diegesis.

<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/IndependentFilm-Road-Movies/Narrative-DEFINING-FILMNARRATIVE.html#ixzz6ckmSs0UfD>

Documentary

A practice of filmmaking that deals with **actual and factual (and usually contemporary) issues, institutions, and people**; whose purpose is to educate, inform, communicate, persuade, raise consciousness, or satisfy curiosity; in which the viewer is commonly addressed as a citizen of a public sphere; whose **materials are selected and arranged from what already exists** (rather than being made up); and

whose methods involve filming 'real people' as themselves in actual locations, using natural light and ambient sound.

Kuhn, A. & Westwell, G. (2012). "Documentary." In A Dictionary of Film Studies.: Oxford University Press. Retrieved 17 Nov. 2016.

NOTE: Mockumentaries are fictional stories told using the techniques of documentary, so they are classified as **Narrative**.

Traditional Animation

Traditional animation uses physical (rather than virtual) materials and activities. This includes any film where **100% of the “frames” and their content are created by hand**. The medium can be pencil, pen or brush on paper.

The medium can also be hand-drawn images utilizing a pad or other digital drawing device; the key is that there is drawing by hand. A minimal amount of digital effects may be added in post-production (effects such as a sparkle, etc.)

Claymation, Lego figure, still object animation, and other stop-motion techniques –where each frame is set up and captured and then laid into a timeline – also fit this category.

Again, the key is that **each frame is created manually**.

Digital or Computer Animation

Animation that involves **using keyframes in a software program, so that the software creates the tweens (intermediate frames)** to create the illusion of motion or change, is considered **digital**.

The use of digital **3D computer modeling** would also place the piece in the digital category.

We realize that there can be hybrids where animation and live action are utilized. Please consult with the UIL Office for aid in categorizing.

Evaluation

Films submitted to the Festival are previewed, critiqued and ranked by our adjudicators, who score them on the following criteria:

- **Originality** (the screenplay/story idea)
- **Cinematic storytelling** (how effectively students use the elements of filmmaking – cinematography, audio, mise en scène, editing – to tell the story)
- **Technical execution** (clear audio, proper focus and lighting, clean editing)

Evaluation

- Entries will go through a **preliminary round**.
- Depending on the number of entries received in each category, **advancing films go through several rounds**, culminating with a State Semi-final round to determine State qualifiers.
- The **entries advancing to State in each category** will be screened and ranked first through sixth place at the State Festival in Austin on **February 28, 2024**.
 - Medals and trophies will be awarded for first through third place, and plaques for fourth through sixth place.
 - Schools shall receive **written evaluations** of the film via the Film Contest Portal for each level.
 - Films cannot be revised after initial submission.
- **Nobility Award**—celebrating student films promoting social change which inform and inspire audiences about issues that the teams care about

What is YOUR role as a sponsor?

- Provide structure and deadlines
- Give artistic and technical *guidance*
 - You may appear as an actor, but you cannot do the writing, filming or editing
- Maintain Community Standards & Copyright Compliance
- Help secure locations and actors (can be non-students)
- Acquire and maintain equipment
- **Provide supervision, safety, meals on film sets**

Sample Timeframe

- **AUGUST-SEPTEMBER: Development and Pre-production**
 - includes brainstorming, screenwriting, table reads, rewrites, mood boards, casting, finding locations, creating storyboards/shot lists, rehearsals
- **OCTOBER-NOVEMBER: Filming** (and refilming if necessary)
- **NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Post-production**
 - includes reviewing & organizing footage, editing, music scoring, audio dubbing, visual effects, graphics & titles
 - “Intent to Participate” due **December 1, 2023**
- **JANUARY:** watch, revise, rewatch, re-revise, get feedback
 - **Submission Deadline is January 20, 2024;**
 - Don’t wait until 11:50 pm to start submitting
 - Exporting can take a long time

Inspiration to get started:

- Your students may already be **making films on their own**, or for their places of worship, or for their AV, Animation or Journalism classes
 - Make friends with those teachers!
- You're already surrounded by **actors, technicians and designers** who love to bring stories to life
- People in your **community WANT** to help student filmmakers
- You **don't need expensive equipment** (see next session; SmartPhones are great if used well)
- ***Storytelling*** is the main objective

Film vs. Stage

- Acting styles
 - Be subtle, avoid melodrama
 - “To think is gesture enough”
 - Remember your world is 360°
- Multiple takes and continuity; “coverage”
- Hair & makeup is more natural
- Set dressing, lighting more natural
- Audio
 - While filming: lack of control
 - In Post-production: can add so much

Screenplays

- *Very* specialized format
- Special software is great, but not mandatory
 - CeltX, Final Draft, Writer Duet
 - Google Doc template
- Explore and study existing screenplays:
 - The Script Lab
- Style Guidebooks:
 - Screenwriter's Bible
 - Hollywood Standard

Common Pitfalls–Narrative

Script

Too much dialogue; expository dialogue; stereotyped characters; unclear story; no story structure

Video

Poor focus; overexposure; unintentionally shaky camera; “undershooting;” no attention paid to backgrounds

Audio

Background noise; mic too far from actors; audio changing with different camera angles; music overpowering dialogue

Acting

Melodramatic/amateurish; misplaced eye contact

Editing

Shots too short; distracting transitions and effects

Common Pitfalls—Documentary

Story

No story structure; advertisement or promotion rather than documentary

Video

Poor focus; overexposure; unintentionally shaky camera; “undershooting;” no attention paid to backgrounds

Audio

Background noise; mic too far from actors; audio changing with different camera angles; music overpowering dialogue

Editing

Lack of meaningful B-roll; B-roll too short; B-roll doesn't flow with story

Common Pitfalls–Animation

Story

No story structure, or undeveloped story

Artwork/Design

Anime-derived drawing style without fresh approach;
trademarked character figures used for stop motion

Video

No tripod used for stop motion; poor lighting; frames not timed properly for smoothness

Audio

Poor music choice; voiceover hard to understand due to poor performance or recording quality

“Setiquette”

- Set etiquette: the guidelines for how to behave in the specialized work environment of a film set
- Not following these rules could easily get you fired from a set – or not hired for the next one!
- [Set Etiquette slideshow](#)

Take Time To Watch Lots Of Previous Winners With Your Students

Examples from 2023 winners

AMELIA- 4A Narrative

Housing the Unhoused 3A Documentary

Copy Cat – 2023 6A Digital Animation

Lifeline– 2023 5A Traditional Animation

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

The UIL Film Page– we will be adding more resources

The Handbook

The Constitution

2023 State Finalists

Paula Rodriguez email: prodriguez@uiltexas.org

OTHER FUNNER RESOURCES

No Film School

Studio Binder Pre-production Templates galore!!

Filmspotting

Every Frame a Painting

Fantastic film analysis YouTube channel by Tony Zhou

Nerd Writer

Crash Course Film History video series

Crash Course Film Production video series

Join the UIL Film Facebook group