COURSE SYLLABUS

Video Production Course Online (Self-Paced)

Train in video production from the phone up, covering planning, manual exposure control, lighting, sound, framing, directing, AI-assisted prep, and finished delivery.

> Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email partnerships@vdci.edu or visit: https://vdci.edu/courses/video-production-course-online



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Course Outline

Module 1 · Story, Pre-Production & Releases

- **Story and message:** hooks, narrative arc, and message-first planning, working from a finished script (documentary, commercial, or short narrative scene).
- **Breakdown:** break the script into scenes, locations, cast, and gear needs.
- **Shot lists and storyboards:** plan coverage shot by shot, using AI to draft shot lists and real storyboard frames.
- **Releases and rights:** talent and location release forms, where you can legally shoot, and music-licensing and copyright basics.

Module 2 · Casting

- **Finding actors:** friends, classmates, Backstage, Actors Access, Craigslist, Facebook groups, and local theater programs looking for reel material.
- **Auditions and self-tapes:** running simple in-person auditions or reviewing recorded submissions, and what to look for beyond line delivery.
- **Directing in the room:** giving adjustments, reading adaptability, and keeping the environment relaxed.
- **Chemistry and callbacks:** imagining actors together, pairing them in callbacks, and communicating your vision once the cast is set.
- **Releases and agreements:** standard talent releases, union vs. non-union considerations, and what actors and crew expect before they step on set.

Module 3 · Location Scouting

- **Finding spaces:** starting with what you already have, plus platforms like Peerspace and outreach to local businesses for off-hours access.
- **Sound assessment:** listening for traffic, HVAC, appliances, and background noise that competes with dialogue.
- **Light, power, space, and consistency:** evaluating and controlling existing light, outlet access, room for camera and crew, and locking access for the full shoot.
- **Releases and permits:** location release forms, permit requirements, noise ordinances, and liability basics.

Module 4 · Budgeting

- **Food and crew:** why feeding people matters, and how to think about compensating collaborators — in cash, food, or portfolio credit.
- **Equipment costs:** buying, borrowing, or renting — factored into your plan before it becomes a surprise expense.

- **Location, transportation, and delivery:** free spaces vs. hourly rentals, travel costs, storage and backup, and delivery from hard drives to streaming platforms.
- **Financing a project:** self-funding, crowdfunding, investor pitches, production loans, and grants.

Module 5 · The Phone as a Pro Camera

- **Manual control, one app in depth:** shutter, ISO, aperture equivalents, frame rate, and white balance in the free Blackmagic Camera app.
- **ND filters, the 180° shutter rule, and Log:** holding cinematic motion blur in daylight, and shooting flat/Log for more control in post.
- **Lensing and movement:** focal length, depth of field, and steady, intentional moves — handheld, on a fluid-head tripod, and with a gimbal.
- **Setup, rigging, and reliability:** the mic/light/ND kit on a phone cage, managing storage, battery, and heat on a long shoot — and the craft you'll add on a bigger camera.

Module 6 · Composition & Coverage

- **Composition:** rule of thirds, leading lines, headroom, and frame balance.
- **Shot sizes and angles:** wides, mediums, close-ups, cutaways, height, Dutch, and POV.
- **Coverage and continuity:** shooting enough angles, holding the 180-degree line, and capturing the b-roll that lets a scene cut together without gaps.

Module 7 · Lighting Fundamentals

- **How light behaves:** the inverse square law, hard vs. soft light, modifiers, and light sources from LED to practicals.
- **Three-point lighting:** key, fill, and back light, and how each shapes the subject.
- **Natural and available light:** mixing window and practical light with your kit, plus simple modifiers and bounce.
- **Mood and problem-solving:** shaping shadows, controlling contrast and color temperature, exposure tools, and fixing color casts.

Module 8 · Audio: Capture, Monitoring & AI Cleanup

- **A real mic system:** a wireless lav (or two) for dialogue and a shotgun mic for scene coverage.
- **Placement and levels:** mic distance and positioning, setting gain, and avoiding clipping for close, clean dialogue.
- **Monitoring and room:** monitoring on headphones so you never record blind, plus controlling echo and noise and recording room tone.
- **AI audio cleanup:** rescuing takes with Adobe Enhance Speech, Descript Studio Sound, or Krisp — and the limits of what cleanup can fix.

Module 9 · Interviews & On-Camera Production

- **Interview setup:** clean backgrounds, lighting and framing an interview subject, two-camera and single-camera setups, eyelines, and question flow.
- **Directing talent:** getting natural performances from non-actors and clean, usable answers.
- **On-camera presenting:** delivery to camera, plus an AI teleprompter to stay on script.
- **Continuity and pickups:** matching takes and capturing the pickup shots that save the edit.

Module 10 · Production Workflow, Assembly & Delivery

- **File management:** ingest, naming, folder structure, and reliable backups.
- **Assemble one scene from your coverage:** the test that reveals coverage gaps, crossed eyelines, and missing cutaways while you can still reshoot.
- **Light assembly, color, sound, and captions:** a clean cut, basic color correction, an audio mix, titles and lower thirds, and AI captions in DaVinci Resolve or CapCut.
- **Export, archive, and client review:** platform export presets, archiving projects you can reopen years later, and a professional review-and-revision workflow.

Module 11 · Crew Roles & Responsibilities

- **Above the line:** executive producers, producers, line producers, showrunners, directors, and writers — and how creative and money decisions get negotiated.

- **On set:** the camera and lighting departments, sound, art and wardrobe, and the AD department that keeps a set running on time.
- **Post-production roles:** editors, colorists, sound designers, foley artists, composers, and the post supervisor.
- **You are the crew:** mapping every role to the skills you've built, how crews scale as budgets grow, and which role to hire first (it's sound).

Module 12 · Expanding Your Services: Live Events, Real Estate & Music Videos

- **The working videographer:** finding local clients, pricing (day rate vs. per-deliverable), simple proposals, and managing scope.
- **Live events:** planning from a run-of-show, multicam coverage with no second takes, clean audio from the sound board, and highlight-plus-program deliverables.
- **Real estate:** the stabilized walkthrough, wide framing, exposure against bright windows, and a repeatable listing package with fast turnaround.
- **Music videos:** the treatment, playback and sync on set, full-song performance coverage across setups, and cutting to the track.
- **Packaging client work:** deliverables per gig, one-page agreements, testimonials and referrals, and a portfolio that wins the next job.

Module 13 · Content for Digital Platforms

- **The platform landscape:** how content-sharing platforms evolved, the major players today, and which platforms reach which audiences.
- **Format and aspect ratio:** horizontal, vertical, and square, and framing to support all three from one shoot.
- **Platform craft and professionalism:** hooks, pacing, captions-on viewing, thumbnail-friendly framing, and why Vimeo signals a different audience than YouTube or TikTok.

Module 14 · AI in the Workflow & Responsible Use

- **AI foundations:** a brief history of AI, the difference between large language models and generative image and video models, and choosing the right tool for each stage.
- **Plan and produce with AI:** script development, shot planning and storyboard frames, plus the AI teleprompter on set.
- **Post, repurpose, and generate:** transcription and captions, one-to-many platform cuts with AI-drafted titles and chapters, and generative b-roll — with a clear-eyed view of where that line sits.
- **Use AI responsibly:** AI-content disclosure and labeling (YouTube, Meta, TikTok, C2PA), caption accuracy for accessibility (ADA / WCAG), and verifying AI-drafted facts before you publish.