

AGGIE SWAMP CLUB

New Member Information Packet

Version 3.0

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I. General Info

What does SWAMP stand for?

ScreenWriting, Acting, and Movie Production (Studies show that 9 out of 10 people agree that SWAMP is a better name than SAMP)

What does SWAMP do?

First and foremost, SWAMP helps its members make movies. In addition we have meetings, workshops, and social events that are related to filmmaking and film appreciation.

Does SWAMP have a website?

Yes! Our official website is <http://aggieswamp.com>. In addition, we also have accounts on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/aggieswamp>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/aggieswamp>), and many movies from members of SWAMP can be found on Vimeo.com (<http://vimeo.com/channels/aggieswamp>) or the Favorites list on YouTube at <http://youtube.com/aggieswamp>.

Does SWAMP have an email list?

Yes! To be added to the email list, please contact the current Webmaster/Communications Chair (whose email can be found SWAMP's website under Officers/Members).

II. Membership

What do I have to do to be considered an official member of SWAMP?

You become an official member of SWAMP, you are required to pay \$25 in dues each semester. However, we offer a special rate at the beginning of each new academic year: \$40 for the whole year. If you have done this, you are an official member. We have no requirements on the number of meetings you must attend, nor do we have any sort of “points” system like some organizations.

As a member of SWAMP, what will I be doing?

Anything and everything! Members help brainstorm for ideas and doctor scripts. Members act as crew during shooting, and may be operating anything from cameras to microphones to lights. Members can act in the movies too, with roles ranging from background extra to leading lady or man! Members edit the film and publish the finished product.

Do I need experience in filming/acting/writing to have fun in SWAMP?

Nope! Even if you don’t know which end of the camera to point at the actor (hint: it’s the end with the lens on it!) you can still have a great time in SWAMP. Every film needs people to brainstorm ideas, carry equipment, hold lights, make food runs, and other such things. Also, there are plenty of socials and movie nights where all we do is have fun. And eventually, by watching what other members do and participating in shoots, you can pick up enough experience to participate in more ways!

How much time do I have to commit to SWAMP?

As much or as little as you want. Honestly. Any activities that SWAMP organizes, including making movies, are completely optional. As long as you pay your dues, you are a member for that semester. We will never force you to do anything you don’t want to or don’t have time for. However, the more time you make for SWAMP, the more fun it is!

Do I get any perks for being a member?

Yes! By paying your dues for the year, you will receive a free SWAMP t-shirt for that year. You gain access to SWAMP’s equipment, including cameras, costumes, lights, microphones, props, etc. You also get a listing with an accessible account on the Officers/Members page of the SWAMP website. The most important benefit, though, is that you get access to the help, ideas, and opinions of your fellow SWAMP members.

III. Meetings

When, where, and how often does SWAMP meet?

SWAMP holds official meetings once a week on Thursdays at 7:30pm in room 110 of the Oceanography and Meteorology (O&M) Building. (It's the building with the big satellite dish on top)

What if I can't make the meetings or arrive late?

No problem. We understand that people have other things going on, especially tests and schoolwork. Try to make the meetings as often as you can, but if you can't, don't worry about it. You will not get kicked out, but you WILL miss out on lots of fun! If you would like to find out what happened at a meeting that you missed, you can contact one of the officers and they will provide you with a brief summary of the meeting and can answer any questions you might have.

What is the typical structure of a SWAMP meeting?

I'm glad you asked! Please note that this is just a basic outline of a typical meeting. Not every meeting will follow these exact guidelines.

1. Welcome!

Generally people arrive a little early to chat and talk about the week. At the start of the meeting, new members are welcomed, and are encouraged to get signed up for the listserv after the meeting is over.

2. General Announcements

The first order of business at every meeting is to go over the most important news updates from the last meetings. These announcements usually include:

- upcoming socials
- any new film/video contests members can participate in
- workshops
- film festivals (either to attend or submit a film to)
- updates to the website
- new equipment
- anything we might need the general members' opinions on

3. 10-minute Session

Every SWAMP meeting begins with a short presentation by one of the officers on a topic of interest. The presentation is usually about 10-15 minutes in length. In the earlier parts of the year, the sessions will cover basic videography techniques, how to use equipment, and editing, as well as impromptu acting, script reading, brainstorming sessions, and script writing techniques. As the year progresses, the topics become more specific and advanced.

4. Projects

In this section, members are encouraged to get up in front of the group to talk about ideas they have for movies they would like to make. Typically one should only present something if one has something to present. For instance, if you have a funny idea for a scene but have not fleshed it out or given any thought to an actual storyline, please wait until you have developed it further before presenting

it to the club. The main point of presenting your idea to the group is to a) get people excited about your film, b) ask people for help with ideas, equipment, etc, and c) get the rest of the group's input to help make the film happen. If a member already has a project in production, this would be the time they give the group any updates on their progress.

6. Short Films, Videos, Trailers

If a member has completed a movie that they would like to show to the group, or if the member has made an "early cut" of a movie and would like to get the group's opinion on it, this is the place to do it. Typically we do not show clips any longer than 10 minutes, especially if multiple clips are being screened. If you have a clip that we feel is too long, we will show it after the meeting or at a social. During this section, instructional filmmaking videos are also sometimes shown. If there's time, new movie trailers selected by the Webmaster/Communications Chair are shown. If you would like to show something at a meeting, it is highly recommended that you email the Webmaster or any of the officers ahead of time with a link of the film or video online if possible.

7. Fin!

Once the meeting has officially concluded, many members like to hang around and chat for a while. If any clips were too long to show during the previous section, we will screen them for anyone that wants to hang around. Oftentimes members may go grab a bit to eat together or head to the theatre to catch movie.

IV. Making Movies

How exactly does making a movie get started?

Most of the time, the movies that SWAMP helps to make are started and organized by individual members of SWAMP. A member decides they have a good idea they would like to turn into a movie, and they announce this idea during the projects section of a meeting (See Section III for more info on this). After the idea is officially announced, the individual, with the aid of SWAMP, writes a script (if they want to), gets equipment, and starts shooting!

Can anyone direct / star in / write a film?

Yes! Everyone from the grizzled veteran to the newest member can start a project. If you have a good idea, bring it up during the Projects section of a meeting and we can help you start to flesh it out.

When does SWAMP shoot movies?

When a movie is shot is completely up to that movie's director. Typically, directors like to shoot on weekends because people tend to have more free time then. But sometimes shooting during the week is preferred or even necessary.

HELP! I have a great idea for a movie but I don't know the first thing about how to make it! Can SWAMP help?

Yes! If you have a great idea but don't have the technical experience to "make it happen," you have two choices. If you don't mind giving some control of your idea to another person, you can team up with someone who knows their way around a camera better than you. You'll still be involved in making the movie, but can leave the details of shooting it to another person. If you're dead set on controlling everything yourself, but don't feel prepared to do so, it is best to put your movie on hold and participate in the production of other movies that members have going on.

If you participate enough, you will find organizing your own movie to be much easier. In addition, we do have workshops throughout the year that teach editing, filming, etc that you can attend to help gain some experience.

HELP! I want to shoot a movie but I don't have the necessary equipment!!

Relax. SWAMP is here to help. If you need equipment, (such as a video camera, microphone, lighting equipment, costumes, or props), simply bring it up during the Projects section of the meeting and we will help you find what you need. If you cannot make it to a meeting, feel free to send out an email over the SWAMP listserv asking for equipment. Remember that SWAMP has "club equipment" that any member who has paid dues can use, including cameras.

HELP! I have a neat concept for a film, but I don't think I have it developed enough to bring it up during the projects section quite yet. What can I do?

Throughout the year, SWAMP will have a few "screenwriting schindigs" where members will congregate with the sole purpose of fleshing out new ideas for films. Watch the listserv and attend meetings to find out when and where these sessions will take place, because brainstorming can really help turn a concept into a full-fledged film!

I want to make a (insert-type-here) film. Is that ok?

SWAMP encourages its members to explore many different themes and genres of films. You can make any type of film you want because it is your film, not SWAMP's. SWAMP may help you make the film, but it is your film. Though you may make any type of film you want, it is up to the individual members of SWAMP as to whether or not they actually want to take part in helping make the film.

SWAMP will under no circumstances aid or associate itself with any films containing:

- Pornographic or highly sexual content
- Racially or ethnically offensive content
- Anything the officers feel might reflect negatively on Texas A&M

If you have a desire to make a film containing controversial subject matter, please do it on your own time and do not attempt to involve SWAMP in the film's production. Please also ask to have yourself officially removed from SWAMP's membership. There is no chance that SWAMP will support or aid such films.

What length of films does SWAMP typically produce?

Most of the films SWAMP produces are shorts. These range in length from a few minutes to about half an hour. You are open to produce a film of any length though of course.

Once I've made a film in SWAMP, where can/will it be shown?

Where (and when) a film is shown is up to the producer of the film. Most filmmakers enjoy screening their films for the entire SWAMP club during one of the Thursday meetings during the Trailers and Videos section, or possibly the Projects section. This is especially useful so as to get critiques on your movie and make some last minute changes. After this, the filmmaker is welcome to submit the film to any festivals he or she sees fit. Every Spring, SWAMP hosts the annual Texas Film Festival in Rudder Theater. This film festival has drastically grown in attendance over the past couple years and getting your film accepted into it can mean an audience of hundreds. Also, with the increased use of sites like YouTube, Vimeo, or Facebook, you can attract a wide audience and get your film a lot of exposure on the internet. Even with all these options, it is completely acceptable for any member to simply make a film for fun, with no intention of submitting it to any festivals, SWAMPFests, or internet sites. Remember, though, that films are meant to be seen, and by submitting your films to festivals you can share your hard work with more people!

V. Socials

Is making movies the only thing SWAMP does?

Heavens no! We do all sorts of fun stuff! Typically we try to have at least one social event a week. Social events in the past include...

- Seeing movies at the local theater
- Covering ourselves in blue then going to Blue Baker and getting free food
- Campouts
- City-wide scavenger hunt
- Flying kites in Research Park
- Beach volleyball
- Group pull for football games and other sports
- Pajama Party and Ice Cream Teeny-bopper Movie Night
- Halloween House Party
- Christmas Party

Many others!

Do I have to do to any of these?

No one is ever forced to go to any of the socials. If you're really strapped for time and can only fit a few into your schedule, try to make at least the Halloween Party or the Christmas Party. Those tend to be the socials where people "premiere" their

movies and are attended by the most people. Keep in mind though, that socials are a great way to get to know a lot of members easily and feel more comfortable getting involved in projects.

VI. Workshops

What are “workshops”?

Workshops are scheduled times outside of the general meetings when one or more members offer classes on a certain filmmaking technique. Usually there are only a couple of hours long. In the past we have had successful workshops on editing, videography, screenwriting, acting, and special effects. There is no set time for workshops, nor is there a formula for what a workshop will cover. Listen at the meetings when workshops are announced to decide whether or not you want to attend.

VII. Policies and Rules

How should I credit SWAMP in my movies?

Any movie that is made with SWAMP’s help is the sole property of the individual who initiated the project. It is not “A SWAMP Production” and it is not “Aggie SWAMP Club Presents”. You do not have to credit SWAMP at all if you do not want to. However, if you do wish to, the best way to do so is to put “Special Thanks to Aggie SWAMP Club” or a similar message at the end of your credits.

If I am out shooting and am approached by an authority figure, should I tell people that I am in SWAMP?

You’ll have to use your judgment here. Some establishments don’t like people walking around filming things. If you shoot enough films, it is not unlikely that you will get kicked out of some places or asked to leave. If the local owner/authority asks you to leave, please comply in a polite manner, and please do not mention SWAMP. If you are trespassing where you shouldn’t be and get in trouble, it is because of an individual’s decision and not SWAMP’s, and as such we would prefer that SWAMP not get blamed.

On the same note, if you know you are going to be filming in a “questionable” area, please do not wear your official SWAMP T-shirt!

On the other hand, if you approach the management of an establishment BEFORE filming and ask permission, mentioning SWAMP is alright. Businesses and restaurants seem to be more conducive to letting one film if one is part of an official club. There is still a good chance that they will say no. If this happens and you have already identified yourself as a member of SWAMP, please do not attempt to shoot there illegally.

What is SWAMP's policy on using copyrighted material?

The choice to use copyrighted material is, once again, the choice of an individual member of SWAMP. If you are just making the movie for fun to show your friends and family, using copyrighted material is probably ok. (You will certainly not be chastised by SWAMP for using copyrighted music in such a situation so don't worry about that). If you are planning to show the movie at a festival or publish it on a public website, it is probably a better idea to avoid copyrighted material. Some websites and festivals do not care, but many do.

There are plenty of places on the internet where one can find good music and special effects that can be used legally in films. Many of these sites are listed under the Resources section of the SWAMP website. It can be quite rewarding to make a film that you know is completely legit!