

Directing: Mise-en-Scene

CTPR-475 -- Section 18574D -- Fall 2012

Thur 7-10:00 pm RZC Stage A Units: 4 CNTV & Lab Fees: \$125

INSTRUCTOR: MARK ROSMAN

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"The Director's main responsibility....is telling the story. This means finding a structure to the script and setting up events so that they are at once surprising and inevitable. You give the actors direction in order that the actor's actions and interactions illuminate and create those events. The actor has a responsibility....to create truthful behavior while following direction and fulfilling requirements of the script. Actors and Directors must respect each other's creative territory."

Judith Weston, DIRECTING ACTORS (p. 9)

Goals and Objectives: To develop in directors the ability to communicate effectively with actors. No matter how good the other creative elements, unless the actors engage the audience as credible intriguing characters, the film will rarely succeed in *memorable* fashion. In this class, Directors will learn how to shape the essential structure of a scene by breaking it down into its component parts, and how to guide actors into realizing their roles with spontaneous, organic behavior so as to effectively mount the scene in order to best tell the story.

Course Description: This is essentially a "scene study" class. In the initial phase, we will present "open scenes" (scenes with non-specific dialogue). Students will write a scene analysis and prepare the scene for presentation as a director. They will also be in two other open scenes *as an actor* so that they experience both *giving* and *taking* direction.

Each student will also select two scripted dialogue scenes for presentation/rehearsal in class -- the **Midterm Scene** and the **Final Scene**. Both will then be shot & edited outside of class. The Midterm Scene should be from a prescribed list of screenplays; the Final Scene **has the option** of being from other **produced** material, or adapted **published** material (from plays, short stories, poems, etc.), with **prior approval by Instructor**. You may have the Midterm and Final Scenes come from the same screenplay.

The Midterm and Final Scenes will be cast with "outside" actors, and brought into class for intermediate stages of rehearsal work. **It is wasting your and the class's time if you cast friends, classmates, roommates, significant others, etc., who lack legitimate acting training.** The intent is to discover effective

methods of rehearsal, and to develop “an eye” for truthful performance. This rarely happens with the uninitiated.

It is expected that all scenes will be pre-rehearsed outside of class, and that directors utilize scene analysis methods to make specific choices of dramatic elements such as backstory, objectives, key props, wardrobe, etc., so that they enhance authenticity.

The Midterm and Final Scenes will be shot on HD cameras shortly after presentation in class, edited, and then screened in class for final presentation and critique. Both scenes must be accompanied by a Production Notebook which will contain two parts: the **Rehearsal Packet** with a scene analysis, rehearsal plan and script with director's notes is due when the scene is rehearsed in class; the **Shooting Packet** with floor plan, shot list or storyboard, cast, props and wardrobe lists, and director's personal reflections is due when the edited project is screened in class.

Interspersed with these scene study endeavors, reading assignments will be both discussed in-class and tested (take-home).

Required Texts:

DIRECTING ACTORS by Judith Weston

Recommended Reading:

I'LL BE IN MY TRAILER: THE CREATIVE WARS BETWEEN DIRECTORS AND ACTORS by
John Badham and Craig Modderno

A CHALLENGE FOR THE ACTOR by Uta Hagen

ACTING ON FILM by Michael Caine

A SENSE OF DIRECTION by William Ball

Assignments	Instructions/Details	Due Dates
Reading Assignments	Weston	see Weekly Schedule
“Open Scenes”	Rehearse outside of class twice (2 hrs each); present in class with PROPS & COSTUME	Week 2, 9/6 Week 3, 9/13 Week 4, 9/20
"Open Scene" Analysis		Due when presenting scene
Midterm Scene Selection	Read at least TWO complete screenplays from list; submit Midterm Scene choice	Week 3, 9/13
Take Home Quiz	On textbook assignments and class discussion to date	Week 5, 9/27

Workshop Midterm Sc.	Four scenes per night: 7:00, 7:40, 8:30, 9:10 start times	Week 6, 10/4 Week 7, 10/11 Week 8, 10/18
Midterm Scene Rehearsal Packet	Scene Analysis, rehearsal plan, scene with beats/notes	Due when presenting scene
Shoot & Edit Midterm Sc.	Outside of class	Weeks 7 - 10
Screen Midterm Scenes	Six scenes per night	Week 9, 10/25 Week 10, 11/1
Midterm Scene Shooting Packet	Floor plan, storyboard or shot list, cast/wardrobe/prop lists, Director's personal reflections.	Due at screening
Final Scene Selection	Submit Final Sc. choice	Week 9, 10/25
Workshop Final Sc.	Four scenes per night 7:00, 7:40, 8:30, 9:10 start times (Note: Thanksgiving is off – Week 13, 11/22)	Week 11, 11/8 Week 12, 11/15 Week 14, 11/29
Final Sc. Rehearsal Packet	Scene Analysis, rehearsal plan, scene with beats/notes	Due when presenting scene
Shoot & Edit Final Sc.	Outside of class	Weeks 11 - 14
Screen Final Scenes	Six scenes per night	Week 15, 12/6 Last Class, 12/13
Final Scene Shooting Packet	Floor plan, storyboard or shot list, cast/wardrobe/prop lists, Director's reflections.	Due at screening

Grading: ACTIVE participation of students is essential. This entails thorough preparation of exercises and scenes. Grading will be based upon the extent & thoroughness of preparation, all written assignments, the presentations of scenes, and the growth evidenced during the semester.

Class participation	10%
Open Scene Analysis	10%
Open Scene	10%
Take home Quiz	10%
Midterm Scene Production Book	10%
Midterm Scene	20%
Final Scene Production Book	10%
Final Scene	20%

Due Dates: Missing deadlines is generally regarded as unacceptable in the Industry, and so it will be in this class. If you know ahead of time that unavoidable circumstances will prevent “delivery”, you must notify Instructor immediately, and the circumstances must be documented. Likewise, if an unavoidable calamity prevents timely “delivery”, it must be a genuine emergency and again must be documented. Unexcused missed due dates will result in reduction of 2/3 of a grade for each full class period past the original due date.
All papers must be turned in as hard copies. Emails not accepted.

Attendance/Absence: Credit towards your grade cannot -- by University policy -- be given for simply being present. It is expected that you will attend class and participate. If you are unavoidably going to miss class, **Instructor MUST be notified in advance in writing (e-mail). Justifications must be verifiable.** You will be permitted TWO excused absences. Beyond that, you will receive a reduction of 1/3 OVERALL COURSE GRADE per excused absence over two, and per each unexcused absence. **SA will keep track of attendance.**

Late Arrival: If you are later than 10 minutes, you will receive a HALF ABSENCE. **The SA will keep track of late arrivals (and by how long).** IT MAKES IT HARD TO TEACH WHEN EVERYONE ISN'T ON THE SAME PAGE (i.e, you've missed something that prefaces what I'm talking about when you walk in), and IT IS INCONSIDERATE OF YOUR COLLEAGUES. So, please be on time.

Scene workshop scheduling: Once you are scheduled for a time slot in any of the in-class scene workshops (open scenes, midterm and final scenes), the class is counting on you to be there so you **MUST NOT MISS YOUR TIME.** As can happen with professional actors, scheduling conflicts can arise at the last minute that prevent them from coming to class. If this is the case, please inform the SA as soon as you know. Options are to find a substitute actor just for the class workshop, or to ask a fellow student to step in.

Casting note: Because of the potential for scheduling conflicts with professional actors, it is my strong recommendation to choose **TWO TOP CHOICES** for each role. This way, if you run into a problem with your first choice, you will have a back-up.

Notes Regarding Video Projects:

- (1) Students must select scenes they have either never seen produced or haven't seen in at least five years. It is impossible not to be influenced by something you've seen more recently than that.
- (2) Scenes need to be short, between 2-4 pages, two characters, one location.
- (3) Students will have the OPTION of selecting two scenes from the SAME SCRIPT for their respective Midterm & Final Scenes. Scenes should be far enough apart in the story chronology to evidence substantial “character arc”. Compellingly different

(i.e., major story reversal) consecutive scenes require securing prior approval from Instructor. Casting should NOT be the same for the Midterm & Final Scenes.

(4) WE ARE NOT CONCERNED SO MUCH WITH TECHNICAL QUALITY AS WITH THE IMPACT OF THE PERFORMANCES. I recommend trying to optimize sound quality (i.e, use a boom mic if outdoors or in a noisy interior), but you will not benefit grade-wise from “slick” lighting. If you do choose to light, that is for your own purposes. I will, however, take into consideration SHOT SELECTION and CAMERA PLACEMENT & MOVEMENT (hand held) as it enhances the impact of performance.

(5) Students will be responsible for payment of insurance for usage of school equipment.

(6) Students sharing the same production number can work together. Since there is one camera between them, one student can function as the camera operator while the other is directing. As the Director, a student may ELECT to have some-one other than their prod# partner serve as the camera operator, but each student is responsible to serve in that capacity if called upon.

(7) All projects should be presented in-class on DVD.

(8) School-provided video cameras may be reserved in the Zemeckis Center Equipment Room, and you must give 24-hours notice. You may use your own video camera, but equipment failure will not be considered a justification for a missed delivery.

(9) Students may edit their projects in the Avid Express Labs on the Avid Express Pro systems. Two students will be paired on a single drive. You may edit on your own equipment, but again, equipment failure will then not be an acceptable excuse for missed delivery.

SAFETY:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinema-Television Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the Instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The office is in Student Union 301, and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus at his sole discretion.