

CTPR 499 – SPECIAL TOPICS: DIRECTING THE SHORT FILM
SYLLABUS
2 UNITS (18611)

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

SPRING 2013

MEETING TIMES: Mondays, 9am – 12:50pm

CLASSROOM: SCA 110

INSTRUCTORS: James Franco & Vince Jolivette
(meetings outside of class by appointment only)

SCA FACULTY/CLASS COORDINATOR: John Watson (310) 367-6038
jwatson23@mac.com
Office Hours: SCA 438 (by appointment)

STUDENT ASSISTANTS: Stephen Gibler (508) 259-1089
stephen.gibler@gmail.com

Eric Robbins (310) 560-8710
robbinsej@gmail.com

NOTE: THIS CLASS MAY NOT BE AUDITED. Guests must be pre-approved by John Watson before attending the class.

Class Overview:

This class is an opportunity for SCA students with proven directorial skills, in both the BA and MFA programs, to direct a short film under the supervision of James Franco and Vince Jolivette, who will also provide production funds.

Eight students, selected during Fall Semester 2012, will each direct a short film of approximately 10 minutes, based on the following premise: *“Labyrinths: a compendium of character-based original short stories, exploring the unknown, the unexplained and the unimaginable.”*

The scripts have been written by students in SCA’s Writing Division during fall 2012. The directors and writers are expected to collaborate closely throughout the production process, under the guidance of Mr. Franco and Mr. Jolivette.

The films will be produced and edited down to the “final cut” stage of post-production by the end of this course. The eight films *may* subsequently be combined into one feature-length film, at Mr. Franco’s discretion, with the addition of interstitial cinematic sequences. **Final sound mixing, VFX, color timing, titles, etc., will be completed outside of class, during summer and fall 2013. The directors are encouraged, but not required, to be part of this completion process.**

General Guidelines for Crew:

The crew for the productions will consist of paid industry professionals, with precedence given to recent SCA alumni; and some current USC students.

Learning Objectives:

To study directing techniques and gain experience in performance and the use of camera for storytelling, while working with professional actors and crew. To learn the director's responsibility in leadership, vision and knowledge of techniques for motivating performance, blocking for camera, and use of visual and aural elements to create an effective movie, through pre-production, production and editing.

Use of Visual Effects will be encouraged, where appropriate, under the guidance of SCA faculty and industry professionals.

Pre-requisites:

Production Division Graduate students must have completed CTPR 532 Intermediate Directing by the end of Fall semester 2012. Production Division Undergraduate students must have completed CTPR 480 and one of CTPR 475, 476 or 477 by the end of Spring semester 2012.

NOTE: This is a 2-unit Special Topics course and CANNOT substitute for CTPR 546/547; it WILL NOT count towards the 6-unit emphasis requirement for CTPR MFA students.

Grading:

Class is for a letter grade.

Performance of director role: 75%

Grading will be based on several factors: collaboration with the writers (15%), execution of shot lists and storyboards (15%), on-set execution and leadership (15%), collaboration with the editors (15%), and final execution of the film (15%).

Class Participation: 25%

In-class contributions will also be factored into the grading, including weekly class presentation of future plans (15%), and feedback on the work shown by other students (10%).

Copyright on the short films made in the class will be retained by USC.

Directors will send private journals to John Watson via email every Tuesday.

Final Cut:

The eight directors will have the right of final cut on their individual short films, but should they be combined into a feature-length film later, James Franco will have final cut on the longer film, including the right to make any and all changes to the eight short films that he believes necessary for the purpose of completing the longer film.

Equipment and facilities:

It is anticipated that most equipment will be provided by outside vendors, and that the only SCA facilities required will be the classroom. SCA equipment *may* be used at the discretion of Doug Wellman. Cameras will be provided by Red Digital Cinema.

Recommended Reading:

The short stories of Jorge Luis Borges.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Note: This schedule is approximate. It may be adjusted, as required.

Weeks 1-4, PRE-PRODUCTION

Week 1 - Jan 14th

VFX breakdowns and discussion of VFX requirements for all the films. Character breakdowns for casting and discussion of ideas for casting. In concert with the DPs and Production Designers, discussion of the visual style and design of all the films. Directors will present plans for shooting simple test versions of their films. Filming and editing of these tests will be conducted over the following two weeks.

Week 2 - Jan 21st

Martin Luther King holiday, **no class**. Individual and group meetings will be scheduled as required. Continuation of filming and editing of the test versions.

Week 3 - Jan 28th

Screening of edited test versions of the films. Screen selected auditions and review potential casting choices. Review script changes. Discuss production schedule and budget. Review key crew choices. Location search updates. Preliminary production design presentation for Projects 1-4. Commence prep on Projects 1-4.

Week 4 - Feb 4th

Updates on casting, locations and VFX. Updates on schedule and budget. Preliminary production design presentation for Projects 5-8. In-class script read-throughs of Projects 1-4. Commence prep on Projects 5-8. Present plans for weekend camera, sound, wardrobe and make-up tests (Feb 9, 10).

Weeks 5-8, PRODUCTION

During the production phase, dailies will be screened and discussed, and the schedule for the following weekend will be presented and discussed. Directors will provide shot lists and storyboards. There will be ongoing updates on the status of the upcoming films, production design, locations, and VFX considerations.

Week 5 - Feb 11th

Screen test dailies. Updates on casting, production design, locations and VFX. Updates on schedule and budgets. Lock script on Projects 1-4. In-class script read-throughs of projects 5-8. Commence principal photography on Projects 1-2 (Feb 14, 15, 16, 17).

Week 6 - Feb 18th

President's Day – class may be rescheduled. Individual and group meetings will be scheduled as required. Lock scripts on Projects 5-8. Commence principal photography on Projects 3-4 (Feb 21, 22, 23, 24).

Week 7 - Feb 25th

Screen synced dailies for Projects 1-2. Commence principal photography on Projects 5-6 (Feb 28, March 1, 2, 3).

Week 8 - March 4th

Screen synced dailies for Projects 3-4. Commence principal photography on Projects 7-8 (March 7, 8, 9, 10). View editor's cut on Projects 1-2.

Weeks 9-15, POST-PRODUCTION**Week 9 - March 11th**

Screen synced dailies for Projects 5-6. View editor's cut on Projects 3-4.

March 18th – Spring Break. No class.**Week 10 - March 25th**

Screen synced dailies for Projects 7-8. View editor's cut on Projects 5-6. View director's cut on Projects 1-2.

Week 11 - April 1st

View editor's cut on Projects 7-8. View director's cut on Projects 3-4. Discuss pick-up shooting. Discuss music and sound. Progress report on VFX.

Week 12 - April 8th

View director's cut on Projects 5-6. Present plans for pick-up shooting (if approved by instructors). Commence pick-ups/reshoots/additional photography (April 11, 12, 13, 14).

Week 13 - April 15th

Tax day. Screen pick-up dailies. View director's cut on Projects 7-8. Commence conceptualization for interstitial sequences. Sound and VFX updates.

Week 14 - April 22nd

View final cut on Projects 1-4. Review options for interstitial sequences. First pass of tail credits. Confirm composers and sound editors. Lock VFX.

Week 15 - April 29th

View final cut on Projects 5-8. Decide on concept for interstitial sequences. Lock tail credits. Spotting for music and sound.

FINALS: The eight films will be screened during Finals Week in a semi-private screening for invited guests only. (May 8-15)

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is 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 me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html
(213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX)
ability@usc.edu

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Information on intellectual property at USC is available at:

<http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC's Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.