

SYLLABUS

PRACTICUM IN DIRECTING
DIRECTORS AND ACTORS WORK ON CAMERA
Course Number: CTPR 478 Section 18580D
ACTING ON CAMERA: THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS
Course Number: THTR 475 Section 63176D

SPRING 2019

Location: RZC Stage A & RZC Rm. 118
Time: Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.

Instructors:

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I am only impressed when the actor's technique is so perfect that it has become invisible and has persuaded the audience that they are in the presence of a living human being who makes it possible for them to empathize with all his foibles and struggles as they unfold in the play. It is my firm belief that when you are aware of how a feat has been achieved, the actor has failed.

Uta Hagen, A Challenge for the Actor (p. 36)

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

Judith Weston, Directing Actors (p. 9)

Course Description: The major goal in this class, for the directors, is both to be able to analyze and break down a full length screenplay by an author other than yourself and how to communicate that vision to the actors. The major goal for the actors is to understand the differences between acting for the camera and acting for the theater audience and to become comfortable with the craft of acting on film.

Over the course of the semester directors and actors will work together breaking down screenplays and discover in rehearsal, methods to clarify and analyze their scene. In class we will work on rehearsal techniques such as improvisation and beat-to-beat breakdowns. Over the

course of the semester each director will rehearse two scripted scenes and videotape them on location. Both of your scripted scenes will be rehearsed partially in class and partially outside of class. One will be your mid-term assignment and the second will be your final assignment for the class. Reading assignments will be tested over the course of the semester with two take home quizzes. Film clips will be analyzed from week to week and both directors and actors will write journals that will be sent to their individual instructors on a weekly basis over the course of the semester.

Goals and Objectives: This class will touch on the three major aspects of filmmaking. First, conceptual understanding of the story, theme, and dramatic structure of the long form screenplay. Secondly, an exploration of how to illuminate the emotional and psychological relationships of the screen play through both performance the use of visual language. Thirdly, the directors will learn the actor's vocabulary and how to communicate their vision, and the actors will learn how to express that vision through rehearsal and collaboration on set.

The goal is to help the director sharpen their powers of observation, being able to see what has been achieved in the actor's performance and what remains to be worked on. The goal for the actor is to be able to understand what both the director and the writer are trying to communicate and how to incorporate that understanding in their performance. The emphasis of this class will be on communication between director and actor.

Structure: In order to expand our opportunities, our students will learn from each other, directors learning from actors, and actors learning from directors. The scene choices will be limited to 3 scripts in the first half of the semester and 3 new scripts for the second half. This way everyone will have read all of the screenplays and by understanding the material they will be able to learn from other students' rehearsals. This leads to lively discussions of theme and objectives, beats and actions, all of which facilitate broad participation.

Grading: An essential element to the success of this class is the active participation of all students. This entails thorough preparation of exercises and scenes. Grading will be based on the extent of preparation, and the growth and development evidenced by the final project:

Preparation For, and Full Engagement with, Every Session (Includes Commitment, Discipline, Attitude, and Rigor.)	35%
Midterm Project	25%
Take Home Quiz	10%
Final Project	30%

Attendance: No unexcused absences. Because of the highly structured nature of this class, one person's absence makes your team (often 3 people) unable to work. Any absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note. Even if you are sick and have a doctor's note, your absence will not be excused unless you have called the S.A., before 10 p.m., the evening prior to the class meeting, so that alternate arrangements can be made.

An unexcused absence results in a 2/3 grade point being deducted from your grade (meaning one unexcused absence reduces your grade from A to B+).

Late-comers to class will be penalized 1/3 grade point for each late arrival (meaning three late appearances reduces your grade from A to A-).

Don't even think about turning in an assignment late.

Textbooks and Materials:

List of Screenplays:

1st Round:

Clerks

Sunshine Cleaning

Reality Bites

2nd Round:

The Social Network

Juno

Easy A

Required Reading For Directors & Actors:

- Directing Actors by Judith Weston.
- Action by Robert Benedetti (Required only for acting students)

Further Recommended Reading:

Film Directing, Cinematic Motion: A Workshop for Staging Scenes by Steven Katz

A Challenge for the Actor by Uta Hagen.

On Directing by Harold Clurman

A Sense of Direction by William Ball

The Way of the Actor by Don Millman

Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin

Acting: The First Six Lessons by Richard Boleslavski

A Practical Handbook for the Actor by Melissa Bruder & others

Acting on Film by Michael Caine

The Secrets of Screen Acting by Patrick Tucker

The Genius of the System by Tom Shatz

Recommended Viewing at the Cinema School Library:

“American Masters – A Tribute to Sanford Meisner” – CINVID 8715

“Sally Field: Inside the Actor’s Studio” – CINVID 8714

Notes regarding Video Projects:

1. Directors will be responsible for payment of an insurance fee for usage of school equipment.
2. Directors sharing the same production number will work together. Since there is one camera between them, one director will act as the DP when the other directs. As the director, you may arrange to have a person other than the person who shares your production number act as the DP, but you are still responsible to act as the DP for the other director if called upon.
3. The school is no longer fully supporting DVDs. They prefer you use an online link. All projects must be presented in class on DVD or from an online link viewable in class. A DVD copy or a link must be sent or left with the instructors and be given to each of the actors in their scene. The link must be good till Graduation. Students are responsible for ensuring that their DVD’s are able to play on the school provided DVD/mini-DV equipment or that their link is viewable from a browser.
4. The school will be able to provide Canon XA40 digital cameras. Small lighting package will be provided for this class. Also, only a couple of sound kits have been put aside for 475/478, so be sure to reserve them early. If you are shooting on an outside location, especially one that is a working business location, in that situation you must use a sound kit with boom and a

boom operator. Reserve cameras at the equipment center on campus. You must provide ample notice, typically 72 hours, to obtain your camera. Please see Equipment Center Staff, or your SA for more reservation instructions.

5. The school will be able to provide rehearsal space and some access to sound stages for shooting. Make reservations at the Zemeckis Center desk right across from the entrance to Studio A or at Operations in the Steven Spielberg building to reserve space in the SCA facilities.
6. **All directors will burn a watermark disclaimer that will run the length of the project. The disclaimer should read: "This is a classroom exercise and not intended for distribution."**
7. The directors may edit their projects in Post on the Avid Premiere editing bays, which allow mini-digital input and output only. If they have access to outside facilities (e.g., Adobe, Final Cut Pro, etc.), they may use them, however they do so at their own risk as Post facilities will not be able to troubleshoot any technical problems. All directors must undergo a short Post checkout scheduled during the third class meeting, prior to being allowed to use the facilities there. Questions regarding equipment or the schedule should be addressed to the CNTV Production Assistant.
8. Each copy of your project that you give to your actors must have a letter accompanying it with the following wording:

LETTER TO THE ACTORS

Date:

Dear _____,

Please find one copy of our 475/478 class project titled _____
The enclosed DVD or Project Link is a result of an in class project and not intended for placement on the internet, or any kind of public screening outside the classroom, which is prohibited by law. You may share it with, if applicable, your agents, managers, and casting directors.

Because of the exercise nature of this project and in consideration of the rights, legal and ethical, of the original creative forces, please do not place this DVD/project on the internet. In doing so, you may be liable for prosecution by the owners of the copyrights.

Thank you,

A Note from Your Instructors

You will be expected to work hard, both in and out of class. You have a responsibility to yourself, to your fellow directors and actors and to the class as a whole. Together we are a production company – we, instructors, are your producers, the student assistant is the production coordinator/A.D. and you are the talent - the actors and directors. We all have to work together to deliver the product and to keep the chains of communication clear. (i.e. Directors call Actors, Actors call Directors, Director calls S.A.)

in regards to scheduling and then contacts the actor.). You will be expected to push yourself beyond the comfort zone. Class participation, discipline and enthusiasm/rigor will be reflected in how prepared and committed your work is. Absorb criticism and avoid going to a defensive place. The people who process information are the ones who work.

A note to aspiring actors/directors/DPs/producers/writers, etc. - I have never asked an actor/director how good their grades were in high school or college, nor do I know of another actor, director, producer, studio executive, casting director or agent who asks actors/directors about their grade point average. The people that hire you are only interested in what you are able to create and produce, and if you are reliable, responsible and flexible - mentally, emotionally, and physically. However, we are required to give you a letter grade. They can be useful because they give you an idea of how you are doing, and how you are applying yourself in the context of this class, thereby enabling you to maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. As with most things, you will get out of it what you put into it.

"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 when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office is in Student Union 301, and their phone number is (213) 740-0776."

All students are expected to understand and abide by the USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

SCHEDULE CPTR 475/478

WEEK 1: 1/9/19

In class:

Introductions / fill out Contact Sheet

1. Read Syllabus Aloud / Opening packet and Journal information.
2. Short discussion of the script list from which your scenes will be selected. Directors will select 3 scenes from which one will be selected for their first project. Each director's scene selection to be handed in next week.
We will send the scripts out.
3. Assign audition groups – one director, two actors, one assistant director, and two camera people per group.
4. Actors to have their picture and resume for next class.
5. Hand out audition scenes and Weston's opening chapter - Chapter 1 – “Result Direction and Quick Fixes” (pp 13-47).

For the next class:

Actors remember to bring pictures and resumes to next class.

Read Scripts!

Scripts may be read online or in the Doheny Film Library. Scene choices for your First Project choices will be due, (NEXT WEEK), Week Two.

Read Judith Weston's Directing Actors

Chapter 8 – “Casting”

Directors: Read scenes for the auditions next week (to be handed out in class).

WEEK 2 – 1/16/19 - AUDITIONS

In Class:

(Needed for class: 2 cameras and extension cord for monitor, tapes)

Actors will separate and go to Stage D. Directors will stay on Stage A, and both groups will prepare for auditions.

Instructors will brief both groups on the proper protocol for the auditioning process before we hold our own auditions in class.

Auditions will be held on Stage A with 4 groups consisting of two actors, one director, one AD, and two on camera.

Read Robert Benedetti's Action! Acting for Film and Television.

Chapter 1 – “Training for the Camera”

Chapter 2 - “How a Film Is Organized”

Read Judith Weston's Directing Actors

“Introduction” (pp. 13-21).

Scenes for auditioning.

WEEK 3 – 1/23/19 - CASTING

In class:

CASTING.

The class will divide using Stages A & D. Directors will cast the first series of scenes. Actors will review the tapes of the casting sessions. Actors will receive their casting assignments for the first project.

Actors and directors meet to discuss rehearsal schedules and getting the proper scripts. Hand out for directors, “Nine Questions” and Clurman handout.

Read Weston:

Chapter 2 – “Moment to Moment” (49-76)

Chapter 3 – “Listening” (pp 77-90)

Chapter 4 – “Actor’s Choices” (pp 91 – 130)

Read Robert Benedetti’s Action! Acting for Film and Television.

Chapter 3 – “How a Single-Camera Film Is Made”

Chapter 4 – “Shot Size”

WEEK 4 – 1/30/19

In class:

We will view clips from known films, illustrating the director’s use of theme to communicate ideas to his co-workers: editor, cinematographer, designer, composer, etc. Discuss the work done by the director in pre-production up to and including the table read.

Discuss the work done by an actor in preparation, what the actor’s responsibilities are, and on set protocol.

One of the directors and their actors will be selected to do a first reading in class.

Discussion of Beat and Objective breakdowns.

Following the breakdowns, the directors and actors break up into individual scene units with director, production partner and the two actors.

Group A goes first, then Group B.

Handout: “Bill Ball on Objectives”

Read Benedetti:

Chapter 5 – “Teamwork”

Chapter 6 – “Continuity”

Read Weston:

Chapter 7 - “Script Analysis”, (pp 163-234)

Chapter 9 – “Rehearsal” (pp 245 – 278)

WEEK 5 – 2/6/19 – GROUP A REHEARSALS

In class:

Group A presents scenes in class. Divide the class in half on stages A and D. Discussion and critique will follow each scene.

All directors will report what locations have been confirmed. Do they need extra crew?

Have the shooting days been confirmed with actors and crew?

Read Weston:

Appendixes B, “Comedy” and C, “Lists of Action Verbs”, (pp 296-307).

Chapter 6 – Actors’ Resources and Training pp 141 - 159

Read Benedetti:

Chapter 10 – “Actions and Objectives”

Chapter 11 - “ Four Types of Outer Action”

Chapter 12 – “Dramatic Structure”

Chapter 13 – “Emotion”

WEEK 6 – 2/13/19 – GROUP B REHEARSALS

In class:

Group B presents scenes in class. Discussion and critique will follow each scene. Report on condition of locations, crew, and shooting dates.

Class divides in two, using Stages A & D

Group A shoots this week.

Read Weston:

Reread Chapter 1 Result Direction and Quick Fixes pp 13 – 46

For next week: Assign roles for Open Scenes to be shot in class next week.

WEEK 7 – 2/20/19 – OPEN SCENES

In class:

Needed for class: 2 cameras and extension cord for monitor.

Assigned In-Class Production of open scenes.

Group B shoots this week.

Read Weston:

Chapter 10 Shooting & Epilogue pp 281-293

For next week:

Read 2nd set of scripts for final project.

Scene selection due Week 9.

WEEK 8 2/27/19 – SCREEN GROUP A SCENES

In class: (Camera and Monitor. Scene Evaluation Criteria on board.)

1. View Group A mid-term video projects in class. Discuss and critique
2. Group A hands in mid semester production workbooks.

For next week: Read 2nd set of scripts for final project due Week 9.

WEEK 9 – 3/6/19 – SCREEN GROUP B SCENES

In class: (Camera and Monitor. Scene Evaluation Criteria on board.)

1. View Group B mid-term video projects in class. Discuss and critique
2. Group B hands in mid-semester production workbooks.

Read Weston:

Chapter 5 Structure: Transitions, Events, and Through-Lines pp 133-141

Handout Take Home Quiz for Actors and Directors.

Discuss casting for Final Projects.

SPRING BREAK 3/11 – 3/17

WEEK 10 – 3/20/19 - CASTING

In class:

(Camera and Monitor with extension cord. Write schedule on board.)

Directors will cast scenes.

Actors separately will discuss problems and discoveries in shooting process

Actors and Directors separate to stage A and D.

Actors and Directors meet and discuss scene selection and arrange schedules

Blocking for the camera: discuss the moving master and show clips. Cold Reading.

WEEK 11 – 3/27/19

In class:

Discuss moving master and show clips.

(Camera and Monitor with extension cord. Write schedule on board.)

Actors and Directors separate to stage A and D to do first readings of new scenes.

Actors and Directors check on schedules.

Discuss blocking for the camera.

WEEK 12 – 4/3/19 – GROUP B REHEARSALS

In class:

Group B presents scenes in class. Divide class in half using stages A and D. Discuss blocking for the camera.

Discuss shooting dates and location.

WEEK 13 – 4/10/19 – GROUP A REHEARSALS

In class:

Group A presents scenes in class. Divide class in half using stages A and D. Discuss blocking for the camera continued.

Group A Shoots

Assignment: Assign teams for Open Scenes for second In-Class Productions.

WEEK 14 – 4/17/2019 – OPEN SCENES

In class:

(2 cameras and monitor with extension cord.)

Actors and directors will discuss problems in rehearsal and in shooting.

Demonstration on problem-solving in pre-production and production.

Demonstrate intimacy exercise.

Open Scenes shot in class.

WEEK 15 – 4/24/19 – SCREEN GROUP B SCENES

In class:

1. View Group B's Final Video projects and critique in class.
2. Group B hands in Final Production Workbook.

Hand in DVD copies of, or links to, final project to instructors. DVD copies or links prepared for actors

WEEK 16 – 5/1/19 – EXAM PERIOD – SCREEN GROUP A SCENES

In class:

1. View Group A's Final Video projects and critique in class.
2. Group A hands in Final Production Workbook.
3. Hand in DVD copies of, or links to, final project to instructors. DVD copies or links prepared for actors.

ALTERNATE FINAL EXAM DATE – Monday, May 6, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.