

INTERMEDIATE DIRECTING: TECHNIQUES

CTPR-533 -- Fall 2019

Section #18638D Tue 7:00 - 10:30 RZC Stg D Units: 2 Lab Fee: \$300
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Prerequisite: CTPR-532 Intermediate Directing (CTPR-475, grade A or A-).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

THE VISUAL STORY by Bruce Block
MASTER SHOTS (volumes 1,2 & 3) by Christopher Kenworthy
MAKING MOVIES by Sidney Lumet
FILM DIRECTING FUNDAMENTALS by Nicholas T. Proferes
FINE ON ACTING: A VISION OF THE CRAFT by Howard Fine
THE POWER OF THE ACTOR by Ivana Chubbuck
THE INTENT TO LIVE by Larry Moss

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This is a second semester of Intermediate Directing, intended to prepare the student for advanced projects. Objectives are: (1) to consolidate key principles from earlier classes re: actor performance; (2) to layer upon them considerations of staging and camera blocking & technique as concrete tools for “visualization“ of scenes, whether “pre-“ or “on-set“; (3) to solidify a grasp of practical & procedural considerations in applying the foregoing to dialogue scenes; and (4) to utilize technique to create tension-escalating “Sequences“, which I consider the organizing component of complete films. Short films are actually one to three (or so) sequences; as are the “First Acts“ of feature films.

The “Scene“ is the fundamental building block. That said, the “Sequence“ -- a series of scenes and/or shots “driving“ to a single Story point or Character turn, revelation, or resolution -- is the structural “beam“ of filmic storytelling.

At the root of both lies the concept of “Moment“. A Director must have an acute awareness of each & every significant Moment -- be it internal to a Character, between Characters, or across Scenes; be it purely for Spectacle (“Wow“ factor), be it Narrative (plot) or be it Thematic -- and the task is to decide how best to *delineate & articulate* Moments “*in correct proportion*“ to create “**progressions**“ **supporting the storytelling**. These choices in articulation -- conscious or intuitive -- in performance & staging, timing, camera position & movement, shot size, lens choice, lighting, etc. manifest as the style of the Director. Thus, the consideration of a Moment’s significance lies at the root of the craft of Directing.

The goal for this course should be to demonstrate mastery of effective film sequences, such that one can then advance to building entire films.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

I have a strong preference for original material (over previously published and/or produced). Since many are in preparation of Advanced Projects, it is encouraged to utilize this class to “workshop” material that students are considering for that purpose. Students may also want to shoot material they have chosen for later pursuit (like a “proof-of-concept” short). Selected scenes -- like the opening sequence -- from a feature script you have written (or have access to) may serve you well. MAINLY, choose material in which you have some long-range interest. NOTE: you MUST have the rights to whatever material you pursue.

*THESE PROJECTS MAY BE “FESTIVAL ELIGIBLE”, BUT CHECK W/ STUDENT-INDUSTRY RELATIONS. **THEY ARE INTENDED AS CLASS EXERCISES -- YOU SHOULD BUDGET/LIMIT THE SCOPE, AS ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AID WILL NOT BE GRANTED – DON’T EVEN ASK.***

(1) Each student makes **one video project**: Finished projects will be SEQUENCES OF SCENES, 3 to 5 preferably consecutive scenes (6-10 script pages). Edited sequences will be screened & critiqued in Final Screening sessions. Re-edits may be screened, as time permits.

In preparation, students may “workshop” one or two scenes from the Sequence, in class & with props & wardrobe, preferably with the actors cast in the roles.

Each workshopping Director should prepare a detailed shooting plan utilizing OVERHEAD DIAGRAMS, indicating anticipated actor movements & camera positions, as well as a Shot List. Copies **must** be emailed to all members of the class in advance. During workshops, we will block the actor & camera positions; then, utilizing multiple cameras and a line-switcher, we will examine pre-vized version. As time allows, we will explore alternative stagings, with class input.

(2) Each student will also be responsible for a “**Scene Breakdown**” (SBD). SBDs are “deconstructions” of the camerawork involved in scenes from produced films that you find particularly notable & effective. You must bring in the film clip, and some form of storyboard, which you have “worked backward” to a shot list, and then to OVERHEAD DIAGRAMS of the set-ups. All prep work should be emailed to the class in advance. You will screen & analyze these clip in class.

(2A) Alternatively to the SBD – or in addition if you choose, for extra credit – any student may produce & shoot a “One-er” (a la “Birdman”) project from either existing or original material, to be screened in-class, utilizing your class production number. Details will be discussed in the first class session.

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SCHEDULE

Exact scheduling will depend on the final enrollment number of the class. In general, the first three sessions will consist of lectures, discussions, screening of clips & analysis, and demos. STUDENT-DELIVERED WORK STARTS in Wk 4, when in-class "Scene Breakdowns" (SBDs) commence. SBDs are a visual analysis (via "frame-grab" storyboards) and shot/set-up/actor blocking analysis (via "overhead diagrams").

The first **(2)** in-class workshops will begin the sixth week (**10/1**), with the shot- & edited-sequence due as much as 11 calendar weeks later (**12/11 or 12/12**). In succeeding weeks, we will schedule two workshops per night, with the shot and edited material due **NO LESS THAN FOUR WEEKS AFTER** the workshop.

The following schedule will serve as a starting point, to be modified according to enrollment. Assuming 16 students, and assuming one project & one SBD each:

Wk 1 - 8/27	Intro, Sched, clips/discussion.	
Wk 2 - 9/3	Lecture/demo -- Actors, blocking & staging	
Wk 3 - 9/10	Prod #s, Lecture/demo	
Wk 4 - 9/17	Lecture/demo	SBD 1, 2
Wk 5 - 9/24	Lecture/demo	SBD 3, 4
Wk 6 - 10/1	Workshop 1, 2	SBD 5, 6, 13
Wk 7 - 10/8	Workshop 3, 4	SBD 7, 8, 14
Wk 8 - 10/15	Workshop 5, 6	SBD 9, 10, 15
Wk 9 - 10/22	Workshop 7, 8	SBD 11, 12, 1
Wk 10 - 10/29	Workshop 9, 10	tbd
Wk 11 - 11/5	Workshop 11, 12, 13	tbd
Wk 12 - 11/12	Workshop 14, 15, 16	tbd
Wk 13 - 11/19	spillover day	tbd
Wk 14 - 11/26		tbd
Wk 15 - 12/3		Early Screenings???
Wk 16 - 12/10	Tue STUDY DAY Wed/Thu 12/11 & 12/12 tbd -- <u>Final Screenings</u>	

Thanksgiving Holiday 11/27 to 12/1

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CASTING

Please forewarn actors that in-class work includes considerable camera & staging, so they will be “standing in”. They usually find this instructive.

GRADING

Workshop: 15% Video: 65% Breakdown: 10% Participation: 10%
Missing “delivery dates” will not be excused except for documented medical and/or personal emergencies. THIS MEANS YOU MUST HAVE “PLAN Bs” FOR CASTING. Instructor reserves the right to not accept late assignments. IF YOU ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS, NOTIFY INSTRUCTOR AND S.A. IMMEDIATELY.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to be on time & prepared for class. Two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of one full grade. A third unexcused absence will result in an additional full grade. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in an additional full grade. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

SAFETY & RESTRICTIONS

All students are expected to abide by SCA Safety Guidelines. Violations may result in disciplinary action ranging to expulsion from the University. MAKE SPECIAL NOTE of policy regarding the use of minors, cars, or weapons which require studio teachers or an off-duty police officer(s).

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 Instructor (or S.A.) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

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, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

HYPERLINK

"<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>"<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. 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: HYPERLINK "<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>"<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed. <https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence>.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086 equity.usc.edu,
titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421 studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support.

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking

needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710 studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu.

Non-emergency assistance or information:

Diversity and Inclusion:

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

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.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX.

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