**CTPR 478: Practicum in Directing**

# Units: 2 units

**Spring 2020—Tuesdays—7:00PM‐10:00PM Location:** USC School of Cinematic Arts, SCE STAGE 1, 900 W 34th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90007

# Instructor: Robert Townsend

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**Office Hours:** By Appointment

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# Course Description

In the early part of the semester, lectures on various aspects of directing, acting and rehearsing will lay the groundwork for students to cycle newfound knowledge into their practical scene study work. Readings from Weston’s “Directing Actors” will help reinforce concepts from the lectures and provide alternate approaches. The majority of the class centers around each student selecting two scripted, two‐person scenes to rehearse in front of the class: first the “Midterm Scene” and later the “Final Scene”. The “Final Scene” is to be cast, shot, and edited outside of class, then screened for feedback and discussion.

# Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The primary goal of this course is for students to develop the ability to communicate effectively with actors. Students will learn how to break down a scene using textual analysis and collaborate with actors to achieve spontaneous, organic behavior to best tell the given story.

**Prerequisite(s):** CTPR 310

# Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Judith Weston: *Directing Actors*

Angela Nichols: *99 Film Scenes for Actors* ‐ to select the scenes ‐ REQUIRED!

# Description and Assessment of Assignments

For the Midterm Scene, students will select a scene from the book “99 Film Scenes for Actors”. Please note: it is *detrimental* to watch the films that scenes are from – students are urged to resist the temptation for mimicry, and do their own work.

Both scenes shall be accompanied by a “Director’s Book”, containing two parts:

1. “**Analysis Packet**” (screenplay, character and scene analysis) \*\*Due by email at **8PM** the night before the scene is rehearsed in class\*\* ‐ MIDTERM AND FINAL SCENE!!!
2. “**Shooting Packet**” (shot list, overhead diagram, floor plan, hour‐by‐hour schedule, conclusions) \*\*Due by email at **8PM** the night before the scene is screened in class\*\* This should be sent to the SA. ‐ FINAL SCENE ONLY!!!

Both assignments require students to read the entire script of a selected scene. Students are also expected to hold auditions outside of class, and cast the scene with the best actors available. Students will learn more about themselves and their craft by collaborating with experienced, talented and professional actors. Working with non‐ actors, or casting roommates in the eleventh hour, will likely lead to a learning experience squandered.

Students are expected to meet and rehearse with actors outside of class. On their scheduled date, students bring in their actors and stage scenes in an active rehearsal in front of class, with props and costumes. Outside of class, students will then shoot and edit their scenes, which will later be discussed and critiqued on their selected screening dates.

Before the in‐class rehearsal of the scene, the director will present a five‐ minute analysis of their scene explaining how they analyzed and broke down the scene.

# Grading Breakdown

Students’ active participation is an essential component to this course, and vital to its overall success. Grading will be based on the following criteria, with the most emphasis given to students’ overall growth throughout the semester:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Points** |  | **% of Grade** |  |
| Final Scene (Director’s Book, Rehearsal, Edited Project) |  | 45 |  | 45% |
| Midterm Scene (Director’s Book, Rehearsal) |  | 40 |  | 40% |
| Class Participation, Discipline, Commitment |  | 15 |  | 15% |
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|  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | 100 | 100% |

# Grading Scale (Example)

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 95‐100 |
| A‐ | 90‐94 |
| B+ | 87‐89 |
| B | 83‐86 |
| B‐ | 80‐82 |
| C+ | 77‐79 |
| C | 73‐76 |
| C‐ | 70‐72 |
| D+ | 67‐69 |
| D | 63‐66 |
| D‐ | 60‐62 |
| F | 59 and below |

**Production Division Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class or contact the Production Office at (213) 740‐3317.

# Rehearsal/Casting Notice

Once scheduled for Midterm and Final Scenes, students may not miss their time slot for any reason. As happens with professional actors, scheduling conflicts may arise at the last minute that prevent them from coming to class. To prepare for this, it is highly recommended that students have a backup choice for each role they are casting.

# Notes Regarding Shooting Midterm and Final Scenes

1. Directors will be responsible for insurance payment for usage of school equipment.
2. Students with the same production numbers are invited to work together in groups, but directors may NOT act as their own camera operators. It is not possible to shoot and pay attention to performance at the same time.
3. All projects must be presented in a format playable in class. Check with the student assistant ahead of time if there are any doubts.
4. The school may be able to supply cameras, provided students give proper notice and consult with the student assistant. Using personal cameras is permitted, but students are responsible for ensuring that outside equipment must be compatible for editing purposes – whether in the AVID lab or on another system.
5. The school may be able to provide rehearsal and casting/audition space. Students should consult with SCA Operations.
6. Directors are responsible for finding locations and obtaining permission to shoot.
7. Good sound must be recorded for all scenes. While the on‐camera mic may work in a controlled interior environment, students must use boom mics if filming outdoors or in compromised interiors.
8. Directors may edit projects in the AVID lab after going through orientation. If they have access to other sources they may use them, but no tech support will be provided for problems arising with outside equipment or software. It is the responsibility of students to ensure videos will transfer properly, and be viewable on our machines. Questions regarding equipment should be addressed to the student assistant.
9. Directors are required to make DVDs or digital files of edited scenes for actors.

# Safety Rules

All students are expected to understand and abide by 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. Please make special note of policy regarding the use of minors, weapons, or cars––which may require the employment of a studio teacher or an off‐duty police officer. NOTE: For this class, any scene which takes place in a car (moving or stationary) must be re‐located.

Your personal safety and that of your cast and crew is vitally important as you plan and shoot your projects. You are responsible to read the Safety Rules for Student Productions Handbook and abide by the policies that apply to CTPR 478. If you have any questions or concerns, please check with your directing faculty before shooting. Violation of any safety policies may result in disciplinary action such as confiscation of footage, lowering of your grade, failing the class, appearance before the Academic Discipline Committee and even expulsion from the University.

The following require a Hazardous Shooting Conditions Form (which can be found on the SCA Community website in the Student Production Resources Section): stunts, special effects, animals, breaking of glass, fire (including candles and smoking), prop weapons, minors, nudity, fog machines, and water work. Actions that might seem safe under normal circumstances (e.g., hurrying down stairs or crossing an uncontrolled street) may not be under production.

Never leave equipment unattended, and take extra care when shooting at night. Don’t store equipment in a car, not even the trunk.

Placing actors in jeopardy of any kind is punishable by failure and possible expulsion even if the actors agree to the situation. Stunts and Effects must be cleared through faculty and properly supervised on your set with written permits. If your actors are doing anything other than sitting or walking, talk to your instructor.

Production Safety Guidelines, The Student Handbook, and the Pre‐Production Hazardous Shooting Form and other documents are available at: [http://scacommunity.usc.edu.](http://scacommunity.usc.edu/) Faculty Sign‐Off sheets are required for all Hazardous shooting conditions prior to production, including shoots with minors and studio teachers.

# FAIR USE GUIDELINES

In order for this class to use copyrighted material, everyone must adhere to the following:

# AUDITIONS

When casting and putting notices up in any public forum, students must not enter the title or the name of the writer, if it is a published screenplay. In place of the title of the screenplay your scene is from, you can call it anything you want that will draw attention – just boil your scene down to a couple of words that describe the essence of the scene (e.g. “The Confrontation”, “Worlds Apart”, “The Final Decision”, “Make or Break”, etc.) and then make the character and scene descriptions (use the real characters’ first names) very specific and compelling. Be sure to mention that the scene will be filmed, that they will receive a copy, and that it will be workshopped in front of the class and professor. Note that this is the official policy of USC School of Cinematic Arts and is intended to protect our right to use the best of the professional screenplays for our scene work.

# SCREENING

1. The version of the edited scene you screen must have the following line burned in (like a subtitle) at the bottom of the image from first frame to last: CLASSROOM EXERCISE, NOT INTENDED FOR DISTRIBUTION. It needs to be in a font and size that makes it readable from a reasonable viewing distance. Place it at the bottom of frame so it is as minimally distracting as possible. If you don't know how to do this, ask the monitor in the lab. Please note, this sort of thing is also done to protect screeners sent to Academy members for the Oscars and the Emmys.
2. Because these projects are considered exercises for class use, do not put any credits whatsoever to accompany the scene – not your name, not the actors' names, crew, school, instructor, etc. Again, these are exercises, not showcases.
3. The instructor cannot screen any scene that does not adhere to these guidelines.
4. To protect themselves, students should also give actors a copy of the scene which follows these guidelines. Under no circumstances should you provide any actor with anything but the edited scene with the watermark displayed throughout.

# Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Topics/Daily Activities** | **Readings and Homework** | **Deliverable/ Due Dates** |
| **Week 1 (1/15)** | Introduction/Contact Info Discuss syllabus and schedule/housekeeping | Refer to Email for Group Assignments |  |
| **Week 2****(1/22)** | Lecture; Guidelines to Selecting Midterm Scene; Searching for the Event; Screen Scenes – Do Breakdown together | Group A selects scene and casts scene for in‐class rehearsal *next week* (email completed Analysis Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group B selects scene. |  |
| **Week 3****(1/29)** | Group A Midterm Scene In‐Class Rehearsal | Group B selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class |  |
|  | Prepare Analysis Packet to present for your scene | rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group C selects scene. |  |
| **Week 4 (2/05)** | Group B Midterm Scene In‐Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet to present for your scene | Group C selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group D selects scene. |  |
| **Week 5****(2/12)** | Group C Midterm Scene In‐Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet to present for your scene | Group D selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group E selects scene. |  |
| **Week 6 (2/19)** | Group D Midterm Scene In‐Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet to present for your scene | Group E selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group A selects final scene. |  |
| **Week 7 (2/26)** | Group E Midterm Scene In‐Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet to present for your scene | Group A selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group B selects final scene. |  |
| **Week 8 (3/04)** | Group A Final Scene In‐ Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet to present for your scene | Group B selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group C selects final scene. |  |
| **Week 9 (3/11)** | Group B Final Scene In‐ Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet to present for your scene | Group C selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group D selects final scene. |  |
| **Week 10 (3/18)** | SPRING BREAK! | ENJOY YOUR BREAK! :) |  |
| **Week 11****(3/25)** | Group C Final Scene In‐ Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet to present for your scene | Group D selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group E selects final scene. |  |
| **Week 12****(4/01)** | Group D Final Scene In‐ Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet to present for your scene | Group E selects casts and rehearses scene for in‐class rehearsal next week (email completed Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet for your scene to SA by Monday at 8PM). SA will send out sheet for preferred time slots.Group A and B shoot and edit final scene. |  |
| **Week 13****(4/08)** | Group E Final Scene In‐ Class Rehearsal Prepare Analysis Packet and Shooting Packet to present for your scene | Groups A, B, and C complete filmed final scene for presentation next week (please bring completed film on flash drive to class)Groups D and E shoot and edit final scene |  |
| **Week 14****(4/15)** | Groups A, B, and C screen final scene (whichever we don’t get to will screen next class) | Groups D and E complete filmed final scene for presentation next class (please bring completed film on flash drive to class) |  |
| **Week 15 (4/22)** | Groups C, D, and E screen final scene | NONE |  |
| **FINAL** | No Additional Final Exam Day! |  |  |