

CTPR 478: Practicum in Directing (18584)

Units: 2

Spring 2022 | Tuesdays | 7:00-9:50 PM

Location: SCE Stage 1

Zoom (1/11 class): <https://usc.zoom.us/j/92001775548>

Instructor: **Tim Kirkman**

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## Course Description

Throughout the course of the semester, directors will complete a variety of assignments, which will help them develop working methods for directing actors on screen. Our goal will be to increase awareness, sharpen the senses of seeing and hearing, clarify what the student wants from the actor, explore methods of getting it, recognize whether it has truly been achieved, and learn ways to adapt. Emphasis will be on communication between the director and performer, as well textual analysis of scene work. Through analytical preparation coupled with class exercises and rehearsal, the director should learn to communicate concepts to the actor and realize that vision incorporating blocking and camera.

## Learning Objectives

Unless the actor engages the audience, a film will rarely succeed, no matter how good the script, how experienced the cinematographer, or how inventive the production designer. In 478, students will learn how to find the structure of a scene and break it down into its component parts, discover how to use their most valuable asset (the actors) to enable them to create the performance and support the intent of the scene through creative use of camera, and actively participate in acting exercises, thereby gaining a greater understanding of the acting process.

## Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will need to be able to film and edit scenes for presentation. You may use whatever software you are comfortable with. Please discuss output format with the SA.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

DIRECTING ACTORS by Judith Weston.

- **Casting Scenes:** Students are advised to hold auditions and cast the best actors available. The purpose of this class is to improve your ability to work with actors (performers who take their craft seriously) and students are graded for in-class rehearsals for both P1 and P2 projects. (Should we

say that students will be graded for their P1 and P2 assignments, I think we're only doing in class rehearsal for P2 so it might be confusing to say that it's for both P1 and P2)

#### • **NOTES REGARDING PROJECTS**

1. Directors are responsible for payment of the insurance for usage of school equipment.
2. All projects should be presented in class via Vimeo Link (password protected).
3. You can use your own equipment or the school can provide camera [and sound equipment located at PEC](#). You must give them proper notice before you can [rent out equipment](#) (consult with our SA). The focus of the class is the scene work with actors, not on equipment.
4. Consult with Operations at SCA about on-campus rehearsal spaces. Auditions for non-USC students should be conducted on Zoom or held remotely.
5. Directors are responsible for finding locations and obtaining permission to shoot there.
6. While the on-camera mic may work in a controlled interior environment, you should use a boom mic if recording outdoors or in a compromised interior location. The best method is to recruit other students in this class ([and outside of class as well?](#)) to help each other film scenes and watch each other work.
7. Directors may edit their projects in whatever application they choose. It is student's responsibility to ensure that final cut will transfer properly and uploaded to vimeo (or equivalent). Please address all questions regarding equipment or the schedule to the SA.
8. All directors are required to provide a digital file, dupes of their edited scenes for the actors.
9. All USC health and safety protocols must be followed.
10. All videos must begin in five seconds of BLACK SCREEN.

#### **Grading Breakdown**

Participation is essential in this class. This entails thorough preparation of exercises and scenes. Grading will be based upon the extent and thoroughness of preparation, as well as the quality of written assignments and projects, professionalism of rehearsal of scenes, and growth during the semester.

#### **Project Descriptions and Grading Breakdown**

- **Analyzing a film, shot by shot.** Students select a narrative (scripted) short film (under 5 minutes), share the link with the class. Everyone will watch and analyze based on techniques demonstrated in class. You will be required to watch all of the short films that the other students select and provide written responses to all of the shorts based on the instructor's in-class demonstration. No more than one page, keep it VERY simple. (5%)
- **Scene Analysis.** Students select a 2-3 page scene from a feature length screenplay and analyze it based on instructor demonstration in class, as well as Judith Weston's techniques in the text book. You will hand in a scene analysis of your selected scene. (5%)
- **P1, part 1: Filmed Rehearsal or Audition:** Students will select a two-person scene from a feature length screenplay. Students should read the entire screenplay and take their selected scene, break down the dramatic values of the scene, and audition THREE ACTORS minimum for the same role, over Zoom. You will need a READER to play the other character in the scene. You will highlight on Zoom ONLY THE AUDITIONING ACTOR'S ZOOM WINDOW and record it. All other windows will be invisible. Run the scene 2 or 3 times, giving adjustments to the actor. Select the best take from ONE ACTOR to screen in class. This should be the actor you would like to cast. (Important: you will watch the actor, not the script; it is the job of the Reader to follow along with the script, not the director. Your job is to observe the performance). (10%)

• **P1, part 2: Filmed Coverage.** Now you should cast that actor! You will now work with the actor in person in a rehearsal setting. Work on the entire scene, beat by beat. Once you feel ready, FILM THE SCENE. You can do this sitting at a table or you can get the scene on its feet and shoot in a real location. The important thing is that you are filming ONLY that actor's side of the performance, also known as their "coverage" of the scene. Adjust the actor and shoot at least THREE different takes with variations. Select the best takes from parts of the scene to show in class. This exercise will require that you enlist the help of a READER (for the other role) and a CAMERA OPERATOR (15%)

• **P2 — Final Directing Project, Part 1: Cast and Rehearse** Students select a 2-CHARACTER, 2-3 page scene from a produced screenplay approved by the instructor. Analyze the dramatic values of the scene. Students cast their scenes and bring their actors to the Stage and Rehearse it in front of the class. You are not required to have rehearsed it outside of class beforehand; this can be your first time working with them. But you must be PREPARED TO DIRECT and LEAD THE REHEARSAL. You must make all arrangements for the guest actors, including parking, vaccination requirements or COVID testing. If you need help, reach out to the SA. You may also use other directing students in these scenes if the actors cannot come to campus for some reason, but all of this must be pre-arranged and ready for class time. No exceptions. (20%)

• **P2 — Final Directing Project, Part 2: Film and Cover the Scene** Students film their chosen two-person scene in a location with the actors. Cover the scene as you see fit. The important part is not the cinematography or sound, though you should get the best quality you can. The focus is on PERFORMANCE. You may not shoot your own project or act in it. You must direct and edit this project. Someone else must be the camera operator. They do not have to be enrolled in 478. Films will be screened in class for notes. (25%)

• **P2 — Final Directing Project, Part 3: Post Production** Students re-cut the scene based on feedback from classmates and instructor. Again, focus is on performances. (5%)

• **Professionalism** Students will be grades on participation, attitude, adherence to deadlines, etc. (15%)

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**100% TOTAL**

### **Grading Scale (Example)**

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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|----|--------------|
| A  | 94-100       |
| A- | 90-93        |
| B+ | 87-89        |
| B  | 84-86        |
| B- | 80-83        |
| C+ | 77-79        |
| C  | 74-76        |
| C- | 70-73        |
| D+ | 67-69        |
| D  | 64-66        |
| D- | 60-63        |
| F  | 59 and below |

## Assignment Rubrics

- **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 and SA immediately, and the circumstances must be documented. Likewise, if an unavoidable situation prevents timely “delivery,” it must be evaluated and documented. Discuss alternate solutions with instructor. Late work will be graded and then lowered a grade for every day the assignment is late. Any work a week late gets an F.
- **Formatting.** All written assignments must be turned in as PDFs to the SA unless specified by the instructor. These must be loaded into the Google Drive by due date and time indicated in the semester calendar. LINK: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1On-Afm7nyj9QI4Un9WAEZrAoSPDliX5I6?usp=sharing>
- **Attendance/Absence:** It is expected that you will attend class, and if you are unavoidably going to miss class, Instructor and SA must be notified in advance via e-mail. Justifications must be verifiable. You will be permitted ONE unexcused absence (meaning you do not have to give a reason for it), but will still receive (0) points for participation that day because it is impossible to make up in-class work. Beyond that, you will receive a reduction of 1/3 OVERALL COURSE GRADE per 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). Please be on time.

## Equipment and Cameras

If you're planning on renting a camera for this class you have access to a **Canon XA-20 camera kit** and a **Libec/Manfrotto 503 tripod kit**. In order to rent any equipment out you will need to create a production number and review the insurance agreement. The camera rental center is located in the '*Production Equipment Center*' building on the second floor. You need to go in person and fill out a '*Practicum Classes Equipment Reservation Form.*' Reservations should be made at least 48 hours in advance. Craig McNelley should be able to assist you and answer any questions you may have ([mcnelley@usc.edu](mailto:mcnelley@usc.edu)).

## Safety

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 (refer to <http://scacommunity.usc.edu> ). If you have any questions or concerns, please check with your directing faculty and SA 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.

## Hazardous Shooting Conditions

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. Working with children require hiring a welfare worker with no exceptions. Additionally, actions that might seem safe under normal circumstances (e.g., hurrying down stairs or crossing an uncontrolled street) may not be under production circumstances. Faculty Sign-Off sheets are required for all Hazardous shooting conditions prior to production. Never leave equipment unattended and take extra care when shooting at night. And never store equipment in a car, not even in the trunk.

## **Fair Use Guidelines**

In order for this class to use copyrighted material, we need to adhere to the following:

### **Auditions**

When casting and putting your casting notice up on any public forum, you will not be able to enter the title of the piece or the name of the writer if it is an already 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 of Scenes**

**A.** The version of the edited scene you screen and distribute to crew and actors 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. The text needs to be in a font and size that makes it readable from a reasonable viewing distance. Place it at the bottom of the frame so that it is as minimally distracting as possible.

**B.** Please note: We cannot screen any scene that does not adhere to these guidelines.

|  | <b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>   | <b>Homework</b>  |
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| <b>Week 1</b><br><b>1/11</b><br><b>VIA</b><br><b>ZOOM</b><br><b>LINK</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation/Syllabus</li> <li>• Expectations for semester</li> <li>• SA discusses the room and logistics for campus auditions and equipment.</li> </ul> <p><u>Presentation:</u> What is the role of the director? What are the expectations of cinema from an audience?</p> | <p>Assignment: Students select a narrative (scripted) short film (under 5 min). Watch it and do the exercise demonstrated in class. Add the link to the short film on the SHEET Document provided by the SA by THURSDAY 1/13. You will be required to watch all of the short films that the other students select and provide written responses to all of the shorts based on the instructor's in-class demonstration. No more than one page, keep it VERY simple. Upload your assignment to your drive folder.</p>  |
| <b>Week 2</b><br><b>1/18</b>   | <p><u>In class exercise:</u> SA answers any questions about on-campus logistics.</p> <p><u>Presentations:</u> Discussion of the short films that were assigned and screened. What is the short ABOUT? What are the THEMES? Who is the MAIN CHARACTER? What is the TONE?</p>  | <p><u>Reading:</u> Ch. 2 working Moment to Moment with the actor in Weston</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Find a 2-character, short scene from an existing feature film screenplay that you are interested in directing as an exercise. It should be something you have not seen, if possible, something you are less familiar with. Read the scene. Print it. Write on the pages some of the answers to the questions raised in the first exercise – what is the scene about? what are the themes? what is the central conflict? identify the main character and what they want. What are the obstacles?</p> |
| <b>Week 3</b><br><b>1/25</b>   | <p><u>Discussion:</u><br/>Auditions are all about preparation. Fears about casting and working with actors and crew.</p> <p><u>In-class exercise:</u> Students come to class prepared to discuss their own scene analysis and work to refine it.</p>   | <p><u>Reading:</u> Ch. 4, Weston – Actor's Choices.</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Find a scene you wish to direct for your P1. Write character breakdowns for the scene. Upload to our CTPR 478 Google Drive folder by 7 PM on 1/31, the day before class.</p> <p><b><u>START CASTING BY POSTING CASTING NOTICES TO RECORD VIA ZOOM.</u></b></p>   |

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| <p><b>Week 4</b><br/><b>2/1</b></p>  | <p><u>Presentation:</u> Instructor brings two actors in to workshop a scene; demos of audition, table read.</p> <p><u>In-class discussion:</u> Students should come to class with their scenes and bring questions for preparation for their P1 auditions/casting.</p> | <p><u>Reading:</u> Weston: Ch. 8 (casting)</p> <p><u>Group 1 and 2</u> begin P1. Audition THREE people for the same role. You may do this on Zoom or in person, but it must be recorded. Enlist a reader to read the other role during the audition. You will select one moment in the recorded audition to screen for class.</p> <p><b>P1 GROUPS: <a href="#">Click Here</a></b></p> |
| <p><b>Week 5</b><br/><b>2/8</b></p>  | <p><u>Presentation:</u> Instructor will demonstrate getting a rehearsal to its feet and blocking a scene for production.</p>   | <p><u>Reading:</u> Weston: Ch. 10.</p> <p><u>Group 1:</u> Auditions for P1. You may audition people on Zoom or in person, but it must be recorded. You will select one moment FROM EACH ACTOR in the audition to screen in class.</p> <p><u>Group 2:</u> Start looking for actors to audition.</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 6</b><br/><b>2/15</b></p> | <p>P1, part 1 screening #1</p> <p><b>Group 1</b> will screen their P1 auditions. The clip should have THREE actors each reading the same role.</p>   | <p><u>Group 1:</u> casts and shoots P1 with their actor in a location and edits the best takes together. It will not feel like a film. It will feel like one side of coverage for the scene.</p> <p><u>Group 2:</u> Auditions P1. You may audition people on Zoom or in person, but it must be recorded. You will select one moment from each actor to screen in class.</p>           |
| <p><b>Week 7</b><br/><b>2/22</b></p> | <p>P1, part 1 screening #2</p> <p><b>Group 2</b> will screen their P1 auditions. The clip should have THREE actors each reading the same role.</p>   | <p><u>Group 2:</u> casts and shoots P1 with their actor in a location and edits the best takes together. It will not feel like a film. It will feel like one side of coverage for the scene.</p> <p><u>Group 2:</u> shoots coverage for P1.</p>   |

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| <p><b>Week 8</b><br/><b>3/1</b></p> <p>MID-POINT OF TERM</p>  | <p><b>P1 Group 1 screening:</b> The best takes from the coverage in a linear timeline.</p>  | <p><u>Group 2:</u> shoots coverage for P1, selects the best take(s) for screening.</p> <p><b>P2 GROUPS A, B and C: <a href="#">Click Here</a></b><br/>Group A - selects a P2 scene. Auditions P2.<br/>Group B - selects a P2 scene<br/>Group C - selects a P2 scene</p> |
| <p><b>Week 9</b><br/><b>3/8</b></p>                           | <p><b>P1 Group 2 screening:</b> The best takes from the coverage in a linear timeline.</p>  | <p><u>Group A casts P2, begins prep.</u><br/>Group B auditions P2, begins prep.<br/>Group C selects a P2 scene. Auditions P2, begins prep.</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 10</b><br/><b>3/15</b><br/><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p> |   | <p><u>Group A works with actors for P2</u><br/>Group B casts P2, begins prep<br/>Group C selects a P2 scene</p>   |
| <p><b>Week 11</b><br/><b>3/22</b></p>                         | <p>• <b>Group A: P2 In-Class Rehearsal.</b> Students will either invite their actors to our stage to work with them or ask students in class to read roles. Each student will have 30 minutes to set up, rehearse, and work. These slots will be all be predetermined and set prior to class time.</p>  | <p>Group A preps P2<br/>Group B works with actors for P2<br/>Group C casts P2, begins prep</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 12</b><br/><b>3/29</b></p>                         | <p>• <b>Groups B: P2 In-Class Rehearsal.</b> Students will either invite their actors to our stage to work with them or ask students in class to read roles. Each student will have 30 minutes to set up, rehearse, and work. These slots will be all be predetermined and set prior to class time.</p> | <p>Group A shoots P2<br/>Group B preps/rehearses P2<br/>Group C rehearses P2</p>  |



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| <b>Week 13<br/>4/5</b>  | • <b>Groups C: P2 In-Class Rehearsal.</b> Students will either invite their actors to our stage to work with them or ask students in class to read roles. Each student will have 30 minutes to set up, rehearse, and work. These slots will be all be predetermined and set prior to class time. | Group A edits P2<br>Group B shoots P2<br>Group C preps P2   |
| <b>Week 14<br/>4/12</b> | <b>GROUP A screens P2</b>  | Group B edits their P2s. Group C shoots P2  |
| <b>Week 15<br/>4/19</b> | <b>GROUP B screens P2</b>  | Group C edits their P2s.  |
| <b>Week 15<br/>4/26</b> | <b>GROUP C screens P2</b>  | All Groups re-edit P2 for final screening. Add music, credits, tweak audio, etc. to "finish" the project.   |
| <b>FINAL -<br/>5/10</b> | FINAL "EXAM" – Screening of all final, newly re-cut P2s.   | Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://www.usc.edu/soc">www.usc.edu/soc</a> . |

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### 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" <https://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, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

### Support Systems:

*Student Counseling Services (SCS)* - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call. Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

#### *Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

#### *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

#### *Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes & microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

#### *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

#### *Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

#### *Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

#### *USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

*USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>