

DC 462
Directing Workshop
Syllabus Spring 2016

Instructor: Dana Hodgdon
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Course Description

From the course catalogue:

Emphasis on directing actors, with production skills such as camera, lighting, editing and sound used in service of the performance. Topics covered include objectives, beats, script analysis, casting, rehearsal, and actor/director relationships. Students will cast working actors or actors from the Theatre School, in short films from adapted screenplays, and produce sample reel material for both actors and directors. PREREQUISITE(S): DC 461

This is a course on directing motion pictures. The rub is, **I *can't* teach you to be a director.** I ***can*** create a class atmosphere that is conducive to learning the art and craft of directing. I ***can*** teach you many necessary things you will need to know on the road to becoming a director. These include the following learning outcomes:

- understanding and working with actors
- breaking down a sequence and/or script
- blocking, how to "visualize" a scene
- camera angles
- - understanding the use of prime lenses
- "the line"

But ultimately you ***are*** a director when you walk on set, script in hand, and are confronted with the rather daunting task of visualizing shots, communicating with actors and directing performances, and emerging, at the end of the day, with enough visual material (coverage!) that can be successfully edited together into something interesting and meaningful. And, that is a tall order.

Course Outline

WEEK 1	3/28	Introduction: Organization, Assignments, Group/Team organization, Scheduling. Short Lecture: The 7 Deadly Sins. Screening/Discussion: Cashback and Six Shooter Tech: Stanley Kubrick's lens obsession. <i>"How did they do that?" Zack King videos</i>
WEEK 2	4/4	Lecture/Screening: Story-telling, Aristotelian Structure, Surprise, Inevitability, Predictability, Confusion, Tension, and Conflict. Visualization and Script Breakdown. Basic Approaches to Shooting: Master Scene and Triple Take. The "language" of film: objective shots, POV shots, "seeing" shots, subjective shots. Reading: Handout: "Coverage" <i>"How did they do that?" OK Go videos</i>
WEEK 3	4/11	Lecture/Screening: Action Axis, 180 degree principle. Screen Direction and Continuity. Composition and Depth. The 4th Wall. Mise en Scene. Reading: Handout: 180 degree diagrams. <i>"How did they do that?"</i>
WEEK 4	4/18	Lecture/Screening: Acting Basics, Method and Technique. Communicating with Actors. In class directing/acting exercises - TBA. <i>"How did they do that?"</i>
WEEK 5	4/25	Lecture/Screening: Casting, Rehearsals. Directing Actors. In class directing/acting exercises - TBA. <i>"How did they do that?"</i>
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WEEK 6	5/2	Scene Studies Due in class for Screening and Critique. Alphabetical A-Z Green Light Scripts for Final Project - Alphabetical Z-A <i>"How did they do that?"</i>
WEEK 7	5/9	Scene Studies Due in class for Screening and Critique. Alphabetical A-Z Green Light Scripts for Final Project - Alphabetical Z-A

“How did they do that?”

WEEK 8	5/16	Green Light Scripts for Final Project - Alphabetical Z-A <i>“How did they do that?”</i> Green Light Scripts for Final Project, if necessary <i>“How did they do that?”</i>
WEEK 9	5/23	Final Projects Ruff Cuts Due in class for Screening and Critique. All teams
WEEK 10	5/30	Memorial Day. No Class.
Final Exam	6/6	Screen and Critique Fine Cuts of Final Projects. All teams.

Texts:

Handouts: provided by Instructor

Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics, 5th edition. Rebiller & Cherrier

Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television,

Weston, Michael Wiese Productions

<u>Grading:</u>	Scene Study	30%
	Final Project	60%
	Class Participation	10%
		100%

Groups/Teams

Our first order of business is to divide into teams. Think of these teams as production companies. Both Scene Studies and Final Projects will be Team produced. Teams may have 2-4 members. The ideal is 3 - Producer, Director, Cinematographer.

Teamwork – For the filmmaking assignments for this course you will be working in teams. A major component of producing films is collaboration and teamwork. In this course many of you will be working as a creative team for the first time. Most student teams work very well together. But sometimes personality conflicts or creative conflicts can arise. It is your job as a team to work through these conflicts, because if you don't, your project will suffer. If things get really difficult you can come to me as a team and I will help mediate/resolve the situation.

Assignments

Scene Study

1. General Guidelines.

Each student will cast, rehearse, shoot, edit, and finish a completed Scene Study and present it in class. The Scene Study will be a short (3-5 mins.) single location dialogue scene. You will adapt something from a short story, a real story, or write/obtain an original script. Your Production Company/Team members will be your primary crew, although you should also have additional crew (see 5 below). **It cannot have previously been presented on screen or stage.**

2. Technical.

You must shoot and finish in 1080p (Canon 7D, Canon C100, Canon C300, JVC 700 and others). We will take some class time to cover finishing workflows.

3. Shooting and Presentation.

You will shoot your scene studies in 2 ways: 1. In a single shot/camera take, either moving or static. And 2. with multiple camera angles/positions - edited together. Both versions will be screened in class - starting with the edited multiple camera angles version. **Present in class as Full Res 1080p QT from hard drive, and Vimeo upload.**

4. Goals.

You should attempt to make your Scene Study as technically crisp as possible – well lit with attention to production design and detail. But your main emphasis should be on creating a scene that is moving in some way – with strong performances, compelling camera angles, invisible editing, and, above all, a sense of style. Make it as self-contained/stand alone as possible. Music, titles, SFX where appropriate are encouraged.

5. Suggestions for success:

1. Assemble a talented crew. My suggestion for a crew for your **Scene Study** is - Producer, AD, DP, Camera Assistant, Gaffer, Grip/Utility, Sound Recordist/Boom.
2. Use actors. Period.
3. Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse.
4. Pre-Visualize your shots and camera set-ups and communicate (in advance) to your crew and actors everything you want to realistically accomplish and how long it will take.

If you do all of the above, you cannot fail. You may not win an Oscar, but you **will** make something that you can be proud of and can confidently present to the class. **A word of caution: I'm tough.** If you turn in a **Scene Study** that is hacked together - with crew members and roommates as actors and is shot hand-held from a couple of weak camera angles in a cramped dorm room or apartment, I will call you on it, as I suspect will the rest of the class

Final Project

Each team will produce one or more final projects. Final Projects will be completed short narrative films (target 10 pages/10 minutes). As with the scene study you must find and adapt the material (from a short story, real story, etc.) or write it yourself. We will be discussing and refining the parameters for your **Final Project** throughout the quarter. It should be a completed short motion picture with all the trimmings. **Present in class as Full Res 1080p QT from hard drive, and Vimeo upload.**

Green Light – On your assigned **Green Light** day your team will pitch **Final Projects** to the class. For each script to be considered bring 20 copies of:

- character descriptions
- Treatment (1-3 pages)
- script - approx. 10 pages latest version. Page #s and Scene #s mandatory.

At the end of your "pitch" and following discussion, the class will make one of three recommendations:

Green Light - go for it.

Amber Light - serious revisions needed. Come back next week with a revised plan.

Lights Out - an outright rejection of a proposed project - could be for any number of reasons - most likely because it is too ambitious and probably not doable in 10 weeks.

Special Note on Green Lights/Final Projects - Carpe Diem > Seize The Day. You have a unique opportunity - right now. You can make a movie. You can make something that might be your meal ticket into festivals, MFA programs, and/or professional filmmaking opportunities. You are surrounded by a lot of very talented peers. In the Digital Cinema Program you have an incredible support system - a dedicated faculty and lots of equipment and facilities. If you don't take advantage of this **now**, I can guarantee you that 5-10 years down the road you will look back and regret it.

“How did they do that?” This will be a weekly feature. The object is to bring a film clip (from any movie, music video, etc.) to class and challenge me and the rest of the class to figure out the technique used in the clip. It can be a cool shot, a special effect, etc. - anything that you’ve seen that interests you and that you want to share with the class. This is optional/extra credit on your part and will count toward your class participation grade. You can participate in **“How did they do that?”** individually or as a group. I’ll get the ball rolling for the first several weeks.

Class Participation - This course is going to be a process – a process where you start to develop your voice, your own personal directorial style. And while you’re doing that you are going to help your peers do the same thing – physically, by working as crew and intellectually, through feedback and constructive criticism. There will be no competition here. None. Or rather, the only competition will be internal as you challenge yourself to find a voice.

Office Hours/My Availability – I enjoy working with my students and am always available for advising, answering questions, etc. For those of you who want to learn more about techniques beyond the scope of this course feel free to make an appointment and pick my brain. **To meet with me your best bet is to schedule an advising hours appointment thru MyCDM and set up an appointment during my advising hours.** If you stop by during my office hours I may be in the building, but not in my office. If that is the case, call me on my mobile and we’ll connect up.

Talent Resources - We have been doing open auditions for several years and have created an extensive catalog of head shots and audition monologues on DVD. These are available for checkout at the DC Production Office and are now on-line.

Course Policies – in addition to DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following special policies will apply to this course.

Attendance – Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or showing up 15 minutes or more late. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

Assignments and Exercises – Assignments and exercises must be completed by the due date as indicated in the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

Plagiarism – Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on exams are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. Please read the Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) at: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/code16.html>.

Course Lectures/Reading Assignments – The assigned readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lectures. Lectures will introduce material not available in the readings, and the readings will explore concepts not mentioned in class. The exam will cover both lecture and reading materials as specified by the instructor.