FILM TV 122M – Film and Television Directing – 4 units

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In this class we are going to explore the art and craft of directing. When we think of directors we tend to imagine them on set choosing shots and guiding actors, but a director’s creative work begins during the script phase and continues through final post-production. A director must be fluent in all crafts of filmmaking so as to supervise the work of all major collaborators on a project, from the writer(s) to the actors to the various department heads which include the cinematographer, the production designer, the costumer, the editor, the sound designer, the composer, the sound mixer etc. These multiple and intertwined collaborations are the subject of this class.

It will be assumed throughout the lectures that directors are tasked with guiding audience responses to their work. In the case of a Hollywood film or television show this largely means ensuring that the unfolding story is comprehensible, unified and emotionally resonant (sad, funny, scary, etc.). Filmmakers working in other traditions may seek to produce different, sometime even opposite, effects (disunity, ambiguity), but in every case the goal is the same: to control the viewer’s experience of the work. Total control is, of course, impossible, but most skilled directors aim to impose their vision on viewers, and that is what we are going to focus on.

Given the short duration of the course focus will be on film directing, but most of what is covered applies to directing in television as well.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Working knowledge of the major crafts of filmmaking.
2. Understanding of the creative process, particularly in collaborative environments.
3. Deeper understanding of the practical/creative responsibilities of directors.
4. Enhanced vocabulary for discussing films and filmmaking.

How Class Works

Students listen to tri-weekly lectures via a web browser. Reading assignments accompany many of the lectures and The Apartment (Billy Wilder, 1960) is required viewing for the course. There are four major assignments. Additionally, your TA will post a discussion question each week that you are expected to respond to. Final grades will be determined
by the four assignments and by your participation in the online discussion activities.

Readings

One book is required: Making Movies by Sidney Lumet. It is available at the UCLA bookstore, both on campus and online, and from Amazon and other online booksellers. Particular chapters are assigned for some of the lectures, but please read the entire book. Other required readings are listed in the course schedule. These will all be available for download from the class website.

Required Screenings

The Apartment is available on DVD and Blu-Ray. It can also be viewed on a number of online streaming sites. Several clips are also assigned (see course schedule below) and these will be available on the course website.

Assignments

1 – Assignment #1. Write a short 2-page script with no more than three characters. You will complete two drafts. Your TA will provide notes on both drafts. Your script will be judged on how well it incorporates the basic narrative principles and techniques covered in lecture and discussion.

2 – Assignment #2. Develop a shot list, floor plan and storyboards for your script. Your TA will cover in detail how to do this.

3 – Assignment #3. Using images and clips collected from other sources (your TA will provide advice about how to do this), create a stylistic plan for your script that shows how you, as the director, would creatively use casting, wardrobe, locations, production design, and cinematography to tell your story.

4 – Assignment #4. Option 1: Direct your script. You may edit in camera but are encouraged to use editing software. Your phone’s camera will suffice, as will your friends as actors. Option 2: Research a contemporary professional filmmaker you admire. Do not limit yourself to Wikipedia. Seek out articles, interviews etc. Create a presentation with text and clips that in the first place explains why this person and their work matter to you (what is it about their style, subject matter and themes that attract you?). Secondly, outline this person’s career path in as much detail as possible. The goal is to distill lessons from their professional trajectory that could be of use to aspiring directors, including you.

Final Grade Breakdown

Participation – 20%
Assignment #1 – 20%
Assignment #2 – 20%
Assignment #3 – 20%
Assignment #4 – 20%
**Week One**

**Lesson 1:** Action, Cut, Print – is that all there is?

Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 1 “The Director: The Best Job in the World”

**Lesson 2:** Story – the basics

Screening: *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1960)

Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 2 “Are Writers Necessary?”

**Lesson 3:** Act Structure – beginnings

Reading: “What is a Screenplay,” Syd Field
        “Modern Classicism,” Kristin Thompson

**Week Two**

**Lesson 4:** Act Structure – middles and the endings

**Assignment:** First draft of script due due to your TA Tuesday

**Lesson 5:** Performance – an introduction

Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 4 “Actors: Can an Actor Really Be Shy?”

**Lesson 6:** Directing Actors – part 1

Reading: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*: Chaps 1-3 & 6, Melissa Bruder et al

**Week Three**

**Lesson 7:** Directing Actors – part 2

**Lesson 8:** Directing the Camera – part 1

Reading: “Cinematic Sequencing and Narration,” Noël Carroll
Assignment: Second draft of script due to your TA on Thursday

Lesson 9: Directing the Camera – part 2

Week Four

Lesson 10: Directing the Camera – part 3
Screening: View clips available on course website

Lesson 11: Cinematography – what directors need to know
Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 5 “The Camera: Your Best Friend”
Assignment: Shot list, floor-plans and storyboards due to your TA Thursday

Lesson 12: Production Design and Costumes
Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 6 “Art Direction and Clothes”

Week Five

Lesson 13: Directing a Scene
Reading: Scene from *Sleep With Me* available on class website
Assignment: Stylistic plan due to your TA on Tuesday

Lesson 14: Editing – part 1
Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 6 “The Cutting Room: Alone at Last”

Lesson 15: Editing – part 2
Reading: *Making Movies* Chap 7 “The Sound of Music: The Sound of Sound”
**Week Six**

**Lesson 16:** Finishing: Color and Sound

**Screening:** “Painting With Pixels” (DVD extra *O Brother Where Art Thou*) – available on course website

**Assignment:** Use the remainder off this week to either edit your film, which you should try to shoot no later than the end of Week Five, or to complete your presentation.

*Your final assignment, film or presentation, is due Friday.*