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## MAR 355.01: Directing the Fiction Film

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## **MAR 355 Directing the Fiction Film**

Autumn 2013 – School of Media Arts

Professor Michael Murphy - McGill 229

**Office Hours: Mon. 2:00-3:30/Wed. 1-2/Thur. 9:30-11**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an undergraduate level directing seminar and laboratory course.

#### **Personal connection with Story**

Meaning making—what matters

Character—he/she who believes or struggles toward belief

Relationship—communication/connection

History—the circumstances/seeds of the growth of  
character/meaning

Setting—where it occurs—the physical constraints/opportunities

Philosophy—Why it is important—the broader construct of  
meaning and point of view

#### **Spatial Exploration and Articulation of Psychology**

Without a Frame

The floorplan

Homes

Public Spaces

Unmarked spaces

The one—personal space/given circumstances

The two—The Bubbles--Public/Personal/Intimate

The three—Competitive focus

The four—balance/imbalance

The five—community of relations

#### **Exploration of the Mise en scene (the shot) Staging an Action**

Setting

Composition

The vertical axis

Volume/Shape

Gradation

Open vs. Closed Frame

Realism vs. Formalism

Movement/Blocking

Actors

Camera

Costume

Production Design  
Lighting

### **Working with the Actor**

Casting  
The Read-thru/discussion  
Rehearsal  
Production/Shooting

### **Criteria for the class**

You will be graded in this class by my analysis of your ability to:

- be able to articulate dramatic action, structures and patterns through script and film analysis
- block camera and actors accounting for the psychology of space and mise en scène
- work meaningfully in rehearsal
- articulate dramatic action in moment-to-moment with actors and D.P.
- organize the mise en scène to reflect the world of the story
- tell the story with shots
- tell the story through realistic acting
- give constructive feedback to your classmates
- apply faculty critique to your work
- MEET DEADLINES!

### **Graded Class Projects:**

1. Staging a Scene from an existent screenplay. No filming.
2. Performing script analysis on a screenplay based on the Weston model.
3. Writing a paper on the art of directing based in research of a major film director.
4. Staging and shooting a scene from a screenplay of yours as a sequence shot
5. Online discussion boards throughout the semester

### **Reading for the class either all of or sections from the following books:**

1. *The Courage to Create* by Rollo May
2. *On Directing Film*, by David Mamet
3. Elia Kazan "*On What Makes a Director*"
4. *My Own Private Idaho*, Gus Van Sant
5. *Various Other Handouts*

### **Projects/Grading:**

10 Discussion Forums at 5 pts. each = 50 pts.  
Classroom Participation = 10 pts.  
Sequence Shot= 15pts.  
Final Project= 25 pts.

# CLASS TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES

Week 1 Aug. 28	<b>WHY ARE WE HERE?</b> <b>View in Class:</b> Francois Truffaut's <i>Day for Night</i> <b>Hand-outs:</b> Rollo May <i>The Courage to Create</i> , Elia Kazan <i>What Makes a Director</i> , Mamet <i>On Directing Film</i> Chapter 1 <b>Online Discussion 1:</b> Read the May and Kazan handouts and participate in the online discussion board. <b>For next week:</b> Read Mamet and bring in a personal incident to turn into a short film
Week 2 Sept. 4	<b>THEMATICS AND DEVELOPMENT</b> <b>In Class:</b> Sharing of personal stories—Personal incidents and shaping POV character/theme/plot, <i>Kick the Duck</i> : the making of a film/the Mamet chapter <b>Hand-outs:</b> <i>My Last Duchess</i> , <i>Agassiz and the Fish</i> <b>Online Discussion 2:</b> Read the hand-outs and participate in the forum <b>For next week:</b> Read <i>My Own Private Idaho</i> (posted online)
Week 3 Sept. 11	<b>SCRIPT ANALYSIS—<i>My Own Private Idaho</i></b> <b>In-class:</b> Script Analysis Basics <b>Hand-out:</b> <b>Script Analysis Guidelines</b> <b>Online Discussion 3:</b> Discuss: <i>My Own Private Idaho</i> script analysis <b>For next week:</b> Research Collage/Thematics/Production Design/Historical
Week 4 Sept. 18	<b>RESEARCH AND METAPHOR</b> <b>In Class:</b> Research Presentations/Casting Discussion <b>Hand-outs:</b> <i>Idaho</i> Scene Selections/ Casting assignments <b>Online Discussion 4:</b> Scene Analysis <b>For Next Week:</b> Rehearse Scene outside of class
Week 5 Sept. 25	<b>REHEARSING THE DRAMATIC ACTION</b> <b>In-Class:</b> Collage Work/Lucid Dreaming <b>In-Class:</b> Casting of Scenes/Rehearsal Discussion/Week's schedule <b>Hand-out:</b> Weston: Result Direction + Quick Fixes, Moment by Moment, Listening and Talking <b>Online Discussion 5:</b> Post Collages and Talk about Production Design—Visual Visual Visual
Week 6 Oct. 2	<b>THE SEQUENCE SHOT</b> <b>In Class:</b> Rehearsing and Shooting <i>IDAHO</i> Sequence Shots Scene #1:

	<b>Online Discussion 6:</b> Discussion of Bergman directing technique
Week 7 Oct. 9	<b>In Class:</b> Rehearsing and Shooting <i>IDAHO</i> Sequence Shots <b>Online Discussion 7:</b> Discussion of Sandy MacKendrick chapter
Week 8 Oct. 17	Pitch and Decide on Final Films Turn in Written: 1 sentence/1 paragraph/1 page 5 minute verbal in class
Week 9 Oct. 23	<b>In Class:</b> Review Pitches/Assign Films To Be Produced Discuss and Work Weston Result Direction/Quick Fixes Create Production Teams <b>Assignment:</b> In class directing from personal scripts

Week 10 Oct. 30	<b>In Class:</b> Production Meeting
Week 11 Nov. 6	<b>In Class:</b> Production Meeting(s)
Week 12 Nov. 13	<b>In Class:</b> Production Meeting(s) <b>Assignment! Personal Film Collage!</b>
Week 13 Nov. 20	<b>M-T:</b> Shooting THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 14 Nov. 27	<b>In Class:</b> Production Meeting(s) <b>Due: Personal Film Collage</b> <b>Online Discussion 8: Final Reflections!</b>
Week 15 Dec. 5	<b>In Class:</b> Viewing of Rough Cuts?
Finals Class	<b>THUR. DEC. 12<sup>TH</sup> 1:10-3:10—VIEWING OF FILMS</b> <b>Due: Final Film Role Paper/Description/Research</b>

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umd.edu/SA/vpsa/index.cfm/page/1339>