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MAR 456.01: Directing

Lynn-Wood Fields

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MAR 456, Section I: Directing the Fiction Film Fall 2013

Instructor: Lynn-Wood Fields

TA: None

Phone: 406-249-6294 (texting is great)

Class Time: Mondays 12:10-2:30 pm

Office Hours: Please Arrange

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REQUIRED TEXT BOOK:

Making Movies by Sydney Lumet

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Films are big, complicated, shuffling endeavors. Making one is an expensive, labor-intensive, sleep depriving but often rewarding experience. The end result is still, at its very best, “the sum of all your compromises.” Sure you want to make a film? If so; good. The pay-off of reaching **THROUGH THE SCREEN** to connect with an audience is rewarding enough to make it all worthwhile. Chances are, someone broke through to you in that way once.

This class is about learning what it means to be a director and what you want your films to do to an audience, and, as a director, how to best achieve your intentions. It's a class in **SELF-EXPRESSION** through filmmaking. But more importantly than that, it's a class about communication in a visual medium. Each of you have a unique **POINT OF VIEW**, and this class will provide you with tools in helping you define—and achieve on film—your vision. Primarily, this will be a class about understanding the methods of communication required to be an effective director in almost any creative sense, as well as how to best communicate your ideas to an audience. Specific aspects of the **CRAFT of DIRECTING DRAMATIC FILM** include: understanding (and making camera-ready) your scenes; creating storyboards, shot lists, and schedules; working with actors; getting the most from your crew; managing your shoot days.

We will learn the value of setting a goal that is high but **DELIVERABLE**. We will learn that a deadline is not the enemy; it is the necessary boundaries of our personal exploration. We will learn that product is meaningless without meaningful **PROCESS**.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students will...

- **Shoot 3 small visual communication projects.**

- **Shoot 1 dialogue scene.**
- **Create 4 blogs/vlogs with different requirements.**
- **Be required to attend film screenings throughout the semester.**
- **Be required to analyze the films shown in class from a director's viewpoint**

GRADE ASSESSMENT: As in the Olympics, you all start out as perfect “10’s” and it is only by being absent, being tardy, missing deadlines, and being taciturn that your grade will be diminished.

30 points – 3 Visual Communication Shorts

20 points – Dialogue Scene

20 points – Blog/Vlog

10 points – Participation

20 points – In Class Quizzes

Total: 100 pts

Grading Scale

93-100 Points A

90-92 Points A-

87-89 Points B+

83-86 Points B

80-82 Points B-

77-79 Points C+

73-76 Points C

70-72 Points C-

67-69 Points D+

60-66 Points D

59 and Below F

DEADLINES are a basic fact of life, and of filmmaking. If you plan on making films once you leave this place you will have deadlines “in the real world.” They are not going to go away. COST: You are responsible for the costs of your video projects, including the videotapes.

WORKSHOP ETIQUETTE:

Giving and Getting Criticism: In the real world, every Agent, Producer, Actor, and Mail Room Attendant you encounter will gladly tell you what’s wrong with your script and/or film. They’ll treat your precious work like a big ol’ piñata and smash it until no goodies are left inside. So you need to get thick-skinned about your work in a hurry if you want to survive. That being said, there is no need, nor room, for cruelty in this class.

I’m not interested if you “like” or “dislike” your fellow student’s work. That is not useful, nor productive. Workshops are not about slaps on the wrist, nor are they about slaps on

the back. I want the critiques to be more ANALYTICAL than CRITICAL. That means we talk about the material by contrasting “ what it is” to “where it needs to be,” and discuss ways to steer it forward. Negative comments are not nearly enough-- we need to also identify possible solutions. It’s not always what is ON the page/screen; often what’s MISSING is the essential problem.

The work is hard, so respect the work, even if it’s not your “thing.” The more respect you give other’s work, the more respect for yours you’ll get back. We’re all here to help each other improve as filmmakers/storytellers. This is a collaborative medium, folks — and that’s where the magic of it all lives. You will ultimately find that “the sum of your compromises” is actually GREATER THAN the film you initially set out to make. The GIFTS of collaboration are the Golden Fleece of Filmmaking.

PRIVACY:

What we say about each other’s work during class stays between us. It will not wander into the outer reaches of this program, university or town. It will not be published in any blogs/vlogs.

RECOMMENDED READING:

On Directing Film By David Mamet. **Directing Actors** By Judith Weston.

FILMS TO BE SCREENED

Hurt Locker by Katheryn Bigelow

Bridesmaids by Paul Feig

Dead Poets Socieity by Peter Weir

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page/](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page/1321)

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Syllabus subject to change.