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MAR 355.01: Directing the Fiction Film

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MAR 355 Directing the Fiction Film (3cr.)

Autumn 2014 – School of Media Arts

Professor Michael Murphy - McGill 229

Office Hours: Tues. 11-12:30/Thurs. 3-4:30

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an undergraduate level directing seminar and laboratory course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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!

TEXTS AND READING MATERIALS

1. *The Visual Story*, Bruce Block (textbook)
2. *On Film-Making*, Alexander Mackendrick
3. *The Courage to Create* by Rollo May (pdf)
4. *On Directing Film*, by David Mamet (pdf)
5. Elia Kazan "On What Makes a Director" (pdf)
6. *Various Other Handouts*

COURSE POLICIES

Projects/Grading:

6 Still Image Assignments from <i>The Visual Story</i> @ 5 pts. =	30 pts.
4 One-minute film projects @ 15 pts.=	60 pts.
Incident Film/Bullet Point Script	
Hitchcock film	
Actor-based film	
Personal One-minute script	
Classroom Participation =	10 pts.
TOTAL POINTS	100 pts.

CLASS TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES

Pre-Week 1	Read: Excerpt, <i>The Courage to Create</i> , Rollo May
Week 1 Aug. 27	THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR In Class: View and discuss Francois Truffaut's <i>Day for Night</i> and <i>The Courage to Create</i> Reading Assignments: Mamet <i>On Directing Film</i> Chapter 1 <i>The Last Duchess</i> , Robert Browning Samuel Scudder: <i>Agassiz and the Fish</i> Action Assignments: Bring in a life incident for a short film Online Discussion: Discuss above readings for the week.
Week 2 Sept. 3	THEMATICS, DEVELOPMENT (THE FISH) In Class: Sharing of "Incident" stories (shaping POV character/ Theme/Plot) Apply the Mamet chapter to examples Reading Assignments: Mackendrick, <i>The Solomon Exercise</i> , <i>Dramatic Irony</i> , <i>Point of View</i> Action Assignments: Bullet-point version of the incident. Online Discussion: Post scripts by the weekend for feedback.
Week 3 Sept. 10	DIRECTING FOR THE CUT In Class: Discuss Mackendrick Chapters Rehearsal and Storyboard Groups Reading Assignment: None Action Assignment: Shoot and Upload Incident films Online Discussion: Feedback on Films
Week 4 Sept. 17	DEVELOPING THE VISUAL STORY In Class: Discuss Incident Films Re-work for re-shooting! Reading Assignment: Chapters 1 & 2 from The Visual Image (Visual Components/Affinity & Contrasts) Action Assignment: Re-shoot Incident Films! Online Discussion: Response to re-shootings
Week 5 Sept. 24	COLLABORATION AND NON-LINEARITY IN PROCESS In Class: Review 2 cuts Incident Films Discuss Affinity/Contrast with examples Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 from The Visual Image (Space) Action Assignment: Photos re: Space/Affinity and Contrast Online Discussion: Response to Photos
Week 6 Oct. 1	THE PRODUCTION MEETING: DEBONO + LATERAL THINKING In Class: Chapter 3 (Space) and "The Creative Process" Collage Incident Film Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 from The Visual Image (Line &

	Shape) Action Assignment: Shoot photos on Line and Shape/ Idea for Film 2 Online Discussion : Respond to photos on Line and Shape
Week 7 Oct. 8	THE PRODUCTION MEETING: LINE AND SHAPE In Class: Discuss Line and Shape and Film 2 Ideas Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 & 6 from The Visual Image (Tone & Color) Action Assignment: Tone/Color shots and Script for Film 2 Online Discussion: Respond to Photos and scripts
Week 8 Oct.15	THE PRODUCTION MEETING: TONE AND COLOR In Class: Discuss Tone and Color Rehearse Film #2 Reading Assignment: Chapter 7 & 8 from The Visual Image (Movement/Rhythm) Action Assignment: 3 Videos/Edits on Movement and Rhythm and Film 2 Shoot Online Discussion: Respond to online postings
Week 9 Oct. 22	THE PRODUCTION MEETING: STORY AND VISUAL STRUCUTRE In Class: Film #2 and Shots/ Rehearse Re-shooting Reading Assignment: Chapters 9 & 10 from The Visual Image (Story and Visual Structure/Practice, Not Theory) Action Assignment: Re-shoot, post, Idea for Film #3 Online Discussion: Respond to online Postings

Week 10 Oct. 29	FINAL PROJECT PRE-PRODUCTION In Class: Discuss Re-shoots and Chapters 9 and 10 "Fish' the latest story ideas Reading Assignment: Mackendrick: "The Director and the Actor" Action Assignment: Production Meeting/Casting Online Discussion: Pre-production Communication
Week 11 Nov. 5	FINAL PROJECT PRE-PRODUCTION In Class: Pre-production reports/discuss Mackendrick/rehearse a scene each from 2 films Reading Assignment: Mackendrick: "The Director and the Actor" Action Assignment: Rehearsal/Location Scouting
Week 12 Nov. 12	FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTION (SHOOTING) In Class: ALL WORK FOR THIS WEEK IS ON LOCATION.
Week 13 Nov. 19	FINAL PROJECT PRODUCTION (SHOOTING) In Class: ALL WORK FOR THIS WEEK IS ON LOCATION

Week 14 Nov. 26	THANKSGIVING WEEK
Week 15 Dec. 3	FINAL PROJECT POST-PRODUCTION (EDITING) In Class: Viewing of Rough Cuts
Finals Class	THUR. DEC. 12TH 1:10-3:10—VIEWING OF FILMS Due: Final Film Role Paper/Description/Research

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 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.umt.edu/SA/vpsa/index.cfm/page/1339>

DISABILITY ACCOMODATION

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.