

CTVA 440 Theory of Directing
Fall, 2009
California State University, Northridge

Howard L. Ritter, DGA

Email: hkriter@sbcglobal.net

Office: TBA

Office hours: Wednesdays, 5-7 PM Office hours by appointment only. Please feel free at any point during our time together to schedule an appointment.

Class Schedule: Wednesday, 7 – 9:45PM

Room: MZ 103

Required Text: *Acting For Young Actors*
by Mary Lou Belli & Dinah Lenney

Additional Email handouts:

Atonement, The Motion Picture, Directed by Joe Wright
Delbert Mann: Looking Back at Live Television and other Matters
by Delbert Mann

The Film Director
by Richard L. Bare D.G.A.

Television Plays
by Paddy Chayefsky

Sense Relaxation
by Bernard Gunther

Directors Guild of America Quarterly
Emmy Magazine

Course Mission Statement: Today's Director serves many different functions within five major groups. **Understanding the craft of storytelling** and character development is probably the most important task at hand when mounting a production and properly servicing the script for the writer, executive producer and studio. **Creating a safe haven for the actors** to do their best work requires an intimate understanding of the organic process of acting from table read through shooting. **Determining what works for the story** in the ever changing technical arena allows the director to make wise choices in the areas of camera, lighting and special effects to non-linear post production, sweetening and Da Vinci enhancement. **Communicating effectively** with the production team strengthens the ability of the director to tell the story, allowing each member to contribute fully to the process. **Surviving over time** within the creative workplace, growing artistically, and networking everyday is essential to insure future opportunities in the business of the visual arts. These five groups will serve as the framework for this class.

CTVA Television Option Code of Conduct: All the rules and regulations set forth in the signed Television Option Code of Conduct agreement are adhered to by all Television Option Production students, their talent, actors and guest in the classroom, studio or on location environment. All equipment reserved for this class is to be used only for the completion of the class assignments. If equipment is used for any purpose other than this class the student's equipment and editing privileges will be immediately revoked.

Professional behavior is expected at all times in the course of work related to this class. Disruptive, unprofessional behavior in this class will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behavior will be dealt according to the university regulations and the student will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Attendance: All students are expected to attend all classes and lab sessions. There will be NO MAKE-UP of lab assignments without prior consent of the instructor. Unexcused absences as well as tardiness will be considered in your final grade. **THREE** unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction (i.e. up to one full letter on the final grade for each **THREE** unexcused absences). (Three lates, or leaving class early, will equate one unexcused.) Attendance is taken once daily and it is the student's responsibility to SIGN IN! If you have attended the class, but did not sign in an absence will result. Please do not sign in and leave the class. A quiz will take place at some point in class each week to assess attendance and retention of that week's material discussed. Professionalism, class volunteerism, and fair treatment for all is required from each Director. Disruptive, unprofessional behavior will be counted as an unexcused absence. Class or project switching is prohibited without prior consent of the instructor. A truly professional Director is always aware of the designated call time for any given day. *

Course Requirements:

- 1) Read a play or television script weekly
- 2) Use *Acting For Young Actors*, by Mary Lou Belli as class text
- 3) Storytelling:
 - story & scene breakdown
 - character analysis
 - concept & style development
 - acting
 - directing
 - rehearsal
 - camera, lighting, sound, production design, hair/makeup
- 4) Develop the Director's journal and the concept of wild birding
- 5) Formulate rehearsal techniques, building trust and creating the ensemble
- 6) Discuss and demonstrate two styles of preparing the shooting script:
 - creating a line cut
 - assigning coverage for the quad split

*An attendance sheet will be posted for sign-in until fifteen minutes past the hour. At that time it will be removed.

Course Requirements Cont'd.

- 7) Blocking or staging the scene
- 8) Complete several directing lab scenes
- 9) Research, breakdown, rehearse and present a final scene presentation
- 10) Present a current industry news brief each week in order to "Keep Current"
- 11) Keep all emails and hand outs in the three ring notebook for future reference
- 12) Choose a scene for **The Final Scene Presentation from your weekly readings**
(scene duration 3:00 Max)

Equipment: Basic equipment needs include:

- 1) Pencils with erasers (pens do not apply)
- 2) 1-6" ruler
- 3) 1-three ring notebook for the Final Scene Project material
- 4) 5"X 8" lined white note cards (do not use blank colored cards)

The Final Scene Presentation (Presentation time is 15:00):

- 1) Choose a 3:00 scene from your play reading list during the semester.
- 2) Audition, cast, breakdown, rehearse/stage the scene
- 3) Create a director's log from pre-production thru production
- 4) Prepare script for camera (line cut version)
- 5) complete camera cards for four cameras
- 6) Present the scene to the class in 15:00 time intervals followed by critiques.

Testing: All directors face a lifetime of daily testing in the workplace. Tests and unannounced quizzes will help assess directorial progress from time to time along with class participation, attendance and lab work. Testing material includes any information derived from:

- 1) Classroom discussions
- 2) Hand out material
- 3) "Keeping Current"
- 4) Lab scene work
- 5) Text reading assignments
- 6) All email correspondence

Grading:

Class participation & Critiques:	TBA
Multiple Quizzes:	10 (each quiz)
Volunteerism & Acting:	50
Midterm:	200
Final scene presentation:	250
Final scene production notebook:	250
Attendance:	100

The total number of points may change depending on extra credit.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian hall. Room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

Academic Dishonesty: In conjunction with examinations, projects and written assignments, it should be noted that severe penalties—including failure in the course and even expulsion from the University—might be applied for any infraction of accepted academic rules of honesty. Among other things, it is understood there shall be no sharing of information on any examination: there shall be no reference to any notes during any test (unless otherwise announced); and despite the collaborative nature of the class, individuals assigned to a position should be the one completing the task.

Fifteen week schedule

Week One 8/26/09: Purpose, Expectations & The Creative Toolbox

Acting Exercise

Present my background and assess class experience (Director Reel)

Canvas room to survey past, present & future aspirations with each Director

Discuss syllabus

Discuss email handouts

The importance of staying informed and “Keeping Current” with entertainment news

Discuss weekly script reading assignment (choose your final scene from these readings)

The Director as storyteller using the theater and using the camera

“What do I want to say with my work?” throughout my career

Building your Creative Toolbox

Networking

Discuss the three phases of a project:

Pre-Prod.

Prod.

Post/Swt

Discuss the five day schedule Monday thru Friday

Discuss Acting for Young Actors, Chapter one, Who Am I?

Discuss the history & types of storytelling

Example: screen opening of *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Discuss the role of the director

Long term Screen: *Gran Torino*, Directed by Clint Eastwood

Free Reading: Read a play this week

Actors for Young Actors, Chapter two, *What Do I Want?*

Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter two: What Do I Want?

Prepare a “Keeping Current”

Read a script & prepare to discuss it.

Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Two 9/2/09: Story & Storytelling

Assign Directorial slots for final project: Ritter will formulate the schedule & distribute

Acting exercise

Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”

What script have you read this week?

Discuss Acting for Young Actors, Chapter two, *What Do I Want?*

Acting exercise

Discuss the structure of storytelling

Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter three: *Why Do I Want I Want?*

Prepare a “Keeping Current”

Read a script & prepare to discuss it.

Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Three 9/9/09: The Ensemble of Characters

Acting exercise

Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”

What script have you read this week?

Discuss Actors for Young Actors, Chapter three, and *What Do I Want What I Want?*

Discuss eleven forms of storytelling today

Discuss Character Analysis & apply to Cyrano

Breakdown Cyrano scene

Stay Informed and current with business news “Keeping Current”

Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter four: *Where and When*

Prepare a “Keeping Current”

Read a script & prepare to discuss it.

Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Four 9/16/09: The Director’s script breakdown

Acting exercise

Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”

What script have you read this week?

Discuss Chapter four, *Where and When*

Discuss the players in the storytelling process (break down the crew & their jobs)

Discuss Script breakdown & apply to Cyrano (pass out Cyrano scene)

Parts of the play

Beats

Putting it all together

Demo Sample Scene analysis

Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter five: Auditions

Prepare a “Keeping Current”

Read a script & prepare to discuss it.

Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Five 9/23/09: The Wild Bird: The Director’s pre-production approach

Acting exercise

Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”
What script have you read this week?
Discuss Chapter five: *Auditions*
Discuss twenty ways to judge a good story
Discuss two schools of acting
The Never ending creative process for the actor and director
Using your own history and sense memory (What is familiar to you?)
Do your own homework and be thorough
Demo a scene
Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter six: *Monologues*
Prepare a “Keeping Current”
Read a script & prepare to discuss it.
Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Six 9/30/09: Establishing a visual pathway for the story

Acting exercise
Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”
What script have you read this week?
Discuss Chapter six: *Monologues*
Discuss the role of the actor
Sides & the cold reading
Preparation: The beginning, middle and end
Read the play! Again & again
Do’s
Don’ts
Preparation + focus + concentration
The callback
The unimaginative director & writing team in auditions
Shoulda, coulda & sour grapes
Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter seven: Rehearsal
Prepare a “Keeping Current”
Read a script & prepare to discuss it.
Long term screen: *Gran Torino*
Finalize your Directorial Scene choice this week.

Week Seven 10/7/09: Trust and a safe haven for the acting ensemble

Acting exercise
Stay informed & current with business news “Keeping Current”
What script have you read this week?
Discuss Chapter seven: *Rehearsal*
Discuss stage and set language
Breakdown of beats
Working from the inside out: the internal process
Learning the lines, listening and reacting
Thinking in character
Improvisation and game playing
Actions & objectives
Demo Cyrano scene (Cyrano/Roxanne)
Creating a line cut & the booth or truck
Using the quad split & staying on the floor
Assignment: *Acting For Young Actors* Read Chapter eight: Improvisation

Prepare a "Keeping Current"
Read a script & prepare to discuss it.
Long term screen: *Gran Torino*

Week Eight 10/14/09: The Art of Camera Storytelling

PITCH your Final Directorial Project for the Studio and Network Reps. Each Director will have 2:00 minutes to PITCH.

Stay informed & current with business news "Keeping Current"

What script have you read this week?

Discuss Chapter eight: Improvisation

Blocking for the theatre

Stage Blocking for the camera

Camera Terminology

Screen Direction Assignment: This is your last opportunity to screen *Gran Torino*

Week Nine 10/21/09: Midterm

Attendance is mandatory for this one-time only Midterm exam. This exam will only be given once. There will be no make-ups.

Week Ten 10/28/09: Transition Week TBA

Demo a scene from Table Read to VTR

Breakdown script & characters

Rehearse

Create a line cut & shot cards

VTR

Week Eleven 11/4/09: Begin Final Scene Presentations/Critiques

Week Twelve 11/11/09 Holiday Veteran's Day: No Class

Week Thirteen 11/18/09: Continue Final Scene Presentations/Critiques

Week: Fourteen 11/25/09: Continue Final Scene Presentations/Critiques

Week: Fifteen 12/2/09: Continue Final Scene Presentations/Critiques

Week: Fifteen 12/9/09: Conclude Final Scene Presentations/Critiques

Working, Commerce, Longevity & Survival

Week: Sixteen 12/16/09 Final Exam TBA

Goodbye & keep working

The Martini Shot

Wrap

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES MAY BE MADE TO THIS SYLLABUS DURING OUR TIME TOGETHER. DIRECTORS WILL BE NOTIFIED.

END