

ENG 6137. The Language of Film: “The Art of Film Directing”**Professor: Dr. Trevor Mowchun****Class Number: 30650, Section: S222, Spring 2022**

Class: Wednesday | Period E1 - E3 (7:20 PM - 10:10 PM) TUR 2334

Screening: Tuesday | Period E1 - E3 (7:20 PM - 10:10 PM) ROL 115

Course website (Canvas): elearning.ufl.edu

Office hours: Wednesday 5pm-6pm, or by appointment.

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Film & Media lab: TUR 4303

Lab technician: Jack Edmondson

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Lab hours for learning and borrowing equipment: Tuesday and Wednesday 11am-4pm

Course Description: “The Art of Film Directing”

Film directing is an immensely varied and mysterious artistic practice. Werner Herzog has compared it to cooking; David Lynch to dreaming. But what is it exactly, especially when the director isn't very much involved in the creative and technical labor of filmmaking (i.e. writing, cinematography, editing, sound recording, etc.)? This course suggests that film directing is largely misunderstood, obscured by stereotypes of the auteur. The hundreds of books and manuals on the subject have for the most part reduced the role to a “giant wheel” in the Hollywood production scheme in which the director is merely an authoritative implementer of preconceived formulas and appeaser of audience expectations. Instead, we will approach the question of what film directing might consist of by studying a niche genre of writings specifically by filmmakers on their craft. Such works take the form of film theory, philosophy, autobiography, experimental writing, artistic manifestos, and certain craft-oriented manuals on what we might call the grammar of film language. These “directing philosophies” show filmmakers reflecting on the nature of the medium of film, elucidating their creative and technical methods, interpreting their own films, and exposing the various sources of inspiration derived from other filmmakers, movements, and artforms ostensibly unrelated to film. We will perform close readings and assessments of exemplars from this unique genre of film writing, such as Andrei Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time*, Robert Bresson's *Notes on the Cinematographer*, Alexander Mackendrick's *On Film-making*, and key essays by Sergei Eisenstein. Our understanding of the artistic potential and pitfalls of these exploratory, often challenging texts will typically be developed through the analysis of the very films made by these theory-practitioners. Here we will assess to what extent a theory of directing has been productively implemented through creative means, whether the films expand or contradict the ideas underlying them, and, more generally, if film art is ultimately enriched by the preconceived theories, principles and, as is sometimes the case, the dogmas of filmmakers. In addition to these texts, our discussion will be guided by some fundamental aspects of film

directing, such as intentionality, mise en scène, camera aesthetics, montage, acting, pacing, and the poetics of space and time.

Students will undertake extensive preproduction plans to direct a film based on a previously published full-length screenplay, ideally of a film they have never seen before. Prior knowledge of film equipment is not required as the course gives priority to film theory/analysis, artistic methodology, and preproduction/visualization practices. Students, however, are welcome to borrow the department's film equipment throughout the semester to gain a feel for the tools of filmmaking. Workshops with the film equipment will be run by our technician, Jack Edmondson, and for new users are required before checking the equipment out.

Books for purchase:

- Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director* ed. Paul Cronin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
- Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
- Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: NYRB Classics, 2016).
- Raul Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1995).
- Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019). *Any edition is acceptable.

*All other readings except for screenplays will be available via Course Reserves [ARES].

Coursework:

- **Preparing to direct a feature film:** Coursework revolves around a single major project which will occupy you throughout the semester: choose a script or literary work that has not already been produced into a film, or failing that, a film about which you have no knowledge whatsoever, and make all the necessary interpretations and preparations that an imaginative feature film director would make prior to going into production. This phase of film work which we will be concerned with is also known as preproduction and visualization.
- **Workshops:** Almost every week students will workshop aspects of their film project in class. Where indicated, some of these workshops will require the submission of a written draft of the assignment, due by the end of the following day (Thursday). All workshop instructions are provided in the course schedule below. **80%**
- **Final submission:** A complete cinematic interpretation of the script/literary work that corresponds to the narrative action, scene by scene. This list of instructions, if followed through during production and post-production, would result in the finished film as intended. In other words, such a document will allow the reader to visualize the entire film in their mind. We will refer to it in this course as the shot list. **20%, Due Apr. 27**

Online resources for accessing screenplays:

- New York Film Academy: <https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/10-great-websites-download-movie-scripts/>
- No Film School: <https://nofilmschool.com/11-great-websites-download-movie-scripts>

NB. The script you use for your project can be a first or final draft (also known as a shooting script). Make sure the script you use is an official draft, not a transcript of the finished film.

A film director's lexicon: Start familiarizing yourself with the basic terminology of film directing through the following glossaries. This terminology should be used as needed when preparing your shot lists later in the semester:

- New York Film Academy: <https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/glossary/>
- The Columbia Film Language Glossary: <https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/term/>

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Jan. 5). Introduction

Week 2 (Jan. 11-12). Directorial Approaches to the Same Source Material: Three Versions of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

* Reading: Start reading through the online film glossaries listed above (New York Film Academy and The Columbia Film Language Glossary). Continue referring to these throughout the semester.

Films:

- *Macbeth* (Roman Polanski, UK/USA, 1971) *Will screen in ROL 115.
- *Macbeth* (Orson Welles, USA, 1948) *Watch on your own (viewing instructions will be provided).
- *Macbeth* (Bela Tarr, Hungary, 1982) *Watch on your own (viewing instructions will be provided).

In-class workshop: Detailed comparative analysis of the three films.

Week 3 (Jan. 18-19). Alexander Mackendrick's *On Filmmaking: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*

Reading: Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director* ed. Paul Cronin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), pp. xiii-85.

Film: *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, USA, 2002)

In-class workshop: Propose or "pitch" one script, short literary work, or play: **5%**

Week 4 (Jan. 25-26). Alexander Mackendrick's *On Filmmaking* (cont'd)

Reading: Mackendrick, *On Film-making*, pp. 86-194.

Film: *Sweet Smell of Success* (Mackendrick, USA, 1957)

In-class workshop: Propose or "pitch" a second script, short literary work, or play: **5%**

Week 5 (Feb. 1-2). Alexander Mackendrick's *On Filmmaking* (cont'd)

Reading: Mackendrick, *On Film-making*, pp. 195-291.

Film: *The Ladykillers* (Mackendrick, UK, 1955)

In-class workshop: Finalize the source material for your film. Propose it to the class, explain your choice, and offer some preliminary ideas for how you plan to direct it. Send your text (script or literary work or play) to the class no later than Monday so everyone can read it before class.

* Only 2 students will present this week: **5%**

Week 6 (Feb. 8-9). Raul Ruiz's *Poetics of Cinema*

Reading: Raul Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1995).

Film: *The Master* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 2012)

In-class workshop: Finalize the source material for your film (cont'd) (see above for instructions).

* Only 2 students will present this week: **5%**

Week 7 (Feb. 15-16). Case Studies: From Script to Screen

Reading (produced film): Screenplay of *The Thin Red Line* by Terrence Malick [ARES]

Reading (unproduced film): *Norton I, Emperor of the United States* by William Roberts (1946) [ARES]

Film: *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick, USA, 1998)

In-class workshop: Brief biographies and arcs of all main and supporting characters; ideas for casting (provide at least two drawings or photographs of the leads).

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 8 (Feb. 22-23). The Montage Theories of Sergei Eisenstein

Reading: Sergei Eisenstein, *Towards a Theory of Montage*, in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, ed. Glenny and Taylor (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

- Selections: Chapter 12, "Montage 1938," pp. 296-326; Chapter 7, "[Rhythm]," pp. 227-248. [ARES]

Film: *The Color of Pomegranates* (Sergei Parajanov, USSR, 1969)

Clips: *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (Eisenstein, USSR, 1928)

In-class workshop: Outline key image patterns, motifs, objects, symbolism. Pay attention not only to the image but also sound and music (if any) as they relate to the film's overall aesthetic patterning.

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 9 (Mar. 1-2). Andrei Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time*

Reading: Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), "Introduction" to "Chapter V: Scenario and Shooting Script."

Reading: Andrei Tarkovsky and Aleksandr Misharin, "Proposal for the Film *Confession (Mirror)*," in *Andrei Tarkovsky: Collected Screenplays*, trans. William Powell and Natasha Synessios (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1999), pp. 257-261. [ARES]

Film: *Mirror* (Tarkovsky, USSR, 1975)

In-class workshop: Directorial approaches to space (consider locations, sets, mise-en-scene, framing, staging). Include at least one drawing.

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 10 (Mar. 8-9). SPRING BREAK

Week 11 (Mar. 15-16). Andrei Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time* (cont'd)

Reading: Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, "Chapter V: The Film's Graphic Realization" to end.

Reading: Boris Strugatsky, Arkady Strugatsky, and Andrei Tarkovsky (uncredited), "*Stalker* (screenplay)," in *Andrei Tarkovsky: Collected Screenplays*, trans. William Powell and Natasha Synessios (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1999), pp. 373-416. [ARES]

Film: *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, USSR, 1979)

In-class workshop: Approaches to time (consider structure, rhythm/pacing, shot vs. montage dynamics, camera movement, dramatic tension). Include a diagram or graph of the film's structure and/or pacing.

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 12 (Mar. 22-23). Robert Bresson's *Notes on the Cinematograph*

Reading: Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: NYRB Classics, 2016).

Film: *Mouchette* (Bresson, France, 1967)

Clips: *The Pride of the Yankees* (Sam Wood, USA, 1942)

In-class workshop: Script revisions (at least one scene added, one scene cut, one scene revised).

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 13 (Mar. 29-30). Worldbuilding: Space

Reading: David Lynch and Chris Rodley, “I see myself: *Eraserhead*,” in *Lynch on Lynch*, ed. Chris Rodley (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997). [ARES]

Reading: Gaston Bachelard, “House and Universe,” in *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 38-73. [ARES]

Optional Reading: David Foster Wallace, “David Lynch Keeps His Head,” *Premiere* (Sept. 1996). [ARES]

Film: *Eraserhead* (Lynch, USA, 1979)

Clip: *Lost Highway* (Lynch, USA/France, 1997) *First Act

In-class workshop: Detailed shot list for **three** significant scenes, with key shots/moments illustrated.

* Submit via Canvas on Thursday: **10%**

Week 14 (Apr. 5-6). Worldbuilding: Time

Reading: Gilles Deleuze, “Chapter 5: Peaks of Present and Sheets of Past: Fourth Commentary on Bergson,” in *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 103-130. [ARES]

Film: *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, USA, 1942)

Clips: *Synecdoche, New York* (Charlie Kaufman, USA, 2008)

Lecture/workshop by Mukunda Michael Dewil (workshop instructions TBD).

Week 15 (Apr. 12-13). Stanley Kubrick’s Art of Film Directing

Reading: Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

Films:

- *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, UK/USA, 1971) *will screen in ROL 115
- *Kubrick by Kubrick* (Greg Monro, France, 2020) *watch on your own (viewing instructions will be provided)

In-class workshop: Direct a significant scene from your film (maximum 5 actors). Everyone (myself included) must volunteer as actors. Send the scene to your actors by Monday. **5%**

* 2 students will workshop their scenes.

Week 16 (Apr. 19-20). At the Drawing-Board of the World: New Possibilities and Old Limitations of Film Production

Reading: Trevor Mowchun, "Dare to Digress: Cinematic Self-Discovery in Victor Erice's *Dream of Light*," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* (Vol. 18, Iss. 2, 2020), pp. 214-241.

[ARES]

Film: *Nashville* (Robert Altman, USA, 1975)

Clips: *Dream of Light* (Victor Erice, Spain, 1992)

In-class workshop: Direct a significant scene from your film (maximum 5 actors) (see above for instructions). **5%**

* 2 students will workshop their scenes.

Policies and Services

- All written work should be submitted electronically via Canvas. Word and PDF files are acceptable.

- Please no late submissions unless you discuss with me first.

- I will respond to emails from Monday to Friday, usually within a day or two, though please be patient when waiting for a response. While email communication may seem indispensable nowadays, you may find it more productive and interesting to come meet with me during virtual office hours to discuss the course material.

- Regular attendance is essential. If I see that you are consistently absent then your grade will be adversely affected. Communication with the instructor is crucial to avoid misunderstandings related to absences. These policies are consistent with the UF's attendance policies. For more information on these policies, please visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

- I respectfully ask all students to refrain from using cell phones and internet browsing during class.

- Please do not record any class lecture without permission from me.

- Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

- Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>).

- For information on UF Grading policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

- For counseling or urgent help you may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/individual/>

- UF's policy on Harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:

<https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>

Grade Scale:

<i>Percent</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Grade Points</i>
90.0 - 100.0	A	4.00
87.0 - 89.9	A-	3.67
84.0 - 86.9	B+	3.33
81.0 - 83.9	B	3.00
78.0 - 80.9	B-	2.67
75.0 - 79.9	C+	2.33
72.0 - 74.9	C	2.00
69.0 - 71.9	C-	1.67
66.0 - 68.9	D+	1.33
63.0 - 65.9	D	1.00
60.0 - 62.9	D-	0.67
0 - 59.9	E	0.00