**Film Directing**  
**Topic:** Directing Actors

**Instructor:** Laimir Fano  
**Class:** T/Th 9:00AM–12:30PM  
**Email:** lfano@ucsc.edu  
**Office Hours:** Friday 10:00AM – 12:00AM

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**Course Overview**

The course’s topic is directing film actors. Its main goal is to provide the tools that will allow you to effectively work with actors throughout the different stages of the production process, including casting, rehearsals, and filming. The class is structured around readings, screenings of relevant cinematic performances, critical discussions of different acting philosophies, and practical exercises. Case studies have been chosen with the intention of illustrating the ways in which professional film directors have addressed some of the obstacles and limitations that you are likely to encounter in your own projects. Each week, you will be required to complete an assignment that focuses on process. Specifically, you will document your work with actors during an audition, a rehearsal session, and the shooting of a scene. Although access to production equipment is very limited for this class, those of you who are located in Santa Cruz and willing to collaborate will be able to check out cameras and microphones from the film department.

**Required Text**

*Directing the Actor: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television* by Judith Weston

**Assignments**

**Attendance (20%):** All lectures, discussions, and screenings are mandatory. Each class is worth two points. No more than two absences will be permitted. Three or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Script Analysis (10%):** This assignment consists of two parts. First, you will choose a script to work with. (The script can be your own or a published script. If you decide to work with the script for an existing film, make sure that you, as well as the actors, are not familiar with it.) Second, you will write a 300-word paragraph detailing the physical and personality traits of one of the characters, which will serve as the basis for the audition exercise. **Part 1 (Script selection) due in class Thursday, July 29th. Part 2 (Script Analysis) due on Sunday, August 1st on Canvas.**
Audition (20%): You will conduct auditions with the purpose of casting one of the actors for your project. An excerpt from a successful audition (approx. 5 minutes) will be uploaded to Canvas and the Google Drive. Due to COVID restrictions, auditions can be conducted via Zoom. **Due on Sunday, August 8th by midnight.**

Rehearsal (25%): You will record the rehearsal of one of the scenes from your chosen script. An excerpt from the rehearsal session (approx. 15 minutes) will be uploaded to Canvas/Google drive and presented in class. **Due on Sunday, August 15th by midnight.**

Final Scene (25%): You will shoot the previously rehearsed scene, paying particular attention to the relationship between performance and cinematography, sound, and editing choices. The final scenes (approx. between 5 and 10 minutes) will be uploaded to Canvas/Google drive and screened in class. **Due on Thursday, August 26th at 8:30am.**

**Class Policies**

**Academic Misconduct Policy:** Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty. Acts of academic misconduct during the course, including plagiarism, can and usually do result in failure of the course, at the sole discretion of the instructor of record. Your case will be reported to the College Provost as per the Academic Integrity guidelines found on the web at: [https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct](https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct)

Information on subject specific research guidelines is available at: [http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/](http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/)

**Classroom Civility:** Speaking to your peers and your instructor with respect is essential for creating a positive learning environment. Issues surrounding gender, race and class are integral to film analysis and appreciating that each of us maintains a different subject position in relation to these social elements is important. Respectfully engaging diverse ideas will create a sense of inclusion for all of us participating in the course.

**Graphic/Explicit Materials:** In Film and Digital Media courses you will often be assigned films or other material that could contain difficult ideas, uncomfortable language, or graphic depictions of sex or violence. You will be asked to treat these portrayals critically, to consider what is being expressed by the maker, or to examine the potential social impact, and to evaluate the works in a given context. Instructors are always happy to speak with you about your work, and might direct you to CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) at 831-459-2628 or the Disability Resource Center (drc@ucsc.edu or 831-459-2089) should you need additional support in order to do your best work.

**Disability Resources:** UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time,
I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1**
Topic: Intro/Script Analysis

**July 27**
Reading: *Directing Actors*, I: Result Directing and Quick Fixes, pp. 13-47
Screening: *The Disaster Artist*, dir., James Franco, US, 2017

**July 29**
Case Study: Abbas Kiarostami (Non-Professional Actors)
Reading: *Lessons with Kiarostami* [excerpt] pp. 71-103
Suggested Reading: *Directing Actors*, VII: Script Analysis pp. 163-233
Screening: *Taste of Cherry*, dir., Abbas Kiarostami, Iran, 1997. (1h 35m)

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**Week 2**
Topic: Casting

***Script Analysis Assignment due on Sunday, 1st by midnight***

**August 3**
Case Study: John Cassavetes (Improvisation I)
Readings: *Directing Actors*, VIII: Casting, pp. 235-245
   “Shadows” from *Cassavetes on Cassavetes*, pp. 63-76 [Excerpt]
   “A Woman...” from *Cassavetes on Cassavetes*, pp. 322-346 [Excerpt]
August 5th

Case Study: Mike Leigh (Improvisation II)

Reading: *Mike Leigh on Mike Leigh* [excerpt] pp. 20-44
“Spontaneity” from *IMPRO: Improvisation and the Theatre*, pp. 75-108

Screening: *Another Year*, dir., Mike Leigh, UK, 2011 (2h 9m)

Suggested Viewing: *Secrets & Lies*, dir., Mike Leigh, UK, 1996 (2h 16m)
   *Mike Leigh on Secrets & Lies*, dir., Claudia Winkleman, 2011

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**Week 3**

Topic: Rehearsals

***Audition Assignment due on Sunday, August 8th by midnight***

August 10th

Case Study: Robert Bresson (Automatism)

Reading: *Directing Actors*, XI: Rehearsals pp. 235-278
*Notes on the Cinematographer* (1977) by Robert Bresson

Screening: *A Man Escaped*, dir., Robert Bresson, France, 1957. (1h 41m)

August 12th

Case Study: Werner Herzog (Unconventional Processes)

Screenings: *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, dir., Werner Herzog, Germany, 1977 (1h 35m)
   *My Best Fiend*, dir., Werner Herzog, Germany, 1999 (1h 35m)

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**Week 4**

Topic: Shooting

***Rehearsal Assignment due on Sunday, August 15th by midnight***

August 17th

Screening: *Living in Oblivion*, dir., Tom DiCillo, US, 1995 (1h 30m)

Suggested Readings: "Basic Sequence" from *The Bare Bones: Camera Course for Film & Video*
"Staging Dialogue Sequences" from *Film Directing Shot by Shot*

**August 19**

Case Study: Barbara Loden (The Actor-Director)

Readings: "Staging and Camera for Wanda" from *Film Directing Fundamentals*
   “Barbara Loden Speaks of the World of *Wanda*” (NYTimes, 1971)
   “Conversation on *Wanda* by Barbara Loden”

Screening: *Wanda*, dir., Barbara Loden, US, 1970. (1h 42m)

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**Week 5**
Final Screenings

***Final Scene Assignment due on Thursday, August 26** at 8:30am***

**August 24**

Case Study: Raúl Ruiz (Experimental Processes)

Readings: "Human Presence and Representation (II)" from *Poetics of Cinema 2*

Screening: *Mysteries of Lisbon*, dir., Raúl Ruiz, Portugal/France, 2010. (4h 32m)

**August 26**

Screening of final scenes