

University of North Texas
FALL 2026

MRTS 4810.001

Thursdays / 2:25 – 5:15 pm
RTFP 135

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Office: RTFP 228

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays: 12:30-1:30 pm.

Directing Narrative Media

Description

MRTS 4810 is a three (3) credit hour course giving the student a comprehensive overview of directing for single-camera production. Emphasis is placed on directing actors and non-actors in a variety of playing genres, while asking the director to walk in the actor's shoes. Additional consideration is given to the director's use of camera placement and shot design in relation to performance. Dramatic, commercial and audition scenarios are explored with student and working actors. Film screenings and script analysis supplement the acting workshop scenario.

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Prerequisite: MRTS 3220 or 3230.

Course Outcomes

- Students engage in basic concepts of script analysis to understand character intention.
- Students participate in rudimentary acting exercises to expand directing technique.
- Students will have a working knowledge of actor blocking and shot design.
- Students gain experience with casting and audition.
- Students employ basic research methods to investigate a director's process.
- Students publish all finished works on a publically accessible website, such as Vimeo or YouTube.
- Students produce a four-minute, film festival quality short, from an original or adapted script.

Primary Texts (excerpts provided via Canvas portal)

Bruder, Melissa; Lee Michael Cohn, et al; *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, Vintage Press, 1986

Caine, Michael; *Acting in Film: An Actor's Take on Movie Making*, Applause Theatre Books, 1990

Cohn, Lee Michael; *Directing Actors: A Practical Aesthetics Approach*, Routledge, NY, 2021

Figgis, Mike; *Digital Filmmaking*, Faber and Faber, London, 2007

Hauser, Frank and Russell Reich; *Notes on Directing*, Bloomsbury Books, NY, 2008

Hodge, Francis; *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style*, 7th ed., Routledge, NY 2009

Katz, Steven D.; *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen*, Michael Wiese Productions, CA, 2019

Mamet, David; *On Directing Film*, Penguin Books, NY, 1991

Mamet, David; *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, Pantheon Books, NY 1997

Meisner, Sanford; *Sanford Meisner On Acting*, Vintage Press, 1987

Spolin, Viola, *Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook*, Updated Ed. Northwestern University Press, 2011

Recommended Texts

Antonioni, Michelangelo; *The Architecture of Vision: Writings & Interviews on Cinema*, University of Chicago Press, 2007

Callow, Simon; *Orson Welles, Volume 3: One Man Band*, Viking Press, NY, 2015

Carney, Ray; *Cassavetes on Cassavetes*, Faber and Faber, NY, 2001

Cronin, Paul, ed.; *Lessons with Kiarostami*, Sticking Place Books, NY 2015

Insdorf, Annette; *François Truffaut*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Kelly, Mary Pat; *Martin Scorsese: A Journey*, Hachette Books, Revised Edition, 2022

Seymour, Jeff; *The Real Life Actor*, Crazy Geezmo Productions, 2014

Truffaut, François; *Hitchcock*, Simon & Schuster, Revised Edition, 1985

Ventura, Michael; *Cassavetes Directs: John Cassavetes and the Making of Love Streams*, Camera Books, UK, 2007

Required Supplies (You should have this by now...)

External Hard Drive – LaCie Rugged All-Terrain model, recommended. 4 TB minimum

Ideally a second external drive or cloud service for back-up

SDXC Card (class 10, V90) 128 GB or Better. | **Noise-Canceling Headphones**

Media Arts Equipment Room / RTFP 166 / Checkout Policy. Cameras, audio recorders, tripods and lighting kits are available to check out, free of charge to students currently enrolled in MRTS courses. The student assumes full responsibility for any equipment and accessory under rental period, including repair or replacement of chargers, batteries, memory cards or the camera itself.

Equipment access is granted once a student passes an essential camera skills test. Only then will students be allowed gear from the Media Arts Equipment Room. Equipment can be reserved by going to **checkout.unt.edu**.

Online Resources

- Adorama / adorama.com
- B&H Photo Video / bhphotovideo.com

Online Content

criterioncollection.com
simplyscripts.com

filmcrux.com
thescriptlab.com

mobygratis.com
studiobinder.com

mubi.com
vimeo.com

YouTube Channels

Anatomy of a Scene / NYTimes
Film Riot
Omeleto

Every Frame a Painting
Lessons from the Screenplay
CineDailies

Film Courage
Nerdwriter
Studio Binder

Film Threat
No Film School
TIFF Originals

Instagram

Lens Addiction

Real Life Actor

Robin Vada Song

WillBryanFilms

Communication Expectation

The UNT Canvas portal is the virtual meeting place for this course. Additional content will be made available there. Projects will be uploaded and graded there. All students are expected to use their unt.edu email address. Email is typically responded Mondays-Fridays, 9 am – 6pm. Take advantage of in-person office hours.

Attendance / Participation / Time Commitment

Attendance is mandatory for all sessions of this course.

- One absence is allowed per semester without penalty. Semester grade will be lowered one letter after the second absence.
- A significant late arrival or leaving early will be counted as a half absence. Two count as an absence.
- Attendance is expected for all class meetings, even if assignments are not completed by the due date.
- Please schedule your appointments outside of class time if you expect the same courtesy in return.
- If you miss a class, find out from your classmates what was covered and what was due; syllabus schedule is subject to change. Check Canvas regularly for Announcements.
- You must come prepared to work every class; for lecture this means active note-taking and engagement. Laptops and phones are not permitted during class.
- Expect physical activity during workshop sessions.
- Students are expected to complete the **SPOT** online course evaluations and schedule one office-hour visit, as part of their successful completion of this course.

Plan to schedule approximately at least 4 hours per week on production assignments outside of class.

Late assignments will be lowered one letter grade at the instructor's discretion if not completed by the following week. They will continue to be lowered a letter grade with every late week.

Student works may not be screened in class if they are not submitted on time.

Do not expect extra-credit assignments to make up for absences or missed assignments.

Climate of respect and civility

Participation is mandatory. Open, courteous discussion is expected in both lecture and lab sections. Learning to communicate with lens-based media is essential to developing personal vision, creative expression, while freely describing and interpreting the actual and resistant world. That said, please expect an environment where all content and viewpoints relevant to the course are welcome if respectfully presented.

The classroom, as critique space, functions as the principle (and non-partisan) venue for negotiated thought and is meant to deliberately entertain competing and unpopular ideas. This course follows the spirit of free expression as stated in *The Chicago Principles* (University of Chicago, 2014).

Grading Policy

Students with no previous experience in cinema or the arts can regularly receive **A** or **B** grades but is not guaranteed. To do so, the student must come to all the classes, work effectively in a group, complete all the assignments with *demonstrated improvement* throughout the semester and participate liberally in discussion.

The following constitutes a letter grade for an assignment:

A: Exceptional. The student/group completes the requirements of the assignment, demonstrates a technical mastery of their craft and bases the work around a theme or idea demonstrating critical thought.

B: Promising. The student/group completes the requirements of the course and demonstrates a technical mastery of craft.

C: Average. The student/group completes the requirements of the assignments and demonstrates a basic competence of craft.

D: Poor. The student/group completes the requirements of the course but does not demonstrate a basic competence of craft or an adequate development of concepts.

F: Absent. The student/group fails to answer the basic requirements of the course or turns in no work at all.

Grading Breakdown	%	Points
Film No. 1: Long Take	15%	150
Film No. 2: Multiple Takes	20%	200
Mid-Term Oral Presentation	10%	100
In-Class Sessions / Participation & Attendance	20%	200
Final Film: Scripted Short (Including Treatment)	30%	300
Office Hour Visit & SPOT EVAL	05%	50
Total	100%	1000 points

Semester End Grade:

A	900+
B	800+
C	700+
D	600+
F	599-0

Academic Integrity | Creative Labour

It is understood that students must direct and edit their own films to successfully complete this course. The student-director will seek collaborators to operate camera, sound, et al, but the authorship of the film can only be claimed by the director. In this scenario, the instructor functions as the *producer* of the work, setting *defined limits* for its creation.

The university prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, which is understood as the appropriation and representation of another's work as one's own.

Just as plagiarism describes the familiar, fraudulent writing scenario, in the case of production courses, evidence of a student having the **creative labour** of a given project performed by another outside their group, will result in the immediate failure of the project for all in the group. *There will be a zero-tolerance policy for any A.I. generated content.*

Submitting someone else's work as your own or something you have already submitted for another class is unacceptable. You are expected to shoot original work for this course's assignments; not old footage to be re-edited. You will earn an F for any work that violates the academic integrity policy.

Creative labour also pertains to ethical use of third-party music and instrumental score. Only music for which you own licensed permission can be used for cinema projects in this course. Search for free-license and royalty free sources.

ODA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Course Outline • MRTS 4810

Week 1 AUG 20	Course Intro and Syllabus Casting Resources Screen: <i>Coriolanus</i> , Ralph Fiennes, d. 2011 <i>Ethan Hawke at Film Comment</i>
Week 2 AUG 27	Script Analysis: What is the scene about? Acting Exercises “What does the main character want? Is it actable? What’s at stake if she doesn’t get it?” Screen: <i>The Piano Teacher</i> , Michael Hanake, d. 2001 <i>Boiling Point</i> , Philip Barantini, d. 2020 Assignment: First Film Long Take
Week 3 SEP 3	Blocking & Coverage Where do I put the camera? Camera Demo “Give your actors face time. When do you move on? How many set-ups is too many?” Screen: <i>Spielberg Oner</i> <i>John Cassavetes Directs</i> <i>Alice Rorhacher</i> <i>Orson Welles</i> Assignment: Mid-Term Presentation Anatomy of a Scene
Week 4 SEP 10	Directing or Coaching What do you tell the actors? Acting Exercises “An actor can only perform an action. Give an adjustment. Make a strong choice.” Screen: <i>Michael Caine: Acting in Film</i> <i>Juliette Binoche About Acting</i> <i>Jeff Seymour Official Competition</i> , Mariano Cohn & Gastón Duprat, d. 2021
Week 5 SEP 17	Screening First Film: Single Take Assignment: Second Film Multiple Take
Week 6 SEP 24	Screening First Film: Single Take, [con.]
Week 7 OCT 1	Directing Pro Workshop Visiting Actors “An actor cannot perform a psychological or emotional state of being.” <i>Playing As If</i> and <i>Moment Before</i> Assignment: Treatment Final Film
Week 8 OCT 8	Comedy is Serious Business <i>Splitsville</i> , Michael Angelo Covino, 2025 <i>Broken Rage</i> , Takeshi Kitano, d. 2025 Alanna Ubach, Buster Keaton
Week 9 OCT 15	Mid-Term Oral Presentation Anatomy of a Scene
Week 10 OCT 22	Mid-Term Oral Presentation, [con.] Anatomy of a Scene Treatment Due: Final Film
Week 11 OCT 29	Screening Second Film: Multiple Take
Week 12 NOV 5	Screening Second Film: Multiple Take
Week 13 NOV 12	Auditions & Commercials Business of Directing “Directing is mostly casting. Put actors at ease; don’t befriend them. Don’t act with auditioners.”
Week 14 NOV 19	Select Shorts Screen: <i>The Lesson</i> , Alice Troughton, d. 2023
Week 15 NOV 26	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY NO CLASS
Week 16 DEC 3	Rough Cuts Work in Progress Screen: <i>Day for Night</i> , François Truffaut d., 1974 Final Film Due on Canvas: DEC 8