

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

COMM 308 Screen Directing: Spring 2023

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Number & Section	COMM 308
Class Time and Day	TUESDAY: 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM
Room Number & Building	Mundelein Center - Room 1410

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name	Miguel Silveira
Phone Number	7343959578
Email Address	msilveira@luc.edu
Office Hours	By Appointment
Office Location	Loyola University Water Tower Campus, 111 E. Pearson St. School of Communication, 9 th Floor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COMM 308 This advanced course in screen directing is designed to further students' narrative filmmaking skills. Geared toward creating fiction films, the course focuses primarily on blocking for the camera, directing actors for the screen, and structuring dramatic scenes. Students should have a working knowledge of basic videography, nonlinear editing, shot composition and film grammar. This course will explore the essential directing techniques utilized by filmmakers across the ages. A combination of extensive scene analysis lectures and exercises, and multiple hands-on production experiences, each student will be able to develop the necessary technique required for the creation of advanced short fiction short films.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- What are the essential building blocks of a scene?
- How to interpret text (scripts) to the screen?
- What is the relationship between shots, blocking, and the original text?
- Shot listing, scheduling, overheads.

- Production rules.
- Directing the actors is understanding the text.

By the end of the semester, students will master the basic and fundamental techniques necessary for the successful completion of narrative genre films.

RECOMMENDED READING

The following books are suggested, except the titles in **bold**, these are required. I will show you cheap purchase options on the first day of class.

- ***Voice & Vision, 3RD EDITION** By Mick Hurbis-Cherrier.*
- ***The Nutshell Technique** by Jill Chamberlain.*
- *In The Blink of an Eye, 2nd Editing* by Walter Murch.
- *Making Movies* by Sidney Lumet.
- *On Directing Film* by David Mamet.
- *Aristotle’s Poetics.*
- *On Film-Making* by Alexander McKendrick.
- *Something Like an Autobiography* by Akira Kurosawa.
- *Notes on Cinematography* by Robert Bresson.

SUPLIES REQUIRED

- “AA” batteries.
- A personal camera is allowed.
- Lens Cleaning Tissue.
- Mouse for personal computer editing.
- Roll of Clear Medical Tape.
- 2 Portable external hard drives.
- A Tripod or equivalent camera stand.
- A Clipboard.
- Director’s notebook.
- The Sony camera we are using this semester requires a Class 6 SDHC card. Sony recommends an 8 Gig card. This chart illustrates the various storage capacities for different size cards. It is **recommended each student obtain at least 160 minutes of storage** in the form of multiple cards.

Class 6 SDHC card (Required)	2GB	4GB	8GB	16GB	32GB
Fine Mode (Best Quality)	20 min.	40 min.	80 min.	160 min.	320 min.

IMPORTANT: Should you currently have a drive that does not have a connection that is compatible with the school's MACs you may need to get an adapter or new drive. If you have a drive with a Firewire 400 or 800 connection this will not work with the computers without a cable that adapts to fit the port on the iMac computers. I recommend you purchase at least 1 TB drive. The drives should meet the following specifications: Minimum USB 3.0 port. If you have an older drive with only Firewire, you will need to purchase a converter cable that converts Firewire to Thunderbolt / USB C (current port on iMacs). It works best to not have a drive that you must plug into external AC power. Look for a drive that powers off the computer. With 4K, one TB is the minimum recommended. Minimum 7200 RPM recommended, especially for video/film concentrators. There are many different brands that will serve you will. Some brands to consider would be Toshiba, Maxtor, Seagate, Western Digital and Lacie. Many online and local retailers provide these kinds of drives. B&H in New York is the store most used by professional filmmakers. Local stores such as Best Buy, Apple, OfficeMax, Office Depot, etc., are good places to consider a purchase as well. **When possible, come to class with your hard drive without any material on it. If the drive is brand new, we will format in class.**

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

This class is designed as a hands-on laboratory where students will engage in practical learning. All our lectures, all the readings, and all the films we will screen have the purpose of servicing the production of short films students will create. **Filmmaking** cannot be taught theoretically, for one to truly learn, one needs to **make** a film. **Repetition** will be the principal learning tool in this class, and we will spend countless hours analyzing scenes in search of clues as to how and why a particular director decided to shoot a scene in a certain way. Our exercises will emphasize the concept of repetition because *the more you do the better you get*. All your work in class is at the service of the production of your films, which will then be analyzed and discussed to exhaustion. **Please be ready to hit the ground running.**

ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade will be calculated using the following formula (Points – out of 100):

Film Exercise 1: The Switch = 10%
Scene Breakdown = 10 %
Film Exercise 2: Finding Meaning = 20%
Film Exercise 3: Surprise Film = 20%
Film Exercise 4: The Proposal = 30%
PARTICIPATION = 10%

IMPORTANT: NOTES ON COLLABORATION

This class contains an element of collaboration that will involve other classes such as Cinematography, Editing, and more. This means that some of the films you will create as part of this class will be shot by a cinematography student currently enrolled in an advanced cinematography class, etc. The entire class will participate, and your presence will be required on set where you will learn how to work in many different positions – which will train you to get jobs in the real world. Not all students will direct films shot in a studio in collaboration with students from different classes. You will all have to pitch to the producers and a committee will select the directors. The pitch is part of your grade (see below), but it doesn't mean you will be directing the "studio" film, or that you will be graded any differently. Only the selected pitches and their respective directors will direct the studio films – for the same exact grade. The films assigned to the studio production are not more or less valuable, they are simply more appropriate for this style of production. All of you will shoot the same number of films whether they are shot as a collaboration with other classes or not.

1. FILM EXERCISE 1: THE SWITCH (10 points) **due on JANUARY 24th:**

A one-page mock-script titled "The Switch" will be assigned to all students. The story won't have any perceived meaning and will be designed strictly with the purpose of allowing students to solve a seemingly simple directing problem related to blocking: **How to shoot a simple scene where two characters switch places?** Each student will interpret the story their own way and try to implement a *dramatic reason* that justifies the character's movement in the scene. The directors are **not allowed more than 10 shots** (you are allowed as many cuts as you want) and must shoot the exercise in a single location using each other (or roommates and family) as actors. You are **not allowed** any dangerous props such as fire, boiling water, knives, guns, and other similar items that can cause potential accidents. You **are** allowed to shoot this exercise with any camera at your disposal, including your cell phone, but please pay attention to the quality and clarity of your location sound. You have one week to prep, cast, shoot, edit, test your file, upload it on Vimeo, YouTube, or a different platform if you can stream it. No downloads. **You will test the link before coming to class. This will be the delivery rule applied to all your film exercises.** We will begin the critique on the films on January 24th. This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade and no late work will be accepted.

2. SCENE BREAKDOWN (10 points) **due on JANUARY 31st:**

Building upon what you learned by shooting the first directing exercise, you will select a scene from a film you like and **(a)** break it down by number of shots, **(b)** identify the key dramatic unit of the scene (clue: it's in the script) and how it was directed, **(c)** indicate what lens you think was utilized in every shot in the scene, **(d)** indicate where you think the light sources were located and for what purpose **(e)**, indicate if there is any camera movement in the scene and explain what dramatic purpose does it serve (clue: it's in the script), **(f)** create an overhead plan indicating how you imagine the scene was blocked, lit, and shot **(g)**. Based on this work, you will present the class with a shooting schedule for the scene, a map that indicates how you would schedule all the shots taken during production as if you had been the person in charge of scheduling the production (Aka: Assistant Director, or AD). **(h)** You will also provide a short description of what happens

during the scene. This assignment must be presented in class along with the scene. This is an essential exercise, without it, you will lack the fundamental base any director must have to work professionally. This is the standard prep-work utilized by professionals in the real world. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade and it must include items (a) to (h) as you present it to class. I will need a printed PDF copy before the presentation or a link to a PowerPoint if this is your format of choice. **No word documents will be accepted, and no late work will be graded.**

3. FILM EXRCISE 2: FINDING MEANING (20 points) due on FEBRYARY 14th:

Important: The presentation for the Film Exercise 2 will take the exact same shape as the first film exercise. This will be due on February 14th, but to successfully accomplish the exercise's objectives, you will need to deliver the prep-work documents for your shoot on **February 7th** at the very latest. I will accept the work prior to this date, and it can be sent to me via email. The prep work for exercise two will be the same as your scene breakdown exercise - items (a) to (h) -, but this time it will be done for a project you are about to shoot. This assignment is worth 20% of your grade, 10% in connection to the prep-work, and 10% in connection to the finished film to be screened on February 14th. No late work will be accepted. **The Finding Meaning Exercise will be an adaptation of the script for "The Switch" and you will re-write the scene based on your own original concept. This time you will be allowed 15 shots maximum, and the script can be 3 pages long at the very most. Your final film must be no longer than 3 minutes long including credits or one letter grade will be deducted for this assignment.**

4. FILM EXRCISE 3: SURPRISE FILM (20 points) due on MARCH 14th:

First rule of the Surprise Film Project: We don't talk about the Surprise Film Project. This is your chance to surprise the entire class. You will create a film entirely on your own. The themes are free. No comments will be given to you in the process of making this project. Your film must be **3-5 minutes long (not a frame longer)** and must be presented after spring break. This is an individual film, and the filmmaker should not involve any classmate currently enrolled in this class, in short: The filmmaker is allowed to collaborate with any person they wish, except their screen directing peers. The film must be a complete surprised and will be graded based strictly on its technical qualities, including story clarity, camerawork, proper exposure, attention to lighting, etc. The most important element here is the proper utilization of blocking and camera angles to convey the ideas present in your original story. Quality of acting won't be taken in consideration this time. The filmmaker is not allowed to include any of the risk elements discussed in class.

5. FILM EXRCISE 4: THE PROPOSAL (30 points) due on APRIL 25th– MAY 2nd:

This is your final project. Even though the due date is the final two days of class, this is an ongoing project that will involve multiple steps, the most important of all being your pitch. Differently than you Surprise Film, which is entirely your own, from script to screen, your final project is designed to teach you how to prepare for a pitch. Each one of you will have the chance (well, it's a requirement) to pitch for a project you want to direct, but you won't pitch to me, instead, you will pitch your **PROPOSAL** to the screenwriter and/or producer's team. In short: You will be directing someone else's script. Some of you will be selected to direct on a sound stage and will be working with students from different classes, others will shoot within the confinements of our

class. Regardless of the format of each production, whether it is a “studio” film or a “class” film, everyone will collaborate and learn by making these films. **IMPORTANT:** The schedule for these films will not be set in advance and, much like in the real world, will go through many discussions and modifications. This will directly affect your schedules and I will make sure to discuss potential issues with each one of you, so no one is prevented from delivering satisfactory work at the end of the semester. Options will be considered. A final note: All of you will be required to cast actors from our theater program and beyond. You are not allowed to use each other as actors. You are also not allowed to cast age-inappropriate actors for roles written for actor of a different age: EX: If the script includes a “Grandmother” character, you will not be allowed to cast a young person to play the role. These films are designed for film festivals, and you must learn how to produce films of competitive quality.

6. PARTICIPATION: (10 points)

There are 5 projects in this class, your 10 participation points are assigned to each of them, 2 per project. In case of failure to meet the delivery requirements for any assignment, the student’s grade will potentially be reduced by the equivalent participation points = 2 points per project.

LETTER GRADE SCALE

100-95% = A
94.99- 90% = A-
89.99-87% = B+
86.99-83% = B
82.99-80% = B-
79.99-77% = C+
76.99-74% = C
73.99-70% = C-
69.99-67% = D+
66.99-65% = D
64.99%- and Below = F

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY

Documenting with either audio or video, being present at an illegal activity or knowingly violation of any local, state, or federal laws related to the execution of any assignment will automatically exclude it from being accepted for a grade. In addition, the same exclusion applies if you learn after the fact that your actions were of an illegal nature.

Incorporating the use of inappropriate or socially unacceptable images or audio into your work will automatically exclude it from being accepted for a grade.

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

All student work must be wholly original. Academic dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism, will result in a failing grade. Please read the SoC *Statement on Academic Integrity* ([linked here](#)).

RULES OF CONDUCT

Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices such as iPods before entering class. Once class has started, do not sign onto a classroom computer unless instructed to do so. Non-compliance will have a negative impact on your participation grade. Be respectful of other people's opinion in discussions. Do not take naps or fall asleep during class. It is disrespectful toward the other students and the instructor. If you sleep during class, you will be asked to leave, and your participation grade will be negatively affected. Do not leave class early. Do not come to class to take a quiz and then leave. If you foresee that you will not be able to stay the whole class, let me know beforehand. If you have any questions or concerns, let me know as soon as possible.

ATTENDANCE

Regular and on time attendance is essential for the educational process to work. Loyola University expects all students to attend every scheduled class on time. Exceptions may be made for university sponsored or work-related activities, illness, or valid emergency situations.

LATE WORK OR FAILURE TO COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

Any work turned in after the designated due date will receive a 10- point grade reduction for each week it is late unless documented illness. No work will be accepted after two weeks have passed from the due date and that assignment will receive a 0 or incomplete grade.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Students will be given multiple homework assignments to be completed outside the normal scheduled classroom. Some assignments may be conducted working with assigned partners.

Students will do their best to coordinate times to work on each project at the same time. Watching films is a major component of this class, some films may upset some students. The instructor will be conscious and considerate about the student's feelings, but **the student is responsible for speaking (and reminding) to the instructor about trigger warnings prior to screenings.**

GROUP PARTICIPATION

Some assignments may involve working in teams. This will require individuals to be responsible to their teammate(s) for meeting deadlines, be it to shoot an assignment or to edit an assignment. It's expected that these assignments are to be completed as a team. Inevitably, there are always individuals who show up late or not at all, and yet they expect the others in the group to "carry" the load for them. When this occurs and is brought to my attention, there will be a one-grade reduction for that assignment to the individual responsible for letting their team down. If this occurs on more than one occasion, a failing grade will be awarded to the student for that assignment.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Students are urged to contact me should they have questions concerning course materials and procedures. If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that arrangements can be made with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SSWD website: <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>

LIABILITY ISSUES

Students will be instructed prior to their first assignment on the general nature of privacy and trespassing laws. From time-to-time students may find themselves in a position where someone may not approve of them capturing their image. In cases such as this, it is best to honor the wishes of this person. Even though you may very well be within your rights to gather this information to include both audio and video, it would be best if students "walk away" from the situation before it escalates. **In the event something does occur, please contact your faculty advisor and/or the department head.**

EQUIPMENT USE

You may use your own equipment, but first clear this with me before any assignment. The School of Communication provides cameras, tripods, microphones, lighting and editing equipment that can be checked out from the Equipment Room in SOC 004 (OWL Lab). This equipment passes through the hands of many students and to assure that the equipment remains in good working

order, treat it like your own. **You** are financially responsible for all the equipment you use and should treat it with great care. This kind of equipment is not indestructible, and it is susceptible to various environmental situations such as a dirt, dust, rain, snow, water, and heat. Caution should be taken when transporting all equipment as this equipment is fragile and can easily be damaged. Be aware of your environment and where you are, always. **This type of equipment is popular with thieves and can easily be pilfered if you are not paying attention.** Do not rely on others to be the one responsible for “watching” the equipment. In the event something should happen, everyone in the group will be considered a responsible party. **Do not leave equipment in a parked vehicle where it can easily be stolen from the backseat.** If you do have to leave equipment in your car, do so by placing in the trunk. But again, as a reminder, do not let the equipment roll around uncontrollably. **Students are responsible for careful handling of all equipment, and for abiding by all rules and regulations governing the use of the facility.**

FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT RULES

School of Communications Production facilities: Water Tower Campus SOC 51. E Pearson.
Audio and Visual Production Coordinator: Paul Quinn - OWL Lab SOC 004 - 312.915.8830

- Schedule all equipment use through The OWL LAB. Do not assume equipment is reserved unless you have confirmation from the OWL LAB. Equipment and use of facilities are available on a first come first serve basis anytime, they are not being used for classes. We **strongly encourage** you to make a reservation well in advance for the use of equipment.
- To make a reservation, go to <https://equipmentloan.luc.edu>, enter your Loyola ID and password and click on “Owl Lab.” You can find detailed instructions for using the reservation system if you click on the question mark at the top of the page. You will note that the Digital Media Lab in the Info Commons has some (but not all!) similar equipment, e.g., cameras. DML is good for back-up lighting or sound needs.
- You can also come to the lab as a walk-in, but equipment is available on a first come, first served basis. This means that the camera you need for your project due on Monday might be checked out. Therefore, it's always best to make a reservation in advance.
- When a student anticipates a problem with either showing up late to pick up the equipment or returning equipment late, they should contact Paul to explain the situation. Anyone more than 15 minutes late for equipment pick-up may forfeit the use of the equipment at that time. Students who are repeatedly delinquent may lose their equipment privileges.
- Equipment must be signed out in room SOC 004 with authorized personnel. Students are responsible for returning equipment and materials in their original condition. Students must report immediately any damage or theft of equipment. Failure to do so may result in a suspension or loss of equipment privileges.
- Students may bring additional crew members, if needed, to the lab for production.
- There is no smoking in any lab space. No eating or drinking at any work/edit station.

SCHEDULE:

JANUARY

WEEK 1

JANUARY 17

January 16 is the last day to add and swap class

Assignment:

Directing Exercise #1: The Switch.

- Introduction to class.
- Syllabus and student responsibility.
- Problems of directing.
- Shots, script & drama.
- Book requirements and readings.
- Assignment explanation.

WEEK 2

JANUARY 24

January 23 is the last day to withdraw without a "W" grade

Assignment: Scene Breakdown.

DUE: Film Exercise #1: The Switch.

- Directing Exercise # 1 Critique.
- Planning of future assignments.
- Scene analysis.

WEEK 3

JANUARY 31

Assignment: Prep for Film Exercise 2.

DUE: Scene Breakdown.

- Scene Breakdown presentations.
- Planning of future assignments.
- Scene analysis.

FEBRUARY

WEEK 4

FEBRUARY 7

Assignment:

Directing Exercise #2: Finding Meaning.

DUE: Prep for Film Exercise 2.

- Catch up with possible remaining presentations.
- Presentations of Exercise 2 prep-work.
- The Pitch.

WEEK 5

FEBRUARY 14

Assignment:

Work on Proposals for Final.

DUE:

Film Exercise # 2: Finding Meaning.

- Directing Exercise # 2 Critique.
- Discuss Next Exercises.
- Extra Scene Analyses (Time allowing)

WEEK 6

FEBRUARY 21

Assignment:

**Work on Proposals for Final
and script ideas.**

DUE: TBA.

- Continue Critique of exercise 2.
- More on Proposals and Pitching.
- Check updates on proposals for final.
- Discuss script ideas for final projects.

WEEK 7

FEBRUARY 28

Assignment: Surprise Project.

DUE: TBA.

- Lecture on Directing.
- Scene Analysis.
- First rule of Surprise project: We don't talk about the Surprise Project.

MARCH

WEEK 7

MARCH 7

*******SPRING BREAK NO CLASS*******

WEEK 8

MARCH 14

Assignment: TBA

Assignment: TBA

DUE: SURPRISE PROJECT.

- Surprise Project Screening and Critique.
- Touch base about final project.

WEEK 9

MARCH 21

Assignment: Work on Final.

DUE: TBA.

- From now on we will be working on the final projects. The schedule will shift according to the final project needs. You are ready.
- All lectures are designed to address the final project's needs.

WEEK 10

MARCH 28

Assignment: Work on Final.

DUE: TBA.

- From now on we will be working on the final projects. The schedule will shift according to the final project needs. You are ready.
- All lectures are designed to address the final project's needs.

APRIL

WEEK 11

APRIL 4

Assignment: Work on Final.

DUE: TBA.

- From now on we will be working on the final projects. The schedule will shift according to the final project needs. You are ready.
- All lectures are designed to address the final project's needs.

WEEK 12

APRIL 11

Assignment: Work on Final.

DUE: TBA.

- From now on we will be working on the final projects. The schedule will shift according to the final project needs. You are ready.
- All lectures are designed to address the final project's needs.

WEEK 13

APRIL 18

Assignment: Work on Final.

DUE: TBA.

- From now on we will be working on the final projects. The schedule will shift according to the final project needs. You are ready.
- All lectures are designed to address the final project's needs.

WEEK 14

APRIL 25

Due: FINAL FILM

- Final Film Screening Part 1 and Critiques.
- Film Festival Talk.

MAY

WEEK 15

MAY 2

Due: FINAL FILM.

- Final Film Screening Part 2 and Critiques.
- Film Festival Talk.

*******IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT SYLLABUS*******

This syllabus is subject to changes.

ALSO: REMEMBER TO DREAM.

