

# FLPA 331 – Directing Film and Video

Kade Mendelowitz

Film and Performing Arts 331, 3 Credits, **University of Alaska Fairbanks.**

Meets: Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm & Fridays, 10:30am-2:00pm in Fine Arts Theatre 101 (and often KUAC TV studio)

Office Hour; Tuesdays 1:05 - 1:50 or by appointment. Office: 223 (by KUAC) or in the shop.

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## Course Description:

Introduction to the history, theory and basic concepts of film direction. Includes interpretative script analysis, creative visualization, conceptualization, use of space, working with actors and designers, and direction of short scenes and videos.

Special fees apply. Prerequisites;

ART/FLPA 172; FLPA 271 or FLPA 280; FLPA 290 Recommended: FLPA 217;

FLPA F121; or permission of instructor. (1+4)

**\*Non-linear video editing skills required for full success in this course.**

## Required Media:

Reading as assigned; none you need to purchase. Articles will be shared.

## Required Materials:

- **SDHC card Class 6** or better – **16GB Class 10** recommended, **8GB** minimum required, and the cameras we'll be using **don't like cards over 32GB**. Having your own SD card will enable you to back up your own footage and have copies of your original material.
- **1.5" 3-ring binder**. *Get a good one!*
- USB "Jump Drive" at least 8GB or external hard-drive as below.
- Computer Access with a fast Internet Connection and Video Editing suite
- *Recommended:* Portable External Hard-Drive, at least 200GB, (suggested: USB 3, 500GB+) for storing your video projects. The drive can be PC, Mac or both, according to your preference. All video projects stored on the department's computers will be deleted by May 14 – and may be **deleted at any time** without more notice than this announcement.



## Course Goals:

- To provide students with the skills and resources to direct a video project.
- To develop a students visual artistic voice through cinematic expression.
- To understand the processes of film direction by using trained actors and advanced
- cinematic tools.

## Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will direct and produce finished video pieces using a script.
- Students will participate in the production of classmates' video pieces as support crew.
- Students will develop collaborative relationships with members of their production team.
- Students will be able to articulate and defend directorial choices to actors, producers, and designers.

### Methods:

This course will be taught by lecture and demonstration, with students meeting outside of class as required to fulfill the course requirements. Course information, assignments, and updates will be posted on Blackboard. Each student is responsible for communications and assignments on blackboard: <http://www.classes.uaf.edu>.

**Vimeo:** Students will also be required to join Vimeo.com and join the group: <https://vimeo.com/groups/uafscreen2019>

### Equipment:

Directors are encouraged to work on creative projects outside of class. Equipment can be checked out from the KUAC TV-studio.

### Editing Labs:

The Alaska Media Center computer lab (Music 305) has 15 imacs loaded with Premiere CC for you to use. The labs also feature Celtx screenwriting software, and FrameForge Previz software for storyboarding and animatics, and the entire Adobe CC Master Production Suite including After Effects. **You will need your polar express card to access the lab.** *Each entrance to the Lab is recorded, so should there be a problem we know who was in the lab when.*

### Course Policies:

#### 1. Cell Phones/laptops etc.

**Be present and attentive during class.** If you must receive a call, the phone must be silent. Text messaging is forbidden. You are welcome to bring laptops to class, but all electronic devices must be used for class related activities.

#### 2. Attendance and Participation

Participate in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the course. It's important for you to be involved with decisions about the direction the class is going and the activities we are pursuing. The most important goal of the class is for you to learn about the subject – HOW we do that is often negotiable. I expect you to take an active role in expressing your opinion about the effectiveness of class assignments, group projects, your text, assigned readings, etc.

Of course, to be helpful and constructive, you need to back up your opinions with good arguments and reasons for making your claims. A well-articulated argument goes a long way!

#### 3. Absence from Class

Take responsibility for getting assignments or handouts from classmates. If you miss class for any reason, it's your responsibility to arrange for a classmate to collect copies of any handouts, or to provide you with information on any assignments, activities, lecture materials, or dates changed. You must reschedule any conflicts at least 48 hours ahead of time. If you miss a day in which you are scheduled to be a director or cinematographer, you will take a ZERO for that assignment.

**Be in class to earn a grade for an in-class activity or exercise.** Students will be responsible for presenting and critiquing video material in class, should you miss this portion, you will take a zero for the day. In-class activities and exercises may not be made up at a later date. In rare instances, students may have to miss class for a valid, university-sanctioned reason (In general, an absence is considered "official" when the student is: (A) participating in an approved field trip or other official UAF activity [e.g., athletics, music, theater arts]; (B) confirmed under doctor's orders; or (C) granted a leave of absence from UAF for reasonable cause by an academic dean or director). Except for medical emergencies, which require documentation, absences must be approved by the instructor prior to the class session that will be missed. Alternate assignments to make up for any in-class points will be given only for instructor-approved absences.

Class participation, in production and discussions is essential to your learning, and will be part of the final grade.

#### 4. Due Dates are Critical

Projects are due at the date they are assigned. Late projects will be penalized 5 points per day (not per class session). *Be on time!*

### Important selections from the UAF Student Code of Conduct:

“UAF requires students to conduct themselves honestly and responsibly, and to respect the rights of others. Conduct that unreasonably interferes with the learning environment or that violates the rights of others is prohibited.... Honesty is a primary responsibility of you and every other UAF student. The following are common guidelines regarding academic integrity:

- Students will not collaborate on any quizzes or exams that will contribute to their grade in a course, unless permission is granted by the instructor of the course. Only those materials permitted by the instructor may be used to assist in quizzes and examinations.
- Students will not represent the work of others as their own. A student will attribute the source of information not original with himself or herself (direct quotes or paraphrases) in compositions, theses and other reports.
- No work submitted for one course may be submitted for credit in another course without the explicit approval of both instructors.”

### Grading

Grading will be informed by UAF guidelines, which are included in the following table. What I'd consider the cinematic equivalent to UAF guidelines are also noted. I make a conscious effort to have these criteria in mind when I'm grading your work. I encourage you to refer to this chart often (along with the explanation of criteria I use for grading your writing, that appears later in this syllabus). By working from a commonly understood interpretation of grades, you should be better able to gauge your performance and the quality of your work.

#### Grade Breakdown

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%  
Pre-Production Assignments 20%  
Directorial Assignments: 30%  
Post-Production Assignments 15%  
Crew Assignments & Evaluations: 10%  
Final Cut: Film(s) 15%



Attendance is considered mandatory, and absences can only affect your grade in a negative fashion.

- Breaking any parts of the student code of conduct will negatively impact your final grade, the severity of the impact will match the severity of the infraction.

Grade	UAF Guideline	Cinematic Equivalent
A	An honor grade, indicates originality and independent work, a thorough mastery of the subject, and the satisfactory completion of more work than is regularly required.	Great work. Creative, comprehensive, innovative, and insightful. Pre-production, production, and postproduction are to highest standards achievable for the circumstances. DVD with menu is produced.
B	Indicates outstanding ability above the average level of performance.	Well done. Smart, conscientious, thorough, and effective. Work is well shot, edits are clean, audio levels are even, credits are complete.
C	Indicates a satisfactory or average level of performance.	Adequate job. Competently satisfies basic requirements of assignment or request with correct and generally complete information – lacks inspiration, but is sufficient to meet needs. Gets the point across, but roughly cut or shot.

D	The lowest passing grade, indicates work of below average quality and performance.	Sloppy or lazy work. May address most elements of an assignment, but often reflects inattention to details resulting in poor edits, rough takes, out-of-sync audio, and the like. No sound track, credits, or fades typical.
F	Indicates failure to meet lowest standards.	Unacceptable. Work meets so few assignment elements, or meets them so poorly, it is unwatchable.

a. Grading Written and Production Assignments:

The ability to communicate ideas clearly is the cornerstone of a great director. To demonstrate good directing, you should plan to organize your ideas clearly, use correct grammar, spell words and names correctly, and demonstrate that you've thoroughly conceptualized and edited your work.

Effort put in to the pre-production will make up for problems during production and post.

All production assignments should be turned in with accompanying pre-production material; screenplays, shooting scripts, storyboards, production schedules, contact sheets, etc. It is the director's responsibility to provide this information along with their final cut of the film.

It's not "cheating" to ask for opinions and editing skills of others. Instead, the discussion is positive and can bring new insights to your work. The Writing Center (<http://www.alaska.edu/english/studentresources/writing/>) is available for students to develop their writing skills. Please visit or contact them for assistance, Gruening 801 or 474-5314. For assistance with video production, please consult me, or your production-team members.

I generally evaluate video quality based on the following characteristics:

"A" Production:

- Demonstrates a high level of insight about the story – a director's concept is clear.
- Exhibits creativity in both concept and approach to the story. Technique matches intention.
- Well organized production with complete supporting materials (screenplay, storyboard, production schedule, etc)
- Displays awareness of the audience and the kind of production suitable for that audience.
- Is virtually free from errors in mechanics: Shots and edits "work" without dropped frames, gaps, audio inconsistencies, continuity errors.
- Addresses the task set by the assignment.

"B" Production:

- Demonstrates great skill in one or more area of production.
- Exhibits competence in both approach to the assigned problem and use of cinematic language.
- Features good organization of pre-production, although it may have minor flaws in organization.
- Displays awareness of the audience and the kind of production suitable for that audience.
- Is generally free from errors in mechanics. May have some editing or filming errors.
- Addresses the task set by the assignment.

"C" Production:

- Story conveys general understanding of video production skills.
- Production is adequately developed and organized.
- Displays some awareness of the audience and the kind of production suitable for that audience.
- May display some errors in mechanics, on multiple levels.
- Addresses the task set by the assignment.

"D" Production:

- Demonstrates a weak concept of director – unclear story structure or concept.
- Displays weaknesses in development or organization, or
- Reveals the director's unawareness of the kind of production suitable for the audience, or
- Reveals a pattern of errors in mechanics

- Suggests a lack of understanding of the assignment.

"F" Production:

- Work is incomplete, unedited, or
- Unorganized for production
- Reveals the director's unawareness of the kind of production suitable for the audience, or
- Reveals a pattern of errors in mechanics on multiple levels
- Complete lack of understanding or disregard of the assignment.

**Student Protections and Services Statement:**

Every qualified student is welcome in my classroom. As needed, I am happy to work with you, disabilities services, veteran's services, rural student services, etc to find reasonable accommodations. Students at this university are protected against sexual harassment and discrimination (Title IX), and minors have additional protections. As required, if I notice or am informed of certain types of misconduct, then I am required to report it to the appropriate authorities. For more information on your rights as a student and the resources available to you to resolve problems, please go to the following site: [www.uaf.edu/handbook/](http://www.uaf.edu/handbook/)

**Support Services:**

- Disability Services: <http://www.uaf.edu/disability/>
- Student Support Services <https://uaf.edu/sss/>
- Rural Student Services <https://uaf.edu/ruralss/>
- Military and Veteran Services: <https://uaf.edu/veterans/>
- UAF Writing Center <http://www.uaf.edu/english/writing-center/>

**Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity**

University of Alaska Board of Regents have clearly stated in BOR Policy that discrimination, harassment and violence will not be tolerated on any campus of the University of Alaska. If you believe you are experiencing discrimination or any form of harassment including sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, you are encouraged to report that behavior. If you disclose sexual harassment or sexual violence to a faculty member or any university employee, they must notify the UAF Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. Your choices for disclosure include:

- 1) You may confidentially disclose and access confidential counseling by contacting the UAF Health & Counseling Center at 474-7043.
- 2) You may access support and file a Title IX report by contacting the UAF Title IX Coordinator at 474-7599.
- 3) You may file a criminal complaint by contacting the University Police Department at 474-7721.

**Semester Schedule**

*Because we are collaborating with the FLPA 310 Acting for the Camera course, this schedule is very likely to change. This below schedule is meant to give you a broad sketch of the semester.*

This should be considered something of a Capstone course; Work hard, Impress, Excel, Build your reel!

- Wed. 1/16 Enrollment, Syllabus
- Fri. 1/18 Studio, Meet the Actors, Subtext Exercises.
- Wed. 1/23 **DUE: One-Pager selections**
- Fri. 1/25 **DUE: Directing Reels**, Planning and Shooting (discussion)

- Wed. 1/30 Discussion
- Fri. 2/1 Watch actor exercise playbacks, One Pager rehearsals
- Wed. 2/6 **Workshop One Pagers (2)**
- Fri. 2/8 **Shoot One Pagers (4)** 10:35-11:20, 11:20-12:05, 12:25-1:10, 1:10-1:55
- Wed. 2/13 **Workshop one-pagers (2)**
- Fri. 2/15 **Shoot One Pager Scenes (4)**
- Wed. 2/20 Discussion / Reflection of first set of shoots.
- Fri. 2/22 **DUE: Watch One-Pager Scenes** (Discussion: continuity, choices, chemistry).  
**Workshop (2) TV Scenes**
- Wed. 2/27 **Shoot TV Scene (1)** 10:35-11:35 **Workshop TV Scene (1)** **DUE: Scripts for Film Scenes,**
- Fri. 3/1 **Shoot (3) TV Scenes** 10:35-11:35, 11:45-12:45, 12:55-1:55
- Wed. 3/6 **Shoot TV Scene (1)** **Workshop TV Scene (1)**
- Fri. 3/8 **Shoot (3) TV Scenes** *Actors will be given their casting for Film Scenes today.*
- Spring Break*
- Wed. 3/20 Film Scene Rehearsals (actors off-book)
- Fri. 3/22 **DUE: Watch TV-Scenes** Film scene rehearsals
- Wed. 3/27 Workshop Film Scenes (2)
- Fri. 3/29 Workshop Film Scenes (6)
- Wed. 4/3 Planning for Film Scenes
- Fri. 4/5 **Shoot Film Scenes (2)** 10:35-12:05, 12:20-1:50
- Wed. 4/10 Planning for Film Scenes
- Fri. 4/12 **Shoot Film Scenes (2)**
- Wed. 4/17 Planning for Film Scenes
- Fri. 4/19 **Shoot Film Scenes (2)**
- Wed. 4/24 Planning for Film Scenes
- Fri. 4/26 **Shoot Film Scenes (2)**
- Wed. 5/1 1:00-3:00pm Final Exam screening in Salisbury: **DUE: Watch Film Scenes playbacks, discussion.**