

SM4121: DIRECTING FOR HONG KONG CINEMA

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Directing for Hong Kong Cinema

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

4121

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

6

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

Chinese

Medium of Assessment

Chinese

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

SM3115 Chinese Scriptwriting I

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

Building on what students have learned from the screenwriting class, this course allows students interested in the cinematic arts to learn and practice film directing. A firm grasp of film language is vital for a director, whose artistic expression and

communicative power can only be achieved through a precise and meaningful treatment of sounds and images. This course aims to enhance students' understanding of the crafts of film directors, their role and work in a production team, and the steps for them to pitch for a future project. Taught by an experienced director from the Hong Kong film industry, this course provides students a hands-on experience, from developing a screenplay into a filmable script to learning methods in casting and director actors to working with student producers, art directors, recording artists, etc., and to completing postproduction of a short film with music composers, sound design, and special effects when necessary.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1 Understand what film language is, and explain through critical analysis how creative, meaningful and successful film language is used in a cinematic work. Have a thorough understanding of the creative work of a director and be able to apply his/her knowledge of the art and skill of directing to his/her cinematic work. Take up the creative role and responsibility of a director in a professional cinematic production.		x	x	
2 Visualize ideas, emotions and abstract concepts in a narrative context, and translate them into expressive moving images.			x	x
3 Execute good judgement, as director, in various aspects of pre-production work - e.g. casting, location scouting, and storyboarding.		x	x	x
4 Conduct casting with good judgement, and communicate accurately with actors, directing them with clear and effective instructions in a narrative context.			x	x
5 To create and direct a narrative cinematic work that carries the personal vision of the director.		x	x	
6 Transform basic technical competence into a unique style or personal signature and proactively create a highly positive climate to promote social interactions among team members			x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	Lectures on the meaning and expressive power of film language and its creative application in the art of directing. Students also learn the key areas of a director's creative contribution in a cinematic production and are taught the ways to conduct a good and effective execution. Excerpts from film classics are used as illustrations for the lecture texts.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3hrs/wk
2	Lecture	A series of practical exercises conducted in class, out of class, and on location to ensure students gain pre-production experience in casting, location scouting, cold reading and storyboarding etc.	2, 3	3hrs/wk
3	Workshop	On location workshop sessions that focus on mise-en-scene and directing actors. Acting demonstrations with professional actors, with students' participation in group project of shooting-a-scene.	4, 6	3hrs/wk
4	Workshop	Group critique and discussion sessions that concentrate on scripting and production matters, monitoring progression of students' video projects and giving advice on directing.	5, 6	3hrs/wk

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1 Students' individual presentation of 'Scene Analysis' in class.	1	20	-	Yes

2	Students' performances in all class assignments or exercises – location research, storyboard presentation, group project etc.	2, 3, 4, 6	30	-	Yes
3	Creativity and performance of students as 'director' in Individual Project.	5, 6	50	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

0

Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Class Assignments/ Exercises/ Projects

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, build up argument and analysis. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Excellent grasp of creative material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative
- Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize
- Ability to approach a filmic text using a variety of theories and creative tools

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts
- Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions

Marginal (D)

- Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts

- Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions

Failure (F)

- Poor grasp of materials
 - No organization and structure, inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources
 - Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions
-

Assessment Task

2. Presentation

Criterion

This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lied in a student’ s self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter
- Fair organization, weak structure and composition

Marginal (D)

- Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter
- Poor organization, structure and composition

Failure (F)

- Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter
 - No organization, structure or/and composition
-

Assessment Task

3. Individual Project

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’ s proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature
- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative stratification and production
- Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines to create an impactful cinematic project

- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, cast, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, cast, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, cast, equipment, etc) available

Marginal (D)

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, cast, equipment, etc) available

Failure (F)

- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, cast, equipment, etc) available

Additional Information for AR

All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Work of a Director
 Film language for a Director
 Pre-production/ Production/ Post Production
 Location Scouting and Film Space
 Art Direction
 Creative Use of Sounds
 Casting and Rehearsal
 Cold Reading
 Directing Actors
 Mise-en-scene
 Storyboarding
 Shooting a Scene
 Individual Video Project

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Notes on the Cinematographer – Robert Bresson. Quartet Books
2	Theory of Film Practice – Noel Burch. Princeton University Press
3	Sculpting in Time – Andrey Tarkovsky. University of Texas Press
4	The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema – Jean Mitry. Indiana University Press

5	Godard on Godard – Jean Luc Godard. Da Capo Press
6	Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics – Michael Rabiger. Focal Press
7	Total Directing – Tom Kingdon. Silman-James Press

Additional Readings

	Title
1	How To Read A Film – James Monaco
2	Understanding Movies – Louis D. Giannetti