

Instructor: F. Owens; Bliss #2010; 941-1855 (YSU, voicemail); fowens@ysu.edu
Hours: M/W, 12-3, as announced and as indicated on web page schedule

Text: Ivan Cury. Directing and Producing for Television: A Format Approach (most recent edition), Focal. Available electronically via Safari Books. Various handouts.

Cost items: graphics, hand properties, products, set pieces, etc., for personal projects. PLUS **one red Sharpie, one blue/black Sharpie, and one hand-held stopwatch** (that's a stopwatch, *not a phone*!).

Cautions: (1) If Ursuline High School closes because of weather, I will email you information about our class. If YSU cancels class, implications can be messy, and we'll sort them out on a case-by-case basis.

(2) I might attend a couple of conferences during the term.

(3) You will be expected to take on more operational supervision of class/production sessions as the term progresses. Producing/directing involves supervising others: if I am supervising, you are not! Producing/directing assignments are always a function of how many students enroll in this course (six as of 8/13/14); enrollment can change over the semester.

(4) Do not miss class. **Do not miss class.**

(5) Do not arrive late or leave early. **Do not arrive late or leave early.**

(6) Turn **off** personal media devices such as laptops, phones, I-pads, mp3 players and document readers. (You don't have the moral authority to expect your crew to keep an attitude of production – if you're checking messages on your phone !)

Studio electronics. Your first challenge will be to remember how this equipment operates (especially the new audio mixer !!), and then how to operate it in a production setting. Once you've mounted the learning curve – including students in TV-1, you will begin to learn how to direct.

Mixed Model. VITAL: this course is taught in tandem with TV-1, with TV-1 students serving sometimes as writers/producers and always as studio crew. Because 10 or so students have signed up for TV-1, you will also serve as crew and/or talent. But you will come to realize that to achieve a high quality of production, you should **try to bring in "outsiders" as on-camera guests and as on-camera hosts.** That's because "outsiders" will perform for the at-home TV audience, whereas "insiders" – your friends and classmates – will try to perform for you and your crew. They will try to get a laugh from you.

Grading for this sort of course is fundamentally a matter of a professor's good faith professional judgement in relation to announced standards, not a counting of objective "points." Each production assignment will be graded, and grades will be assessed cumulatively. Build basic skills, then use them on advanced productions. So later productions are "comprehensive" demonstrations of your earlier study and practice. Obviously, if a production falls apart (when you should have kept it together), that's not good. If a production is completed but is too weak to air, that's still not good. If a production has the right pieces in the right places, but significant errors or weaknesses, that's a C. If a production has all the right pieces in the right places, that's a B. If you do a "B" show with a sense of style and grace, of panache, that's an A. Grades tend to be high because high-performing students are drawn to leading live-to-tape production.

Said differently, focus on (1) learning how to stage events in the studio for TV, (2) watching a production unfold in your mind's eye, and (3) making your TD calls complete, correct, and automatic. Directing always takes place in the future, whether it's while staging and blocking or actually calling the shots: you lead the viewer, not follow the talent.

You will receive at least one project grade before the “drop date.” You may ask for it in written form. Realize, though, that **later assignments are progressively more heavily deterministic of your final grade** (see above).

Expect to submit one or more of your productions (normally the **final program**) for airing on local PEG channels or web channels such as Vimeo or Blip. Such programs must be produced for real PEG audiences and must feature content appropriate for public channels and public audiences (not for an “insider” audience of YSU students). Said differently, you will make a program intended for an audience who is fundamentally UNLIKE you – in age, gender, lifestyle, and other markers. That means that most cliched program ideas for mail-it-in college students (i.e., clip shows about video games, films and computer programs) are off limits. **Avoid cliché forms such as movie and video game reviews, budget cooking, etc.** Do not parody existing shows. **DO NOT parody existing shows.** Be sure to pitch your program idea to me **well in advance** of production dates – so you can pitch another idea if needed.

Plan to use the best on-camera talent and crew possible for your final show. While you must **pitch** your show concept early in the term and **receive approval** for it, you need only inform me of your personnel selections.

Within this general model, here are specific points of interest:

Production Process (35%) refers to how you as (producer)director nurture a production challenge from its inception to final taping and strike. You will do this according to a time schedule which, if you are the producer, you will determine based on the instructor's advice. Your production "tools" are the skills of the people in your production crew. All people have unique strengths and weaknesses, and your task is to identify those of each person and to work around or to overcome the weaknesses. Some of your effort will be readily apparent to the instructor, but your thinking and other activities will be privately done. Similarly, your "medium" is television, by which you will aim to create sensations in the viewer. The ways in which you conceive television as a tool to affect a viewer also is private, although partially apparent through the programs you create.

One particularly important factor in "Production Process" is your operational mastery of all production equipment. There will be many opportunities for you to display your working knowledge of the production positions, and the crew members will make initial assessments of your directing competence based on what you display.

Additionally, a TV director is expected to lead. That means he/she identifies the desired outcome, formulates a method for reaching it, and supervises the crew and other personnel during execution. The director is **always** out front.

As director, you will be living in multiple time zones. The one most like everyday life is “pre-production planning.” But when you enter the studio, time accelerates because many decisions must be made during a limited amount of time. And when you put a show on the air (or live to tape), time accelerates even more - because the decisions to be made come at the pace of the show. Normally, too, when on-air, you will be thinking about what you are doing right now, about what you will do next, AND about what you will do in the near future. This flexibility of time is an inherent part of the production process and cannot be changed. You must adapt to it.

Production Products (20%) refer to the actual results of planning and studio sessions which may be seen and heard on videotape. Products will be reviewed without consideration to limitations of planning or studio time, of studio crew abilities, of equipment which might not be available, or to inadequacies of hosts or guests. In short, if they look good, sound good and feel good, they are good.

TD Talk (25%). **Your calls will be recorded, and we will review them for clarity, precision and control. Master them immediately.**

Directorial Style (20%) refers to a number of specific behaviors which are expected of a director. A director should be calm, gentle and task-oriented. This is vital because nervousness and uncertainty detected in a director spreads to all. A director is expected to show awareness of what each production crew member is doing at every moment during a production. A director should have a clear vision of the intended "production product" so that questions are easily answered. A director should make calls clearly and correctly. A director should welcome guests and make them feel as relaxed as possible. In general, a director is expected to show self-confidence, competence and friendliness. The instructor will conduct performance evaluations based on personal observation and discussions with crew members and guests.

Other course requirements are included in the syllabus for Tcom 3782, which is incorporated here by reference.

Productions: A rolling production schedule will be finalized about one week in advance. **This semester we will try to incorporate field video in studio productions.** Here's a general summary of what you'll be working on, based on full enrollment:

Week #	Project type	Producer/Writer	Text Chapter
1	(Introduction)		1, 2
2	(Proficiency Tests)		3, 6
3	Practice Scripts	Faculty	App #1
4	Practice Scripts		
5	Spots (Short forms)	TV-1	8
6	Spots (Short forms)	TV-1	
7			
8	Interviews/Demonstrations	4884	4, 5
9			
10	Interviews/Artistic Performances	TV-1	7
11	Interviews/Artistic Performances	TV-1	
12			
13	Newscasts	TV-1	9
14	Newscasts	TV-1	
15			
16	Entertainment Shows	4884	10,11
Final	Friday, 1211, 8-10AM		

Do's & Don'ts

1. Read "Essays on Technical Directing" immediately. It is vital that you speak the proper words in the proper way at the proper time.
2. Be organized. Lots of information thrown at you, and it's easy to become confused. Be sure that each recording is properly logged. Be sure that test recordings are made. Be sure that you don't use up another person's studio time. Be sure that scripts are neat and that you have requested enough copies of each. Accept scripts **only** as complete physical documents, personally.
3. **Be careful of the Character Generator and Switcher.** They require a couple of hours of study to perform basic operations; don't let crew members become frightened, frustrated, or avoid them. Be sure each person knows how to use them.
4. **Be careful also of the teleprompter.** It is simpler to operate than the CG, but it must be approached methodically. Novices think the prompter as a tool makes productions easy and professional. Not true. **They require practice, practice.** Only presentational style of talent performance is suitable for the prompter.
5. For this course, I refer to "environments" which means the real or apparent setting in which studio action takes place or objects are shot on camera. The environment of an interview (the action) normally is a set comprising flats, plants and chairs. The environment of a bag of potato chips might be a picnic tablecloth, some hot dogs, buns and condiments. Every shot must have an appropriate environment. Most need to be created by you in the studio. **Do not show yourself to be "production lazy" by assembling studio elements that are handy: show yourself to be inspired.** Pay particular attention to **populating the Z axis.**
6. Do use non-shooting class time to take care of pre-production and post-production duties.
7. Do put everything "in ratio."
8. Watch television, especially talk shows. Figure out where the cameras are and when cuts will be made among them. ("Take" in live/live-on-tape production, "cut" in single-source production)
9. Remember, live/live-on-tape is the top of the Television Production food chain.
10. Expect to take charge of an empty studio: no sets, no lights, no mikes. You need to decide what action your production will include and how that action will "play." Then you need to figure out what staging areas you'll need and what set elements you'll need to have put together within them. For this course, you should aim for very simple staging that doesn't require lots of "building" time. Then you'll work out how you want the areas lighted and miked. All this information you must convey to your studio crew so they can start the setup. In half of occasions, you'll follow someone who already has done this, and some residual might remain for you. While it might be easier to use an interview set that someone has already set up for you, it reduces the amount of direction you will be able to do. The extreme case is (commercial) newscasts, which involve almost no actual directing.
11. When others are directing, you are expected to watch and listen – if you do not have a production crew assignment. Do not kibbutz, sleep or leave. Put yourself in a corner, get small, and learn from what goes on around you. Model correct behavior.
12. Regarding expectations: Television production is a labor-intensive enterprise. **Only talent stay clean and pretty. If everyone understands that productions take time, effort, and sometimes expense, then everyone will have a happy experience. But when crews try to take shortcuts, try to use other crews' setups, or try to hang back and look busy while not sweating, everyone loses. In this business, nodding the head does not row the boat.**
13. Review studio rules with your crew.
14. Be ready: we might do a real interview show early in the semester, with Dr. Crawford as producer.
15. There's always a place for a go-getter. Someone who is energetic and takes the initiative to do something. As for everyone else, well no.