Cinematography

Camera Position

The position of the camera when a shot is filmed has a significant effect on the meanings that are generated.

For an **eye level shot** the camera is positioned at chest of head height. This creates a sense of normality for the viewers, who are used to viewing events from eye level.

A **high angle shot** places the camera above eye level, looking down on characters or action. What the audience views therefore seems vulnerable or insignificant.

A **point of view shot (POV)** presents action as if from the viewpoint of a particular character. This can encourage the audience to identify with characters or empathise with their situation.

Camera Movement

The movement of the camera can add meaning to a scene and encourage the viewer to read a scene in a particular way.

Movement may be actual or in the case of a zoom shot generated by the use of a particular lens.

Panning is where the base of the camera is static but the head rotates horizontally from right to left or left to right across a particular scene. Here the filmmaker is inviting the viewer to notice details or characters within that scene.

Tilting is where the base remains stationary, but the head of the camera moves vertically up or down. The viewer may have been positioned as a character within a film, looking up and down a building or another character.

Tracking is when the whole camera moves in, out or sideways to follow the action. The camera may be mounted on a track or a dolly (a tripod with wheels), or a steadicam hand held unit may be used. Tracking shots enable filmmakers to follow moving action or characters through scenes.

Shot Types

You will need to become familiar with the key shot types:

Extreme Long Shot (ELS) – This type of shot is often used to introduce a setting or to indicate the overwhelming nature of that setting for the characters involved. It might only show environment or people in the distance.

Long Shot (LS) – These are often used to show the relationship between a character or a group to a particular setting. The whole body of the character will be visible, as will much of the setting.

Medium Shot (MS) – A medium shot is generally used to present characters talking to one another. The characters are shown from the knees up and the viewer is able to see the body language of all the characters.

Close up (CU) – Close ups frame the entire head, hand or foot of a character, or part of an object. They can be used to draw the viewer's attention to a significant facial expression or to a significant object.

Extreme Close Up (ECU) – These only show a section of a face or an object. They are often used in order to focus the viewer's attention on a significant part of the face, a tearful or terrified eye for example.

Establishing Shot – This is the opening shot of a film or sequence, usually an extreme long shot or a long shot.

Cut away shot – In a sequence of action, the filmmaker might cut to show a character or object not in the scene. They are used to indicate connections between the events in one scene with characters or objects that exist in another place or time.

Cut in shot – If the viewer's attention needs to be drawn towards a smaller element within the scene then a cut in might be used. Such as if characters are discussing a crime and there is evidence within the scene which they have not yet discovered, the filmmaker might cut in to that evidence to provide the viewer with information not yet known by the characters.

Framing – If you pause a film you will se a frame, and the filmmaker will make decisions as to where the elements of a particular shot are positioned. The decisions they make regarding the prominence of characters or objects within a shot have the potential to generate meaning.

Which way do the characters look vis-a-vis the camera?

An actor can be photographed in any of five basic positions, each conveying different psychological overtones.

Full-front (facing the camera): the position with the most intimacy. The character is looking in our direction, inviting our complicity.

Quarter Turn: the favored position of most filmmakers. This position offers a high degree of intimacy but with less emotional involvement than the full-front.

Profile (looking of the frame left or right): More remote than the quarter turn, the character in profile seems unaware of being observed, lost in his or her own thoughts.

Three-quarter Turn: More anonymous than the profile, this position is useful for conveying a character's unfriendly or antisocial feelings, for in effect, the character is partially turning his or her back on us, rejecting our interest.

Back to Camera: The most anonymous of all positions, this position is often used to suggest a character's alienation from the world. When a character has his or her back to the camera, we can only guess what's taking place internally, conveying a sense of concealment, or mystery.

The way people use space can be divided into four proxemic patterns.

Performance

Body language: communication by movement or position, particularly facial expressions, gestures and the relative positions of a speaker and listener. It may **be** the message being conveyed or it may add layers of meaning to the spoken words.
Position: includes several different elements:

- **Levels** are very important, eg if you wish to show dominance you will probably have the person in authority on a higher level.
- **Closeness** is also important as there's usually much greater intensity when the characters are close together.
- **Distance** shows how intimate characters are with each other.
- **Posture** is the position of a person's body when standing or sitting, eg a soldier would stand upright but a drunk person would slump.
- How the characters **use their space** (if they take a lot of room for instance).

Writing about facial expressions: You won't be able to comment on every facial expression in a performance. But you can select the key points of a piece of work to talk about so you have a clear commentary that highlights the most important elements. When writing about facial expressions, every comment needs two elements:
- the details of the facial expression
- what that expression conveyed or what it intended to convey

Vocal elements: Many actors begin their interpretation of a character by finding a suitable voice. There are a number of different vocal elements you should consider:

Pitch – speaking in a high, low or natural voice.

Pace – the speed at which someone speaks,

Pause – a dramatic pause at a crucial moment could merit a comment. Surprisingly, a key aspect of dialogue delivery is when you stop speaking. Pauses are used for a number of reasonsP challenging scene or where there is a power dynamic between the two characters.

Tone – this suggests your mood and your intention towards the listener, eg happy or sad.

Volume – you might be commenting on audibility but you're more likely to be discussing the effect of a loud, powerful voice or a quiet, nervous or sad voice.

Accent – you may be talking about how someone has achieved a convincing accent or how the choice of accent enhanced their characterisation.

Emphasis / stress – the pressure on individual words that makes them stand out. Emphasis or stress for a particular effect is significant and can change the meaning of a sentence as well as the feeling behind it.

Intonation - the rise and fall of the voice. There's a clear movement up at the end of a sentence when we ask questions for example. Intonation also helps us to say what we mean.

Proxemics – the character's proximity to one another.
Intimate distances. The intimate distance ranges from skin contact to about eighteen inches away. This is the

distance of physical involvement--of love, comfort, and tenderness between individuals.

Personal distances. The personal distance ranges roughly from eighteen inches away to about four feet away. These distances tend to be reserved for friends and acquaintances. Personal distances preserve the privacy between individuals, yet these rages don't necessarily suggest exclusion, as intimate distances often do.

Social distances. The social distance ranges from four feet to about twelve feet. These distances are usually reserved for impersonal business and casual social gatherings. It's a friendly range in most cases, yet somewhat more formal than the personal distance.

Public distances. The public distance extends from twelve feet to twenty-five feet or more. This range tends to be formal and rather detached.

Editing

Editing is the process of selecting and arranging shots to reproduce the scenes in the screenplay.

A film will be organised or edited in a way that attempts to hide the fact that the scenes are made up of many different shots.

The first element of editing which you will need to discuss is **shot transition,** and there are four main types of transition that can be used by the editor:

Cuts – One scene or shot may move to another by using a cut. This is the simplest form of transition and is shown by an instantaneous change from one shot to the next. Cuts are often noticed by the viewer: a film can be viewed without the viewer being distracted by the mechanics of the editing.

Dissolves – This is a type of transition that involves one shot fading out, whilst another fades in. At some point both shots are visible briefly on the screen. The dissolve may be used to make a connection in the mind of the viewer between one shot and another.

Fades - These occur when there is the gradual darkening or lightening of an image until it becomes black or white. One shot does not move into another, but into a blank (black or white) screen.

Wipes - This is where one shot seems to wipe the other off the screen. It is often used to move the film between different locations experiencing the same time.

You also need to be aware of two main types of editing.

Continuity Editing preserves the chronology of the story in a film and gives the impression of real time.   Time does not jump around with continuity editing; it moves forward in the way that the audience would expect it to. They may involve flashbacks but ultimately the story moves forward in time in a way that is easily understandable and the narrative is continuous and unbroken.

Montage Editing is entirely different from continuity editing. The term describes rapid movement between different images which may seem to conflict each other. The generation of real time is not the goal of a montage sequence. The conflicting images you see are used to generate *meaning* rather than an approximation of time. They may seem to have no connection with each other but viewed so closely together and at such a speed, you may find that the filmmaker is making a point about or offering an opinion on a particular subject.

For example if the montage sequence is being used to represent the thoughts of a particular character, then the state of mind of that character would be indicated here. Montage sequences are often used to reflect chaos, tension or disturbance.

Sound

Sound is an essential and powerful ingredient to the creation of mood and atmosphere in a film/TV sequence and is used to reinforce the images that we see.

There are several types of sound that we need to consider:

Diegetic Sound (sound from within the on-screen world):

Diegesis means story, so diegetic sound means from within the story, such as the sounds that the characters can hear. This includes:

Dialogue/monologue – what the characters are saying within the story

Sound effects – sounds created within the filmic space where the source is clear to the audience

Ambient sounds – Background sounds that add to the atmosphere of the scene.

Non-Diegetic sound:

These are sounds that are not originating from the on-screen world, such as a voice over or music track. The characters cannot hear this type of sound.

Intra – Diegetic Voiceover – Where there is a voiceover from a character within the story

Extra – Diegetic voiceover – A voiceover from somebody that is not featured in the story – like a mystery narrator.

Incidental Music – Music written for atmospheric effect to accompany the action in a film.

Parallel/synchronous sound – sound which reflects the action on the screen

Asynchronous sound – sound which cannot be seen on screen i.e a police siren in the distance.

Contrapuntal sound – Sound that contrasts with the action that we see on screen

Bridge Music – Where music is made with the intention of making smooth transitions from one scene to the next

Theme music – Musical motifs or melodies that occur throughout a text. Theme music is often identified with a character or place and indicates the appearance of reappearance of the thematic subject either visually or ideationally, e.g. the Jaws theme tune or Darth Vadars character theme

Mise-en-scène

Lighting

High key lighting. - Features bright, even illumination and few conspicuous shadows. This lighting key is often used in musicals and comedies.

Low key lighting. - Features diffused shadows and atmospheric pools of light. This lighting key is often used in mysteries and thrillers.

High contrast lighting. Features harsh shafts of lights and dramatic streaks of blackness. This type of lighting is often used in tragedies and melodramas.

Colour

Colour is integral to the cinematographer's repertoire of resources for creating mood and conveying meaning. Colour is an important part of the mise-en-scene to signal a character's mood or also personality, to enhance the narrative arc,

The psychology of colour:
- Red: anger, violence, danger, love, excitement
- Pink: femininity, sweetness, innocence, playfulness
- Orange: warmth. Happiness, friendly, exoticness
- Yellow: sickness, madness, idyllic, insecurity
- Green: nature, renewal, hope, darkness, envy, ominous
- Purple: fantasy, mystical, ethereal, ominous
- Black: fear, grief, sophistication
- White: sincerity, purity

Setting

Setting includes the location, be it exterior, interior, a real place or a specially built set on a soundstage or location.

However, it is not only the physical locations that form setting, but also what the time is – dawn, daylight, dusk or the dead of night.

Props

Setting props are all the items used in both interior and exterior locations. For a historical drama, attention would have to be paid to the vehicles, street lighting, shop facades and background extras. For an interior scene thought would have to be paid to the pictures on the wall, the books on the shelf and the items on a table. The absence of these would also be indicators to character and story. Where props are placed and how they are used can carry additional narrative, emotional or symbolic weight.

Costume, make up and hair

The costume designer works closely with the other creative departments, particularly the production designer, to ensure that they:
- Develop the character
- Support or contrast other characters' costumes
- Are suitable for the actor's performance

- Are appropriate to the setting (both time and location)