

MasterClass



WERNER HERZOG



Teaches Filmmaking





ABOUT **WERNER HERZOG**

Werner Herzog was born in 1942 and raised in Munich, Germany. Having lived an impoverished early life, Werner didn't see his first film until he was 11 years old — in fact, he didn't even know that the invention of cinema existed. Werner studied history and literature at the University of Pittsburgh but never studied storytelling. He learned filmmaking by studying films and story on his own, and debuted his first film, *Signs of Life*, in 1968. Werner garnered a reputation for making films that showed people pushed to their psychological extremes. He earned the Cannes Film Festival's best director award for his film, *Fitzcarraldo*, in 1982. To date, he has made over 70 films and won over 50 awards for his artistry.



1. **INTRODUCTION**

CLASS WORKBOOK

Werner's Workbook supplements each lesson with Chapter Reviews, Take It Further opportunities, and Assignments. This printable PDF is filled with places for you to take notes as you go.

THE HUB

Share your works in progress, and ask your peers for help and support if you've hit a road-block, in [The Hub](#).

OFFICE HOURS

Submit your questions on the MasterClass site and keep your eyes peeled for Werner's personal responses.

A RECORDING DEVICE

Many of the assignments ask you to create short films or clips based on the principles Werner teaches. A smart phone or DSLR camera will do just fine.

HOW TO USE WERNER'S MASTERCLASS

Welcome to Werner's MasterClass! The exercises in this workbook are designed to teach you the craft of filmmaking from a unique perspective. You'll learn many new topics including how Werner approaches budgeting, how he successfully works with actors, and how he tells stories. Use Werner's workbook to follow along with the video lessons, and share your assignments with the MasterClass online community to put his teachings and experiences into practice.

2.

TEACH YOURSELF STORYTELLING: WATCH FILMS

CHAPTER REVIEW

SUBCHAPTERS

- Watch and Learn
- Learn How to Open a Film from Kazan
- Learn the Universal Rules of Filmmaking

Werner is a self-taught filmmaker whose education came from studiously watching films from around the globe. Werner stresses that you should watch films with awe, and watch them multiple times to truly understand how to construct a cinematic story.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- One of the first movies Werner watched was the *The Mask of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1932) by director Charles Brabin. The following are some other films by Brabin during this same time period:
 - *The Beast of the City* (1932)
 - *Sporting Blood* (1931)
- Werner mentions that few modern filmmakers are familiar with the work of [D.W. Griffith](#), who left an influential (and controversial) impact on the silent film era. Take a look at a few clips from his most infamous film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

ASSIGNMENT

- Werner says watching foreign films was instrumental to his own filmmaking education, particularly because he realized the same principles of storytelling applied no matter which country produced the movie. Dig deeper into the film history of countries that have a substantial film culture like Iran, the silent era in Germany, cinema novo in Brazil, neorealism in Italy. What common themes do you see in each of these films and cultures?

3.

TEACH YOURSELF STORYTELLING: READ

“Read, read, read, read,
read, read, read, read, read,
read, read, read. You have
to read because you
develop a sense of
storytelling.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Learning Editing From Icelandic Poetry
- Mandatory Reading For Filmmakers
- Learning From The Peregrine: Become Your Subject
- Help from Virgil

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner says that his obsession with reading was critical to his filmmaking success. By reading , you can learn to develop a sense of storytelling, expand your knowledge base, and move beyond being just a “mediocre” filmmaker. Reading teaches you a different way to see and experience the world. This sharpened viewpoint will inform your storytelling and filmmaking for the better.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner emphasizes that the best directors are the ones who read voraciously, like Errol Morris, Terrence Malick, Francis Ford Coppola and Joshua Oppenheimer. Take a look at [this profile](#) on Malick to read how he incorporates a deep knowledge of literature on set.
- Werner shares how influential [The Poetic Edda](#) was to his development as a filmmaker, particularly in learning how to condense, abbreviate and tell a story in shorthand.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Read *The Peregrine* (J.A. Baker, 2004), which Werner cites as mandatory reading for all filmmakers. Copy five pages of book by hand to get a feel for the language. How could his level of detail and visually-driven writing serve as a model for how you approach filmmaking?
- Now, choose your own peregrine. Find an object, animal, person or place that captivates you. Using the colorful language and prose from *The Peregrine* as your inspiration, write 20 pages of observation of this single object or place.

4.

WRITING A SCRIPT

“I read and read and read and I get into this fury of language, and it’s ...the highest caliber of language. And I know when I start to write, I’m not gonna step down below this.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Psych Yourself Up to Write
- Use the Screenplay to Set the Tone
- Be Ready to Throw it out on Set
- Write With Urgency

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner challenges the traditional three-act structure taught in film schools and says it leads to mediocre and predictable films. Herzog emphasizes writing with a sense of urgency, but not necessarily at great speed or with time constraints. Instead, he champions writing with a focus on dedicating time to record the thoughts and pictures as they arrive in your mind. Don’t dwell. Write!

Werner’s writing is very disciplined, to the point where he tries to never erase a single word once he writes it down. Use this type of urgency and precision to increase the quality of your own writing.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner talks about “psyching” himself up with poetry and music before he writes, and cites the works of Virgil, a Roman poet, as an example that inspires his highest caliber of writing. Read a translation of one of Virgil’s pieces, [The Georgics](#).

ASSIGNMENT

- Set a timer, and listen to Beethoven, Wagner or Schumann for two hours. In those two hours, write by hand a fully finished scene, with the caveat that you cannot delete a single word that you put down. Be inspired by the music, and challenge yourself to write with precision.

4.
NOTES

5.

FINANCING FIRST FILMS

“With 10,000 dollars you can make a feature film.”
—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Become Your Own Producer
- Make the Budget Your Responsibility
- Learn What Things Cost
- Reduce Your Crew Size
- Money Lost, Film Gained

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner emphasizes that large budgets and crews are not needed to make a film. Particularly today, with small and inexpensive cameras and affordable editing programs, it is becoming easier and easier to be self-reliant and self-financing. Be well-versed in your own budgets, keep crew sizes at a minimum, and most of all, do not complain. There are no more excuses to not make your film. So what are you waiting for?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Herzog references Robert Rodriguez and his ability to film *El Mariachi* (1992) on just \$7,000. Take a look at Rodriguez’s book, *Rebel Without A Crew* to learn the details of how he made the film on a shoestring budget.
- Watch the *El Mariachi* (1992) special edition DVD (2003), with the director commentary on. You’ll gain a wealth of knowledge from listening to Rodriguez dissect his own work.
- There are several online resources by filmmakers discussing how they made their feature films for under \$10,000 like [IndieWire](#), [NoFilmSchool](#), and [Raindance](#).

ASSIGNMENTS

- Make a film using only your smartphone in under 10 hours with just two actors, one location, that runs three minutes maximum. The story: One character is trying to get something from the other, and by the end of the film, she or he obtains it. Include one chase sequence. Upload the film to the Rate & Review tool to share with your classmates.
- After you finish editing the film, write a reflection detailing what you’ve learned. What was the most challenging aspect of the experience? Casting? Finding a location? Camera angles? Editing? If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?

5.
NOTES

6.

NEGOTIATION SKILLS

“When you’re negotiating a budget with financiers or production companies, you really have to know what you are doing... you have to understand legal terms. You have to know what you are getting into.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Do It Yourself
- Know What You Are Getting Yourself Into
- Keep It Urgent
- Negotiate With Conviction

CHAPTER REVIEW

Know the legal terms surrounding entertainment production to best prepare and protect yourself as a filmmaker. Learning and understanding basic legal concepts prevents you from wholly relying on attorneys in the negotiation process, who could strain the process or ultimately act against your best interests. For Werner, keeping the negotiations urgent and using your passion for the project to drive the legal process forward is key.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Learn about the [differences](#) between attorneys, agents and managers.
- Lawyers for the Creative Arts have also created a [document](#) to familiarize yourself with common legal concepts and terms that you will most likely encounter as a filmmaker.
- Additionally, there are several resources available that cover the most frequently discussed legal issues for filmmakers like:
 - *Clearance & Copyright, 4th Edition: Everything You Need to Know for Film and Television* — Michael C. Donaldson & Lisa A. Callif
 - *The American Bar Association’s Legal Guide to Independent Filmmaking* — Michael C. Donaldson & Lisa A. Cali
 - *The Pocket Lawyer for Filmmakers: A Legal Toolkit for Independent Producers Paperback* — Thomas A. Crowell

ASSIGNMENT

- Print and review the Directors Guild of America Basic Agreement available from their [official website](#). Underline or highlight any words, terms or phrases that you are unfamiliar with, and seek to fully understand what these mean. Do the same with the DGA’s “[Directors’ Minimum Conditions](#)” sample document.

6. NOTES

7.

LOCATIONS

“I wanted the audience back in the very, very, basic notion, you can trust your eyes again. And Ims normally do not do that anymore.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Quality Scouting
Leads to Quality Footage
- Consider Logistics
- Adapt to the Location
- Shooting With or Without Permits
- There's No Substitute for the Real Thing
- The Final Rule:
Get Away With Film

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner not only directs actors, but he also directs locations. He can spend several weeks doing location scouts to ensure he gets quality footage. Managing logistics, yet adapting to the location is key, particularly when filming in far-flung locations as Herzog does. Make every effort to not fake your footage, and go to the real thing. Manage the restrictions that you have and “get away with film.”

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner’s film locations are infamous for their beauty, daringness, and prominence within his films. As testament, Werner cites the opening of his film *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972), as a particular achievement.
- Jose Koechlin, founder of the Peruvian ecotourism company in *Inkaterra*, [recalls meeting and working with Herzog](#) for his films *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

ASSIGNMENT

- Werner once made a 3-week journey by foot from Munich to Paris in the winter of 1974 to visit a dying friend. It’s time for your own journey. Try to travel a significant distance by foot sometime in your life for an essential reason. Keep a diary or journal of all that you witness and feel.

8.

LEADING THE PLATOON

CHAPTER REVIEW

“Your project has to have a real, big, clear vision. That keeps people going with you.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- How to Inspire Your Crew
- Maintain Formality
- Do the Doable
- Be the Guinea Pig
- Make Catastrophes Part of Your Story
- Deal With the Unexpected

Authority to lead a film set comes not just from feigned confidence. It comes from truly understanding all the elements that go into shooting a film like the sound, the camera, the costumes, and more. By broadening your knowledge and skill base around specific elements required in filmmaking, authority on a set will become more natural. With that knowledge also comes acknowledging what you don't know. Let the experts on set guide you in their crafts as you make decisions as a director.

Consider Werner's words, “I listen to suggestions of the cinematographer, I listen to what the actors are remarking and it's interesting how far I would give them space for creating their own architecture of things. And I give them a very short instruction, and then I can leave them alone, I know they have it all in them and do not direct every single detail.”

TAKE IT FURTHER

- As you become more experienced as a director, you will learn to cultivate your own style and relationship with your crew members, and learn how to set the tone on each of your film sets. To get a more in-depth look on Werner Herzog's experiences on set and reactions as a director, peruse the book: *Werner Herzog - A Guide for the Perplexed* — Paul Cronin.

SET RULES

SUBCHAPTERS

- No Director's Chair, No Trailer
- No Video Village
- Keep the Crew Small
- Do the Slate and Last Looks Yourself
- Defend Your Actors' Eyelines
- Keep Phones and Walkies at a Distance
- Always Start Shooting 90 minutes After Call

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner emphasizes a minimalistic attitude towards his sets that keeps the focus on the film work. By cutting out the ego-driven accessories on set, Werner remains focused on the task at hand: creating a great film.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Herzog lauds director Christopher Nolan on his similar use of a single camera and no storyboards during filming. Learn more about Christopher Nolan's directing techniques and the culture of his sets from the [Director's Guild of America](#).
- Director's Guild of America has a vast archive of interviews with several directors who walk through their own quirks, preferences and approaches to working on set.
 - [Danny Boyle](#)
 - [David O. Russell](#)
 - [Michael Mann](#)
 - [Nancy Meyers](#)
 - [Martin Scorsese](#)

ASSIGNMENT

- It's rare that you get a chance to see your favorite directors at work. Take advantage of watching Werner practice what he's teaching you in the classic Les Blank documentary, *Burden of Dreams* (1982), which documents the making of Fitzcarraldo.

CAMERA: SHOOTING STRATEGY

“I do not want to speak to amateurs who keep rolling rolling and don’t even look through the view finder...I see that as a waste of energy. It’s a waste of material and time. Be very very precise and be focused.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Feature Cinematography
 - Come Unprepared
 - Avoid Too Much Coverage
 - Shoot in a Single Shot to Save Time
- Documentary Cinematography
 - Set Up Quickly and Shoot
 - Don’t Leave Camera Decisions to Post
 - Collect the Remarkable, Not Garbage

CHAPTER REVIEW

Werner emphasizes a minimalist strategy when it comes to shooting: no coverage, no shot lists or storyboards, making decisions in real-time and not in post-production, and attempting to shoot things in a single shot. With the advent of digital technology, it’s easy to accumulate hours of footage mindlessly without considering every aspect of constructing a shot. If you had to shoot every single shot in a film only once, how would this influence your preparation process? Does your mindset change knowing you can’t retake a shot multiple times?

ASSIGNMENT

- One way to break yourself from over-filming is to remember how precious analog film is to work with. Create your own [pinhole camera](#) with a budget of \$10. Take one portrait photo and one landscape photo.
- In a notebook, write down your thought process as you’re preparing to take each shot. Knowing that you only had one chance at the shot, what things did you consider when you were selecting your subject, lighting, location and time of day to shoot it? How can you apply these principles to filmmaking?

CAMERA: CINEMATOGRAPHY

CHAPTER REVIEW

“All my films have very clear aesthetics.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- It's Not the Gear, It's You
- Operate With Your Whole Body
- What Makes a Great Cinematographer
- Setting a Visual Mood
- Favor Momentum Over Style

It doesn't matter if you have the fanciest or latest camera on hand. What matters is whether you know how to compose a great shot. Look through the view finder and operate with your whole body to get the exact shot you need. This includes not only finding the right cinematographer to work with, but also using lighting to create the right visual mood you aspire to. Ultimately, it is up to you to drive and direct the process of creating a great shot.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner praises filmmaker Jean Rouch for his work in *La Maîtres Fous* (1955). Rouch shot the film in Ghana on a Beaulieu camera, which could only film shots that lasted a few seconds. Learn more about Rouch's work in ethnographic cinema by reading *The Adventure of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema*.
- Read [this interview](#) with Peter Zeitlinger, a cinematographer that Werner works with frequently, where Zeitlinger discusses his experiences working on Werner's films.
- Werner describes how he studied medieval paintings with his cinematographer, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, to come to a consensus on what look needed to be achieved in *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979). Take a look at the [work](#) of Georges de La Tour and compare the tones, textures and mood of his paintings with the final product in the film.

11.

CAMERA: CINEMATOGRAPHY

ASSIGNMENTS

- To effectively work with a cinematographer, you need to communicate and articulate a clear vision around framing, lighting and many more details. Make sure to use common reference points, pieces of art or mood boards that you may supply.
- Find a friend, or a fellow classmate from the MasterClass community, and complete the following assignment to test how well you can communicate your vision with a cinematographer.
 - Film a 1 minute take that has specific and conscious decisions made by you in terms of lighting, location, angles, framing, etc., write down your instructions for your partner to film the exact same take in the same setting. You can use additional references to paintings, works of arts, scenes from existing movies, and more. Compare the two shots with your partner. How close was your take to your friend's take? What were the differences? What points did you not communicate clearly to replicate your take in your written instructions?

CAMERA: TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER REVIEW

SUBCHAPTERS

- Spatial Orientation for Your Audience
- The Kinski Spiral
- The Nazarin Walk
- Disorient Your Audience
- Iguanas

Compositional techniques are another tool for storytelling. Each compositional decision you make, whether it is to orient or disorient your audience, or to employ a technique like the Kinski Spiral, should have a storytelling rationale behind it. Think about your intention with every creative compositional technique — what do you want the audience to feel, think, and come away from the shot with?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner stresses the importance of orienting your audience within a scene to avoid confusion. Find the trailer for *Waterloo* (1970) to catch a glimpse of Herzog's reference to the different armies and how they are established and differentiated in the film.
- Learn more about the [180-degree rule](#) and the invisible axis that Werner references. The intention of the rule is to avoid disorientation and distraction for the audience by maintaining the same left/right relationship between the two characters.
- Watch *Le Deuxième Souffle* (1966). Take note of the gangster attic scene that Werner refers to. How does director Jean-Pierre Melville achieve orientation for the audience in this scene?
- In *Herzog on Herzog* (2002), read more about Werner's description of the Kinski Spiral:
 - “There was the ‘Kinski Spiral’ for example, something I talk about with photographer Beat Presser in *My Best Fiend*. When you enter the frame from the side, showing your profile and then face the camera, there is no tension, so whenever there was a reason for it, Kinski would make his appearance from directly behind the camera. Say Kinski wanted to spin into frame from the left. He would position himself next to the camera, with the left foot next to the tripod. Then he would step over the tripod with the right leg, twisting the foot inward. The whole body would organically unwind before the camera allowing him to smoothly spin into frame. It really did create a mysterious and disturbing tension.”

12.

CAMERA: TECHNIQUES

ASSIGNMENT

- Stage a dialogue scene with two friends in a large, open space. With chalk, draw a large circle where they will stand. Divide the circle into six pie pieces. Film your subjects with your camera placed on the perimeter of the circle. Film it six times, once from each dividing line. Bring your footage into your editing program and try to cut the dialogue scene using all six angles. How do certain cuts make you feel? Make note of how your own eyes behave. Upload to the Rate and Review tool to receive feedback from your classmates.

12.
NOTES

13.

WORKING WITH ACTORS: CREATING THE CHARACTER

"[Regarding casting]... It doesn't matter whether your leading character is the absolute pestilence like Kinski, or if somebody's illiterate, or somebody has spent time in jail, or somebody in front of your camera who has been sent as the girlfriend of your producer. It does not matter."

—Werner Herzog

CHAPTER RECAP

Casting is everything. The success of your film rides on whether you've found the right actor to carry your story. Therefore, you must risk everything to find the right actor for the part. All that matters in the end is what you end up with on the screen. Work through the emotional drama and egos, utilize props and wardrobe, and find the voice of the character to create stellar performances.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Werner praises his experiences working with Claudia Cardinale, Christian Bale, Nicholas Cage, Nicole Kidman and Klaus Kinski in his films, and many of those actors praise his approach to filmmaking in return.

SUBCHAPTERS

- Cast the Right Actors
- Risk Everything for the Right One
- What's On Screen Is all that Matters
- Use Physicality:
Nicolas Cage in *Bad Lieutenant*
- Use Wardrobe and Props:
Kinski in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*
- Find the Character's Voice
- Finding a Character's Voice: Kaspar
in *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*
- Finding a Character's Voice:
Perucho in *Aguirre*

13.
NOTES

WORKING WITH ACTORS: ON-SET

“On my set, there are no stars, but whoever steps in front of my camera, is royalty.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Don't Over-Rehearse
- Keep Them On Their Marks
- Simple Directions Work Better
- Know How to Control Your Actors
- Hypnotizing Actors:
Heart of Glass
- Let Your Actors Loose

CHAPTER REVIEW

Every director approaches working with actors differently. For Herzog, not rehearsing a scene too many times, giving simple directions, and providing encouragement and security to the actor were just some of his methods to pull out amazing performances in his films.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Find the trailer for *My Best Fiend*, a 1999 documentary on the tumultuous relationship between Herzog and actor Klaus Kinski, and watch it.
- Dive deeper into Herzog's experiences filming Fitzcarraldo by reading *Conquest of the Useless* (2009).

ASSIGNMENTS

- Sign up for a six week acting class or workshop at your community theater.
- Act out a role in one of your friends' films.
- In your notebook, write down thoughts, experiences, and challenges that you never considered before for the actor. After the experience, what is the most important thing you believe an actor needs from their director?

14.
NOTES

SOUND + MUSIC

“I do believe that I work with greater intensity on music than almost all my colleagues in the profession.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Sound
 - Learn the Basics
 - Understand Sound Problems
 - Blend and Distort
 - Sounds for Stylization
 - Listen for the Remarkable
- Music
 - Find the Mood
 - Communicate
 - What You Want
 - Music Placement

CHAPTER REVIEW

The difference between an amateur film and a professional film can often come down to sound quality. When Herzog rehearses with his actors, he says he just listens, often taking more time to organize the sound than to organize camera and light. Be inspired by sounds, and prioritize it in your film production. When working with a composer, focus on communicating the mood. What do you hope to achieve with the music selection? How does it drive forth the storytelling? And while selection is critical when it comes to music, so is the placement. Herzog offers an example in this chapter from his documentary, *Bells From the Deep* (1993) — the prophet’s line of sight lifting over the mountains as he turns to profile was intentional with the music. By focusing on the elements of sound and music, you will begin to develop your own sense of storytelling.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Some of Werner’s most famous films have extraordinary scores. Find some musical clips from a few of Werner’s films: *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, *The White Diamond* and *Queen of the Desert*. What images, moods, and feelings are evoked when you hear them?
- Peruse the works of the Taviani Brothers, in particular *Padre Padrone*. How is the music dealt with in the film, and what effect does it achieve?

ASSIGNMENT

- Spend a night in the forest, as Herzog prescribes. Stay from dusk until dawn, and listen for sounds and record moments that you feel inspired by.
 - Reach out to a local audio engineer or a friend who records music, sound effects, and/or other audio for films. Ask them for an audio recording device recommendation. This benefits you two fold: You’ll likely find a recording device and microphone that will suit your needs, but you’ll also get to know another talented and passionate individual in your industry. The art of sound is a world you should be very familiar with. Let them share their craft with you.

15+16.

SOUND + MUSIC

ASSIGNMENT (CONT'D)

- Why did you choose to record a certain sound? What feeling did it evoke in you? How could you have enhanced the recording of the sound if you were to do the exercise again? How do you imagine using this particular recording of a sound in your films? What is a composition that you think would enhance these natural recordings?

15+16.
NOTES

EDITING

“What does the material tell you? What does it have to offer? And all of a sudden you discover elements in the footage that you would never have discovered if you had had a very strong will to enforce upon the footage.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Sensitize Your Audience
- Watch Less, Remember More
- Be Ruthless With Your Footage
- There is No Universal Audience
- Get the Right Feedback
- Use the Footage You Can't Ignore

CHAPTER REVIEW

Every director approaches the editing process differently. Werner reveals the following philosophies and practices when it comes to editing his films. Develop a detachment from your footage, and allow the footage to speak for itself, instead of forcing a preconceived will upon it; review footage and rate it with a hand-written logbook, work with others for a separate set of eyes, and be ruthless with your own material.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Read *In The Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing* (1995) by Walter Murch to review and learn some basic principles and philosophies commonly used in film editing.

ASSIGNMENT

- Create a film that is 1-2 minutes in length using only found-footage about the hardships of agricultural life. Sources can include [open source websites](#), [museum](#), and [government archives](#). The film must include a voiceover narration that's also found in the footage. Upload to the Rate and Review tool to receive feedback from your classmates.

17.
NOTES

18+19.

INVADED BY IMAGES

PARTS ONE AND TWO

“These great, incredible visions sometimes have to take root inside of you and the story has to come to you.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Valley of 10,000 Windmills
- When a Story Inspires You, Grab It
- Keep Open to the Unplanned
- Let Ideas Combine in Unexpected Ways
- Gather Ideas and Give Them Time

CHAPTER REVIEW

The world is a grand and mysterious place. Let it inspire you in your filmmaking career, and pay attention to the images that capture a hold of your imagination. Allow yourself to be inspired by a variety of visual images. Watch movies, attend photography exhibit openings, visit museums, study graphic and digital art. This is the beginning of building a visual vocabulary that you will continually accumulate and draw upon in your work

Don't limit yourself simply to what you are able to find online. Herzog is an explorer of the world and recommends traveling by foot to be greeted and surprised by it.

ASSIGNMENT

- Read Werner Herzog's book *Of Walking In Ice*, translated into English and reissued by the University of Minnesota Press in 2015. *Of Walking In Ice* is Herzog's own account of his 3-week journey by foot from Munich to Paris in 1974 to reach his and film critic Lotte Eisner.

18+19.
NOTES

DOCUMENTARIES

“Many of my documentaries, in fact, are feature films in disguise.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Making The Conversation
 - It’s Not an Interview, It’s a Conversation
 - Strategies of Conversation
 - Knowing the Heart of Men
 - Make your Subjects Human
- Eliciting Difficult Stories
 - Manage Your Emotions
 - Get to the Heart of the Story
 - Shape the Story: Get the Essentials
- Dealing With Human Beings
 - Respect Ethical Boundaries
 - Get to the Heart of the Person Quickly
 - Your Subjects are Human Beings
- Truth in Nonfiction
 - Don’t Be Too Pedantic
 - Illuminate Your Audience
 - Script Moments When Needed
 - Give Audiences the Deeper Truth

CHAPTER REVIEW

- When it comes to documentary interviewing, Werner says “you have to crack a human being open.” Get to the heart of your subject — what makes them tick? What do they care about? How can you identify with them, even if they exist in a world completely different from yours? Learn to deal with your emotions while managing your subject to get what you need on film.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Learn more about the subjects of Werner’s documentaries, including Dieter Dengler’s [escape from a Laotian POW camp](#), the prisoners featured in [Into the Abyss](#) (2011) , and Juliane Koepcke’s [survival of a plane crash](#) in the Peruvian jungle.
- Learn more about the style of integrating both documentary and narrative filmmaking with [this piece](#) from the International Documentary Association.
- Dive deeper into the ethics of documentary filmmaking, and where “bending the truth” can sometimes cross a line. Read [this piece](#) in *Point of View Magazine* on cautionary tales in documentary filmmaking.
- Watch Errol Morris’s documentary, *The Thin Blue Line* (1988). A longtime friend of Werner, Morris has helped define and popularize the documentary film genre.

ASSIGNMENT

- Arrange an interview with a prison inmate in your hometown. Go through the process of securing the film permit and releases, and begin the interview with the inmate with no notes or questions prepared ahead of time. How do you choose to maintain the flow of conversation? How do you extract the information you want without it seeming obvious? Be a professional. Edit together your interview, and upload to ‘Rate and Review’ to receive feedback from your classmates.

20-23.
NOTES

CAREER STRATEGY

“Be one of the ruthless ones who bursts onto the scene...do not try to walk all the trodden paths that have been established.”

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Be Your Own Film School
- Take Initiative
- Prepare for Rejection
- Begin With Festivals
- Move On
- Find Your Own Platform

CHAPTER REVIEW

For Werner, relying on traditional paths to success like film school and the festival is foolish. Instead, he advises building your career off of an energetic, focused intention, and through initiative and creative entrepreneurship. Measure the building of your career not just on your film output, but also on how much lived experiences you can accumulate that can then inform your work. As Werner says in *Werner Herzog: A Guide for the Perplexed*:

- “The best advice I can offer to those heading into the world of film is not to wait for the system to finance your projects and for others to decide your fate. If you can’t afford to make a million-dollar film, raise \$10,000 and produce it yourself. That’s all you need to make a feature film these days. Beware of useless, bottom-rung secretarial jobs in film-production companies. Instead, so long as you are able-bodied, head out to where the real world is. Roll up your sleeves and work as a bouncer in a sex club or a warden in a lunatic asylum or a machine operator in a slaughterhouse. Drive a taxi for six months and you’ll have enough money to make a film. Walk on foot, learn languages and a craft or trade that has nothing to do with cinema. Filmmaking — like great literature — must have experience of life at its foundation. Read Conrad or Hemingway and you can tell how much real life is in those books. A lot of what you see in my films isn’t invention; it’s very much life itself, my own life. If you have an image in your head, hold on to it because — as remote as it might seem — at some point you might be able to use it in a film. I have always sought to transform my own experiences and fantasies into cinema.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Start your own production company. Register a business license and name, start a website, sign legal agreements, and source filmmakers and other creators to build content. Where will you distribute the content? What platforms?

24.
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25.

LIFE AS A FILMMAKER

*“I’m a disciplined worker.
I’m a storyteller. I’m a film-
maker, and that’s that.*

—Werner Herzog

SUBCHAPTERS

- Think Long Term
- Make What You
- Want and Ignore the Rest
- Keep Your Curiosity Awake
- Experience the Essential Moments
- You are Alone and
All You Have are Your Dreams

CHAPTER REVIEW

Becoming a director requires fortitude of mind, a clear vision, and a resilience to overcome a series of obstacles. To build a long-lasting career in this industry, Herzog has a few pieces of advice:

- Don’t say, “I want to be a filmmaker.” Be specific. What is the project that you want to create?
- Develop loyalty with the crews that you work with.
- Keep your curiosity awake — become immersed in wildly diverging subjects that have nothing to do with film.
- Have a clear idea in your head about the kinds of projects you want to do, and more importantly, the kinds of projects you don’t want to do.
- Stay in the moment, and experience the essential things in your life without filming them.
- Believe in yourself: “You have to know that you are the one who can move a ship over a mountain.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Write down five things on a piece of paper that you’ve never done before in your life, and that are completely outside anything that is remotely familiar to you: an odd job, a new language, a visit to a location in your town that you’ve never been to, an overnight adventure. Put these items in a hat and pick one out. Dive head first into the unknown. Sign up for a year-long foreign language intensive. Get a full-time job as a bar bouncer or apprentice at a funeral home. Don’t dabble. It’s time to give your passion your full and complete attention.

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POST-SCRIPT

*“It is only the pilgrims
who in the travails of their
earthly voyage
do not lose their way...”*
—Werner Herzog
(*Pilgrimage*, 2001)

CONGRATULATIONS!

- You’ve finished your MasterClass with Werner! We hope you feel inspired to share your art with the world. We want to make sure that your experience with Werner and your peers doesn’t end when you finish watching the video chapters. Here are a few ways to stay in touch:

MASTERCLASS ONLINE COMMUNITY

- Stay active in [The Hub](#) by posting questions and assignments, and be sure to provide feedback to your classmates!
- Upload your relevant assignments to ‘Rate and Review’ for peer feedback.

OFFICE HOURS

- Submit your questions on the Office Hours page of the MasterClass site. Keep your eyes peeled for Werner’s personal responses.

FILMS REFERENCED

- *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972)
- *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* (2009)
- *Bells From the Deep* (1993)
- *Burden of Dreams* (©1982 Les Blank with Maureen Gosling)
- *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010)
- *Cobra Verde* (1987)
- *Echoes From a Sombre Empire* (1990)
- *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007)
- *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (1970)
- *Fitzcarraldo* (1982)
- *Grizzly Man* (2005)
- *Heart of Glass* (1976)
- *Into the Abyss* (2011)
- *La Maîtres Fous* (1955)
- *Land of Silence and Darkness* (1971)
- *Le Deuxième Souffle* (1966)
- *Lessons of Darkness* (1992)
- *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997)
- *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979)

26.

POST-SCRIPT

FILMS REFERENCED (CONT'D)

- *Pilgrimage* (2001)
- *Signs of Life* (1968)
- *Stroszek* (1977)
- *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974)
- *The White Diamond* (2004)
- *The Wild Blue Yonder* (2005)
- *Viva Zapata!* (1952)

MUSIC REFERENCED

- “Urgency” | Artist Credit: William Ryan Fritch

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MASTERCLASS

WERNER HERZOG TEACHES FILMMAKING

