UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Art Direction, Artistic Design and Lighting

Code: 105011
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Audiovisual Communication	OP	3

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

The course has no prerequisites and is designed for students to engage with the content without needing prior experience in the subject.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The objective of this course is to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the field of art direction, understanding its complexity and the diversity of its applications. The course will explore the multifaceted nature of the concept-paying particular attention to its meanings in different areas such as film, theatre, advertising, and video games-and will encourage an open perspective that allows for the discovery of various professional pathways.

The course will delve into the professional profile of the art director and their workflow, from visual conceptualization to tangible implementation, with a strong focus on aesthetic and narrative coherence. Students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to translate ideas into visual language through the management of resources such as lighting, character design, graphic elements, set design, props, and other expressive components of a project.

Learning Outcomes

1. CM14 (Competence) To come up with ideas for audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms, emphasizing the different gender relations and sexual and gender identity.
2. CM14 (Competence) To come up with ideas for audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms, emphasizing the different gender relations and sexual and gender identity.
3. CM14 (Competence) To come up with ideas for audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms, emphasizing the different gender relations and sexual and gender identity.
4. CM14 (Competence) To come up with ideas for audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms, emphasizing the different gender relations and sexual and gender identity.
5. CM15 (Competence) To organise the production of audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms.
6. CM15 (Competence) To organise the production of audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms.

7. CM15 (Competence) To organise the production of audiovisual messages for different audiences and platforms.
8. KM19 (Knowledge) Apply audiovisual communication theories to industrial audiovisual productions.
9. KM19 (Knowledge) Apply audiovisual communication theories to industrial audiovisual productions.
10. SM19 (Skill) To construct static and dynamic compositions in accordance with the key principles of design and art direction.
11. SM19 (Skill) To construct static and dynamic compositions in accordance with the key principles of design and art direction.

Content

Art Direction: Definitions and Disciplines

Art direction is a key discipline within the creative and audiovisual production processes. It refers to the set of conceptual and formal decisions that define the visual identity of an audiovisual, stage, or interactive piece. The art director is responsible for defining the visual, aesthetic, and symbolic universe of a project, in coordination with the rest of the creative and technical departments.

This role unfolds across various disciplines:

- Advertising: crafting impactful visual messages aligned with brand identity and communication strategy.

- Theatre: designing the stage space, costumes, lighting, and atmosphere according to the dramatic needs.

- Film: designing the overall visual aesthetic of the film, including set design, wardrobe, and visual elements that support the narrative.

- Television: creating visual universes for programs, series, or news segments, tailored to the format and duration.

- Video Games: constructing immersive, visually expressive, and coherent worlds in collaboration with designers, programmers, and 3D artists.

Visual Conceptualization: Ideation and Emotion

The process of visual conceptualization is essential to transform an idea or script into a concrete artistic proposal. It involves three key stages:

- Ideation: generating visual ideas based on the script, briefing, or narrative concept.

- Emotion: conveying moods and atmospheres that resonate with the audience through color, composition, lighting, and materials.

Visual tools:

- Moodboard: a collage of visual references that defines the tone, color palette, and overall aesthetic.

- Sketch: quick drawings used to explore and communicate visual proposals.

- Storyboard: a sequence of images or frames representing key scenes, with notes on framing, action, and set design.

The Art Department in Preproduction: Conception, Design, Development, and Implementation

The art department is involved in the early phases of preproduction, working closely with the director, production team, and writers. Its functions include:

- Visual Conception: defining the project's aesthetic universe.

- Design: developing visual elements (sets, costumes, atmosphere).

- Development: creating models, lighting and color tests, detailed sketches, etc.

- Implementation: coordinating the construction and execution of visual elements on set or stage.

Lighting as an Expressive and Narrative Tool

Lighting is one of the fundamental elements in building the image and atmosphere of an audiovisual, stage, or interactive project. Beyond its technical function, light becomes a narrative and emotional tool that helps define the atmosphere, time, space, and emotional state of the characters.

Core knowledge explored in the course includes:

- Light characteristics: intensity, color, direction, hardness, and diffusion.

- Types of light: natural, artificial, spot, ambient, fill, backlight, etc.

- Classic lighting scheme (three-point lighting): key light, fill light, and backlight.

- Color temperature and visual coherence: expressive use of warm and cool tones to convey emotion or mark temporal/spatial shifts.

- Integration with art direction: lighting must harmonize with the set design, color scheme, costumes, and props to create a cohesive image.

The course will encourage a creative approach to lighting as a means to reinforce the overall aesthetic of the project, drawing on cinematic, theatrical, and experimental references. Students will develop lighting schemes for specific scenes and participate in lighting design and simulation exercises using dedicated software or in practical lab environments.

Areas of Action

The art department has direct influence in multiple areas:

- Atmosphere and set dressing: creating a setting that reflects the emotional tone and narrative time.

- Lighting: working with the photography or technical department to define lighting as an expressive resource.

- Set design and scenography: designing and constructing physical or digital environments for the action.

- Props and objects: selecting functional and symbolic elements that reinforce the visual narrative.

- Costume design: defining the visual identity of the characters based on historical, psychological, or symbolic context.

- Makeup and hairstyling: character physical definition, aligned with aesthetic and narrative goals.

- Voice-over and graphic titles: graphic or sound elements that may be part of the art direction (e.g., motion graphics or title sequences).

The Art Director: Project Coordination

The art director is a figure who combines creativity with management and leadership skills. Their responsibilities include:

- Team coordination: supervising designers, lighting specialists, set builders, costume designers, etc.

- Supplier relations: selecting and managing materials, services, and external technical resources.

- Budget management: planning and optimizing the department's financial resources.

- Scheduling: setting deadlines and monitoring the production timeline to ensure each stage is completed on time and to the required standard.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Evaluation	10	0.4	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19, CM14
Implementation practices	40	1.6	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19, CM14
Theoretical sessions	20	0.8	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19, CM14
Type: Supervised			
Tutorials	20	0.8	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19, CM14
Type: Autonomous			
Reading, analysis and synthesis of texts, preparation and completion of assignments	60	2.4	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19, CM14

The course will be carried out based on four methodologies: theoretical sessions, practical implementation sessions (in the classroom or laboratories), tutorial sessions, and independent work in which students are expected to develop assignments, complete readings, and prepare class exercises.

The course content will be sensitive to issues related to gender perspective and the use of inclusive language.

The detailed schedule, including the content of each session, will be presented on the first day of class and will also be available on the course's Virtual Campus, where students can access teaching materials and all the necessary information for proper course tracking. In the event of a change in the teaching format due to force majeure, as determined by the competent authorities, the teaching staff will inform students of any modifications to the course schedule and methodologies.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Evaluation tests	20%	0	0	KM19
Implementation practices	30%	0	0	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19
Project	50%	0	0	CM14, CM15, KM19, SM19

Assessment will be carried out based on three systems:

Open-ended evaluative tests (development exam or theoretical essay) (20%): 2 tests, one in-class activity and one written essay (10% + 10%). Can be recovered. Repeat the test.

Completion of two short practical assignments (30%): 2 assignments (15% each), Can be recovered. Repeat delivery.

Project work (50%): Completion of 2 projects (25% + 25%).

Non-Assessable. Following point 9 of Article 266 of the UAB Academic Regulations, if it is determined that the student has not provided sufficient evidence to be evaluated, the subject will be classified as non-assessable.

Plagiarism: If the student commits any irregularity that could significantly alter the grade of an assessment activity, that activity will receive a score of 0, regardless of any disciplinary procedures that may be initiated. If multiple irregularities are detected in the assessments of the same subject, the final grade for that subject will be 0.

AI: In this subject, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is permitted as an integral part of the development process, provided that the final result reflects a significant student contribution in terms of analysis and personal reflection. Students must clearly identify which parts were generated using AI tools, specify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on how these influenced the process and the final outcome of the activity. Lack of transparency in the use of AI will be considered academic dishonesty and may lead to a penalty in the grade for the activity, or more serious sanctions in severe cases.

Bibliography

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Hernández Serrano, Gloria. *Dirección de arte para producciones audiovisuales.* Madrird: Ministerio de Educación de España, 2017. Print.

López Fernández, Jesús, and Leonor Balbuena Palacios. "Comunicando a través de la seducción: análisis de la dirección de arte en la publicidad de perfumes." (2019): n. pag. Print.

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Oejo, Eduardo. *Dirección de arte / Eduardo Oejo Montano.* Madrid: Eresma & Celeste, 1998. Print.

Quintas Froufe, Eva, and Natalia Quintas Froufe. "Moulin Rouge: dos estilos de direccion artistica." *Revista FAMECOS* 40 (2009): 84-. Print.

Rizzo, Michael. *Manual de dirección artística cinematográfica / Michael Rizzo; traducción: Sylvia Steinbrecht Aleix*. Barcelona: Omega, 2007. Print.

Rom Rodríguez, Josep A. Diseño gráfico publicitario: diseño gráfico y direcciónde arte publicitaria. N.p., 2018. Print.

Software

Adobe Photoshop - Image editing, concept art creation, and matte painting.

Adobe Illustrator - Vector graphic design, logos, and signage.

Adobe Color - Tool for creating coherent color palettes.

Adobe After Effects - Used to test how lighting will behave in post-production (VFX, mood setting).

Storyboarder (by Wonder Unit) - Free tool for creating digital storyboards.

Toon Boom Storyboard Pro - Professional tool that allows moving from storyboard to animatic.

Substance Painter - 3D object texturing for realistic finishes.

Vectorworks Spotlight - Industry standard for technical lighting design in theater, concerts, and film.

Lightwright - Used alongside Vectorworks for managing equipment, lighting plots, DMX channels, etc.

Capture - Real-time lighting design and simulation software, widely used in live shows and adaptable to cinema.

DaVinci Resolve (Color Page) - Though mainly for color grading, it's also used to anticipate how lighting willaffect color correction.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this link. To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PLAB) Practical laboratories	41	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	4	Catalan	first semester	morning-mixed