

Glossary of a Few Film Terms  
Engl 354: Grace and the Grotesque

*Mis en Scène* (everything captured within the camera's frame—that which shows up on screen)

- setting: on location, on set, or digital
- subjects: characters and their actions, reactions, and appearances
- composition: the arrangement of subjects, setting, lighting, etc. to one another

Camera Shots

- extreme long shot: subject appears small, in distance of frame; helps establish setting
- long shot: subject still visible in its entirety, close enough to register bodily & facial reactions to setting
- medium shot: only part of subject is visible (often knees or waist up, if human); setting still a variable
- medium close-up: subject fills most of frame; if human subject, frame captures shoulders & head
- close-up: virtually no setting visible; if human subject, tight focus on most of face
- extreme close-up: part of subject fills entire frame; could be part of a person's face or limb
- zooming: changing depth of focus *and* amount of subject in frame in the midst of a given shot

Camera Angles

- low angle: shooting from below a subject; grants sense of power and influence to subject
- eye-level shot: brings viewer into scene by placing audience on same visual level as subject
- high angle: shot from higher plane than subject
- bird's-eye/God's-eye view: shot from directly above subject (often w/ help of crane which lifts camera)
- canted angle ("Dutch" or "German" angle): camera is tilted; can capture or create unsettling emotion
- Bavarian angle: angle is changed by ninety degrees, making horizontal lines *vertical*

Framing & Composition

- loose framing: captures central subject w/ much surrounding space
- tight framing: focuses attention primarily on the subject
- symmetrical composition: two subjects appear on opposite sides of a single frame
- asymmetrical composition: one or more subjects are not balanced by others within the frame
- split-screen technique: conveying two or more frames/images on the same screen at the same time
- cut: shifting from one shot to another during editing process

Lighting

- hard light: direct, strong light, often from a single direction; can create stark shadows
- soft light: light reflected off another surface before it hits a given subject
- key light: primary lighting source
- fill light: soft light fills in yet unlit areas of subject and dissolves shadows; attractively lights subject
- low-key lighting: the subject receives little illumination, leaving much of the subject in darkness
- high-key lighting: light covers most of the subject and the surrounding space
- side lighting: subject is lit from one side, creating contrast between halves of the face
- backlighting: single light source illuminates character from behind, casting subject's features and perhaps even identity into doubt
- bottom lighting: think campfire ghost stories—can be frightening
- catchlight: a reflection of a light source caught or reflected in a character's eyes or some other surface
- main, frontal lighting: subject illuminated by one light in front and to one side of the camera, so there is slight shadow on the face

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#### Lenses & Focus

- depth of field: the amount of space between foreground and background which is actually in focus
- aperture: lens opening size which determines depth of field and relative brightness. Wide aperture results in shallow depth of field and brighter image; narrow aperture results in deep depth of field and dimmer image
- f-number: ratio of focal length to effective aperture diameter (e.g.  $f/1.4$  = large aperture,  $f/8$  = small aperture)
- normal lens: approximates what the eye sees when gazing at an object from a given distance
- wide-angle lens: more visible within frame, all planes in sharp focus (deep focus), curvature bends edges
- telephoto lens: frame is tighter—less is visible, and only some planes are in focus (shallow focus)
- fish-eye lens: entire image is curved, as if bent around a glass sphere
- lensbaby lens: creates a very small, in-focus focal point; other objects increase in blur the further away they lie from the focal point
- diffuser: material (e.g. frosted glass, mesh, etc.) placed in front of lens or light source to soften image

#### Color

- saturated color: intense, dense color which can capture emotional intensity, etc.
- desaturated color: duller color scheme which can convey the absence of emotion or energy
- warm color: reds, oranges, yellows
- cool colors: greens, blues, violets

#### Camera movement

- tracking shot: shot in which camera follows a moving subject within frame, often for a considerable time
- dollying: filming while camera is affixed to a moving, wheeled platform
- tilting: moving a camera, one fixed to a given location (tripod, etc.), up or down
- rack focus: altering focus in midst of a single shot, either from background to foreground or vice versa, while retaining the same amount of material in the frame (as opposed to *zooming*, which alters both)
- panning: pivoting mounted or relatively fixed camera sideways around a central axis
- swish pan: panning so fast that it creates blurred images

#### Soundtrack

- spoken word: spoken lines (dialogue, monologue), narration
- sound effects: non-verbal sounds made by characters, sounds made by objects, ambient sound (background noise: wind, surf, etc.)
- diegetic sound: sounds that can be traced to a visible or nearby source present in the film's storyline
- non-diegetic sound: sounds that cannot be explained by film action
- score: singing, instrumental music, laugh track, clapping, much narration. Usually *non-diegetic* sound.