1. **What is one of the most important qualities in a successful writer/director?**

One of the most important qualities in a successful writer/director is the ability to balance the sensibilities between the iron-willed tyrant and a Buddhist monk. This means that on the one hand, one should be able to wield an attitude of resolve and relentlessness to one’s vision and yet, on the other hand, one should be open-minded to criticism. Striking this balance is the key for a writer/director.

1. **What do Highlander 2 and Blade Trinity have in common? How were their creative problems solved? How would you have attempted to solve the creative differences on set?**

*Highlander 2* and *Blade Trinity* had actors that were contractually obligated to perform in their respective films, but really had no interest in being on the set. In *Blade Trinity,* director David Goyer and principal actor Wesley Snipes didn’t agree on the direction the franchise was to take. Snipes obliged to Goyer’s direction but only due to his contract. And he did not cooperate with anyone on the set. He reportedly strangled director David Goyer. In *Highlander 2*, Christopher Lambert did not cooperate with director Russell Mulcahy’s vision, either. The financing for the film fell apart half way through production and the producers cut the footage that had been shot until then in to something that barely resembled a feature film. The creative differences between the directors and the principal actor were never properly resolved in these two cases. Another famous example is the scuffle between George Clooney and David O Russell on the set of *Three Kings*. Clooney didn’t like how Russell was dealing with the crew and him. Russell alluded to the idea that the crew didn’t always know what they were doing. Moreover, Warner Bros. had never given a huge budget and shooting schedule to an auteur before. In all likelihood, Russell had many things to balance. It also didn’t help that Clooney was traveling back-and-forth between the sets of *Three Kings* and a certain TV drama with doctors set in a Chicago emergency room. Going back to *Highlander 2* and *Blade Trinity*, I would have resolved the creative differences on the set by properly accepting critique where required and for the rest of it, properly execute my vision by being a benevolent dictator. Sometimes accepting critique is not a possibility because of logistics: the locations and costumes have been set. The actors have been cast. They have to perform, even if they don’t like being on the set. This will be the most difficult part of film making. However, it is up to the director to convince the principal talent that they need to be there. The accolades are waiting only if they cooperate. All of this: the crew, the location scouting, the money, the great costumes, the music and sound and the producers are there only and only for the actors. That’s how I would convince the actors and actresses to bring their A game to the set. Now, if I were there for *Three Kings*, I would have treated the crew differently: with respect, humility and collaboration. Russell was wrong, if Clooney’s recollection is correct: that’s no way to treat a human being. Humility and collaboration are required on every level of film-making: from day one. No. From before day one. (Source of scuffle: many websites including Wikipedia).

1. **What is so unique about Highlander: The Renegade Cut?**

After the financing for *Highlander 2* was cut, director Russell Mulcahy didn’t accept defeat. He used Werner Herzog’s method of being self-reliant and found private financial backing for his film. He then re-hired some of the crew and actors and filmed new sequences for the film. He titled this new version of the film *Highlander: The Renegade Cut*. This is so unique because no one has done it before. The director’s yearning to tell his story his way ensured that the story was told the way he wanted to. Christopher Lambert didn’t have to come back to re-shoot for the *Renegade* version. Mulcahy re-edited the old footage along with the new footage and the result was a great, watchable film.

1. **What lessons can be learned from the tumultuous production of Highlander 2 and Blade Trinity?**

Collaboration is the key. Film-making is a distinctly and prohibitively collaborative medium. If one is not interested in collaboration, then one should not get in to film-making. The lessons here are just that: keep even temperament throughout, remain level-headed and the ultimate goal to make the film and have it shown to the audience. An objective mind-set is required for this goal. And great work ethic goes a long way to get this difficult, collaborative task accomplished.

1. **Why is being able to take criticism an important attribute of any filmmaker?**

Being able to take criticism is an important attribute of any filmmaker because having a singular vision of an idea is always self-fulfilling. It never serves the greater purpose of making a collaborative feature and getting it shown to the audience. On the other hand, expressing an idea, having it evaluated by peers and having someone point out the flaws in it will give it the perspective it needs. One should not take such criticism to heart. One should always have an objective mind, eye and heart to be able to take criticism and grow from it. George Lucas himself has said that one has to have a thick skin to cope with criticism and that he has a lot of friends that he trusts who are film directors and writers; he trusts their thoughtful opinions, knowledge and the psychological slant they put on their critique. Technical criticism is also extremely helpful, he says, but one can only get that from peers, he says. Most importantly, he says, “Well that’s great for them but that’s not great for me”. If George Lucas, out of all people in the industry, is getting criticism, it will be natural to get criticism for newcomers like me. I’ll be able to take that in stride and pursue my ultimate goal of making films and showing it to the audience by keeping a level head, remaining objective, humble and collaborative. (Source of George Lucas’s quotes: IMDb).

**Assignment #6**

**Turn in the first act of your script. Here you will meet again with your Hollywood screenwriter to begin work on Act II**

I have completed the outline for the first act of my script and have submitted it to my Hollywood screenwriting mentor. I have begun working on the outline of Act II of my script

**Extra Credit:**

**Watch *Overnight*. Compare Troy Duff’s experience making Boondock Saints to Herzog’s experience making Fitzcarraldo. Contrast these two filmmakers**

It was exhausting to see Troy Duff’s attitude for one hour and 21 minutes in *Overnight*. Not even for one minute does Troy talk about the art of film, the collaboration in film, and the value and process of film-making. Troy is interested only in fame and about being number one. After selling his first script, Troy let all kinds of bad ideas get to his head: about ruling Hollywood, about everyone else being a hack and about being successful. In the film world, success does not come by talking the way he did. Success comes by being humble, being collaborative and by immersing oneself in to the art completely, without any trepidations. Success will be a journey and it will be found again and again by being truthful to the art and by finding the audience with that truth. And it’ll come by mastering the art step by step. Troy did not have the attitude to pull off any of these aspects of success. It was excruciating to watch Troy and his friends smoking and drinking beer for breakfast, lunch and dinner. That is not how responsible men act. That is not good work ethic. And without good work ethic, one will become invisible in Hollywood. There was not an ounce of responsibility displayed by Troy to his friends and brothers. His mother tried to make him understand about twenty or so minutes in to the documentary, but he did not budge. Troy also had the audacity to bad mouth Hollywood Big Shots such as Harvey Weinstein. Yes, we all have the freedom of speech. But there is also the unwritten commandment to be respectful of others in any business and most importantly in film-making. Troy destroyed himself by bad mouthing producers, distributors, casting agents and Big Shots with a lot of influence in Hollywood. They all caught on to the idea that Troy wouldn’t be good to work with, so they let him go. It would have been painful to even have a cup of coffee with Troy. And during filming, Troy actually spoke about other peoples’ attitudes with his cast. One wonders if he should have been allowed to even cast actors. Bad attitude does not get one anywhere in the film industry. Humility and the ability to listen and collaborate is the key.

On the other end of the spectrum of film-making, we see Werner Herzog: a man who believes in self-reliance, reading and in being a gentleman even in the most demanding times. While filming *Fitzcarraldo,* Herzog spoke only about his vision for the film with his cast and crew. Herzog only talked about getting the best possible footage for his film. Herzog spoke multiple languages to connect to various people, doctored papers to film in another country and captured beautiful moving pictures for *Fitzcarraldo*. It is evident from the documentary and also by watching *Fitzcarraldo* that Herzog employed guerilla film-making methods just to make his vision a reality. Troy had no idea how to do guerilla film-making. I wonder if Troy could have learned anything if he were put in the same room as Herzog. With the kind of attitude that Troy displayed in *Overnight,* it would have been impossible for him to learn from anyone. Herzog on the other hand, displays humility. He listens. He is dedicated to the success of each of his departments on the set: cinematography/lighting, sound, camera, talent/acting, costumes. If these basic departments are successful in their respective areas, the film has many things in place already to get the best out of the actors. Herzog is able to properly devote his attention, effort and time to the venture with the proper grounded passion. This type of attitude makes film-making a pleasure. The journey itself is a success. The audience will flock automatically because all the elements of film-making have come together through proper collaboration by the auteur. In other words, Troy Duff didn’t deserve to be an auteur due to his attitude. Werner Herzog owned and ran the show throughout the film-making process and became a prime example of an auteur with Fitzcarraldo.