

COURSE SYLLABUS

CW 2400: Introduction to Screen / TV Writing, Fall 2018
CRN 43707

Oakland University
College of Arts & Sciences
Department of English
Course Credits: 4

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Office Hours: 5:40 – 6:00 pm, 9:20 – 9:50 pm at classroom (before and after class) or by appointment

Class Location: 273 South Foundation Hall

Times: Thursday 6:00 - 9:20 pm (9/11/18 – 12/13/18)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Just as there are essential literacies in both the traditional literary mediums of human expression (novels, poetry, short fiction, and theater) as well as new, emerging forms of media (graphic novels, video games, interactive digital fiction, and transmedia), so too is there an essential literacy to the understanding how a screenplay functions in film and television. As an introduction to feature and short film screenwriting, students will learn the essential components of character, plot, theme, and idea generation that go into composing a successful screenplay. Students will study the art of communicating ideas and emotions through the mediums of sight and sound as conveyed in standard variations of the Hollywood script format.

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to develop their own unique voices while deconstructing (or “reverse engineering”) an authentic, real world example of a feature film or television screenplay. Students will select a screenplay to analyze in order to generate products that demonstrate evidence of learning in the form of: 1) generating warm up and work journals inside and outside of class, 2) crafting a succinct logline, 3) presenting a pitch to the class, 4) generating a script reading response journal, 5) deconstructing a scene of dialogue, 6) analyzing a structural scene, plot point, and act analysis, and finally, 7) delivering a final script analysis in the form of an extended multi-media presentation.

TEXTS & MATERIALS

- A copy of the book *The Bare Bones Book of Screenwriting* by J.T. Clark (ISBN-10: 0-9795102-0-1.)
- A digital reading and writing device with internet access (a laptop, iPad, etc.) during every class if possible
- Access to Final Draft screenwriting software in computer labs across campus or from personal purchase. Contact the English Department for a list of labs that currently have Final Draft installed.
- Classroom access to a digital reader (Kindle, Laptop, iPad, etc.) and the following online files:
 - **Hereditary** by Ari Aster
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nGpY-UIEJE5kjhbAhgafczSKDmvh9CJ/view>

- **This is Us** television pilot

<http://scripts.tv-calling.com/script/nbc-us-1x01-pilot/>

- Access to either a hard copy or a digital version of a student choice script:

Hard copy of script:

<http://www.amazon.com/Screenplays-Movies-Entertainment-Books/b?ie=UTF8&node=4499>

<http://www.moviescriptzone.com/home>

<http://scriptcity.com/>

<http://www.planetmegamall.com/screenplays/screenplays.html>

or free access to script via:

<https://www.imsdb.com/>

<http://www.screenplaydb.com/film/all>

<http://www.script-o-rama.com/>

<http://www.dailyscript.com>

<http://www.moviescriptsandscreenplays.com>

<http://www.horrorlair.com/scripts>

<http://www.scifiscripts.com>

<http://www.roteirodecinema.com.br/scripts/>

<https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/>

<https://www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html>

<http://www.awesomefilm.com/>

<https://sfy.ru/>

<https://thescriptlab.com/>

<http://www.moviescriptsandscreenplays.com/>

- Access to Screenwriting Podcasts and Youtube Channels

ScriptNotes – Podcasts

<https://johnaugust.com/scriptnotes>

ScreenCraft – Youtube Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ScreenCrafting/videos>

ScreenCraft – Podcasts

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/the-screencraft-podcast/id1103544143?mt=2>

On the Page - Podcast

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/on-the-page-screenwriting/id262077408>

Film Courage – Youtube Videos

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs8o1mdWafefJkdBg632_tg

- Pitch and Logline Adaptation Source:

<https://themoth.org/story-library/stories>

- Instructor-selected excerpts for reading assignments TBD.

PHILOSOPHIES, GOALS & METHODS

The intention of the course is to allow students to construct their own meaning through discovery, discussion, guidance, collaboration, and application. Students will reverse engineer a real Hollywood screenplay of their choice in order to promote a deeper analysis of the film by its individual screenplay elements. The pedagogy weaves disparate elements of traditional PowerPoint lecture, Socratic seminar, constructivist social learning, and Wiggins' backwards design. Time permitted; there may also be a modification of the writer's workshop approach promoted by Lucy Calkins. The class is meant not only for aspiring screenwriters, but for anyone wanting to understand story dynamics and the business of writing (ie. aspiring producers, creative executives, directors, technicians, etc.) The course may also prove valuable to traditional literary fiction writers as well.

THE FOUR-FOLD APPROACH

- Focus on where the STUDENT is at the CENTER OF THE LEARNING PROCESS. Emphasis is placed upon student choice, inquiry, and creative freedom where students discover for themselves what storytelling elements contain value. A balance is struck between individual, self-guided reflective work, dynamic social interaction and participation within a group, and the value of the teacher in the role of facilitator, mentor, and master writer. The "student as learner" must always come first.

- Focus on the development of each STUDENT'S OWN UNIQUE ARTISTIC VOICE through the self-discovery, imitation, innovation and the cultivation of personal story values that carry individual meaning. Just as students come from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences, students carry within them the potential for unique visions, creative ideas, and the ability for original artistic expression. This value is paramount and sacrosanct.

- Focus on the classroom as A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS. Students must feel safe in the classroom in order to take creative risks, maximize their learning, and have the opportunity to both give and receive praise as well as constructive critical feedback. The classroom instructor will model and set the tone. Ideally, each class should develop a cohesive identity as, for lack of a better word, a "tribe." This tribe provides the foundation for learning. The greater the trust, safety, collaboration, and contribution of the tribe, the more deep, positive, and enriching the learning experience will be. In creative endeavors, there is rarely "right" and "wrong," only weaker and stronger expressions of meaning and strategies for communicating art. A certain amount of "play" with light structure is a necessary ingredient for stretching and growing. Respect for one another is demanded at all times.

- Focus on the careful examination and REVERSE-ENGINEERING OF CASE STUDIES by artists known for having their own voices – as well as more traditional genre pieces – as a springboard to exercises developing each student's understanding of screenwriting concepts. Just as an art student is expected to study the masters, so too must the apprentice writer study from the masters in order to not copy, but ultimately to subvert their craft. Know the rules in order to know how to break them through innovation.

Session	Date	Primary Topic	Due on the Day of Class	Assigned Journal Topics Due the Following Week	Assigned Textbook Reading Due the Following Week	Student Engagement Activity	Lecture Topic(s)
1	9/6	Table Read (Feature)		Journal 1 Table Read – Feature Reflection	Finish Feature Screenplay	Students-Driven Table Read	Nuts and Bolts Ice Breaker Meet the Proff Brief Overview
2	9/13	Screening (Feature)	Journal 1	Journal 2 Background and Expectations WGA Write Up	Clark p. 36 - 67	Students Screen Feature	WGA Top 100 Screenplays
3	9/20	History Formatting Spectacle Emotion	Journal 2, WGA 101	Journal 3 Pick Three Potentials Master Scripts Spectacle and Emotion Reflection Podcast Write Up	Clark, p. 32, 40	Students Share WGA	History of Screenwriting Screenplay Format Spectacle Opening Shot, Closing Shot Audience & Emotion Brain Chemicals Podcast Set up
4	9/27	Idea Development	Journal 3, Podcast Share	Journal 4 Inspiration Reflection Choose Final Screenplay Selection Link Three versions of Single Logline	Clark, p. 9, 12-13, 15 - 16, 17, 18, 31	Students Share Podcasts	Idea Development Story Framing Story Molecules Theme Logline, Beat Sheet Treatment How to Write Loglines
5	10/4	Genre & Pitching	Journal 4, Rough Loglines Share	Journal 5 Genre Expectations Written Pitch Outline	Clark, p. 10 - 11	Students Share Loglines	Genre How to Pitch The Moth Dialogue
6	10/11	Character Pitches Day 1 of 2	Journal 5, Student Pitch	Journal 6 Final Logline Character Analysis Three Essential Character Relationships	Clark, p. 10, 19 - 20, 28-32	Students Share Pitches	Heroes' Journey, Character Archetypes, Character & Conflict
7	10/18	Character Pitches Day 2 of 2	Journal 6, Student Pitch	Journal 7 Screenplay Reading Response Journal Formatting Analysis		Students Share Pitches	Character Relationships, Character & Theme
8	10/25	Structure & Plot Table Read & Screening (TV Pilot)	Journal 7	Journal 8 Structure Inciting Incident and Climax Beat Sheet		Students Table Read and Screen (TV Pilot)	Structure and Plot Positive & Negative Story Charges
9	11/1	Structure & Plot Scene Construction	Journal 8	Journal 9 Scene Analysis – Positive and Negative Charges, Truth Gaps Scene Riff in Final Draft	Clark, p. 40-41, 48, 59-60	Students Share Beat Sheets	Scene Construction Final Draft
10	11/8	Scene Construction Dialogue	Journal 9	Journal 10 Dialogue Analysis Dialogue Transcript in Final Draft Negation of the Negation	Clark, p. 49-54, 33	Students Share Truth Gaps	Comparing Mediums Adaptation Dialogue Exposition, Subtext, Theme Negation of the Negation
11	11/15	Business & Writing Plan Review Example Presentation	Journal 10	Journal 11 The Business Five Year Career Plan	Clark, p. 69 - 89	Students Share Negation of the Negations	Working in Hollywood Coverage, Review Example Presentation Slide Checklist, Rubric Doodle
12	11/29	Student Share Presentations Day 1 of 3	Journal 11, Final Presentation	Journal 12 Clash of Concepts		Students Share Final Presentations	
13	12/6	Student Share Presentations Day 2 of 3	Journal 12, Final Presentation	Journal 13 Learning From Others' Presentations		Students Share Final Presentations	
14	12/13	Student Share Presentations Day 3 of 3	Journal 13, Final Presentation	Journal 14 Course Feedback and Best Take Away		Students Share Final Presentations	
	12/14		Journal 14, Rate Your Proff				

FINAL DEADLINE FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS: Friday 12/14 at midnight.

Assignment	Due Date	Weighted % of Grade
Participation & Attendance (14 sessions)	Every class session with one acceptable absence	15
Reflection and Analysis Journals (14 total)	Due one week from day of assignment	15
Final Extended Logline	10/11/18	10
5 minute Pitch	10/11/18	20
Final - 30 – 35 minute Media Presentation of Screenplay Analysis	11/29/18 - 12/13/18	40

POLICIES - Academic misconduct, plagiarism, attendance/tardiness, late work, and civility will be in accordance with standards of Oakland University policy.

LATE WORK - Late work will be penalized by a loss of 10% for each day that it turned in past the due date. Extenuating circumstances are considered at the discretion of the professor.

GRADING - Each day an assignment is late it goes down one full grade with a basement of 50%. Final averages will be converted to numeric grades as follows:

98-100%	4.0	79%	2.9	68%	1.8
96-97%	3.9	78%	2.8	67%	1.7
94-95%	3.8	77%	2.7	66%	1.6
92-93%	3.7	76%	2.6	65%	1.5
90-91%	3.6	75%	2.5	64%	1.4
88-89%	3.5	74%	2.4	63%	1.3
86-87%	3.4	73%	2.3	62%	1.2
84-85%	3.3	72%	2.2	61%	1.1
82-83%	3.2	71%	2.1	60%	1.0
81%	3.1	70%	2.0	59%	0.0
80%	3.0	69%	1.9		

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation and Attendance: Much of the class will be focused on discussion, collaboration, and group presentation. Students are expected to be engaged with both the instructor and well as with other students in an effort to create a conversation, explore ideas, and discover insights through mutual interaction and creative expression. Passively remaining in the "back seat" of discussions or group work will result in a lower score, while contributing regularly and encouraging others to do so will not only increase a student's score, but also help to create a positive, constructive learning environment and community.

Reflection Journals: Students will be expected to write short response journal entries for various brainstorming and creative writing activities. Generally, there will be no more than one or two pages required on a given topic without concern for spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Journals should be typed but may optionally be submitted in a composition book or notebook. Scoring will be based upon reflection, depth of understanding, and creative effort. These journals will often focus on the student's "Three Favorite Movies" in an effort to cull concepts in the context of the students' own personal experience. A love of cinema is a huge advantage for these exercises, regardless of one's depth of understanding. Students will be asked to share their journals by choice in an effort to stimulate the conversation of the learning community.

Podcast Share: Students will self-select a podcast on screenwriting and share out with the class the link and the best information they learned from the listening to it.

WGA Share: Students will self-select one of the most highly-rated films or television shows from the Writers Guild of America.

Logline: Students will demonstrate mastery of the logline concept by reverse engineering a marketable logline based upon a self-selected Moth Podcast.

5 Minute Pitch: Students will stand before the class and pitch their Moth Podcast as if they are adapting the material for a television show or film.

Scene Riff: Students will rewrite a scene from their selected reverse-engineering screenplay, riffing creatively off of the original material and format it using Final Draft screenwriting software.

Dialogue Transcript: Students will transcribe a real-world "overheard" conversation between two or more parties into proper screenplay format using Final Draft screenwriting software.

Scene List / Beat Sheet: Students will break down their real world feature film screenplay into a acts, sequences, and scenes including major plot points and a brief description of each scene.

Screenplay Reading Response Journal: Students will keep a journal and write their own personal responses, thoughts, observations, and questions as they read the actual screenplay of their real world case study feature film.

Final - 30 – 35 minute Media Presentation of Screenplay Analysis: Students will apply the concepts taught in class in order to create a presentation using media such as PowerPoint or Prezi in a shared analysis of the real world case study feature film screenplay. This presentation will be presented in the final three sessions of class.