

ART 3350: Introduction to Narrative Screenwriting Fall 2017

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2 - 4 PM and by appointment

Class Meetings: Mon. & Weds. 11-1:50 PM - Room: FA 166

COURSE OBJECTIVE AND CONTENTS:

Screenwriting is the foundation and creative engine of narrative storytelling. The fundamental elements of screenwriting are essential not just for the one who writes the script but, later on, for the director, cinematographer, and many other creative collaborators in this art. The primary focus of the course is to introduce you to the fundamental aspects and necessary discipline required to write different types of scripts. With the help of your peers and instructor, you will leave this course with a solid grasp of how to write short narrative and feature film scripts. By building on a series of discussions and rewrites, you will explore the basic theory and formal aspects of story, structure, character development, and dialogue.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to identify the basic aspects of narrative screenwriting and utilize the introductory guidelines of every step in the writing process in order to develop two individual screenplays to completion.

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES:

Students are *expected to be prepared before class with both assignments and readings completed*. Due to the practical and communal nature of the class *students who do not have the required work completed at the beginning of class will be asked to leave the classroom*. Any excuse for not presenting assignments must be discussed with the instructor the day prior to the class meeting.

All assignments must:

- 1) Be introduced by a cover page containing the title of the assignment, the name of the student, and the date (due).
- 2) All work must be typed, correctly spelled and in the proper screenplay form. Many times you will be required to bring a copy of a writing assignments for class discussion.

Assignments that do not follow all these guidelines will not be accepted. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Assignments Distribution:

- 5 Reading quizzes (20%)
- Draft 2 of short film scripts (10%)
- Synopsis of feature film script (10%)
- Draft 2 of feature script up to Call to Adventure (20%)
- Final Draft of TV episode (20%)
- Final Draft of short script (10%)
- Class participation (10%)

Final grades will be weighted according to this schematic, and students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor).

MATERIALS AND TEXTS:

Required Texts: *Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need* by Blake Snyder

Crafty TV Writing: Thinking Inside the Box by Alex Epstein

Other readings and materials to be found in the class Blackboard.

Final Draft screenwriting software: (PROVIDED to be used at school)

Students are highly recommended to have Final Draft <http://trial.finaldraft.com/edutrial/>

Note: We will be watching short films, features and clips in class that may contain adult language and content. If this bothers you, or you do not wish to view these materials, please let me know in advance.

Use of electronic devices: Cellphones, computers, tablets or any other electronic device are not allowed to be used during class time.

ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS:

Attendance is required to all scheduled classes. However, I understand there are occasions when absence is necessary and excusable. You are responsible for notifying the instructor ahead of class if the absence is unavoidable. It is up to the discretion of the instructor if the absence is excused or not. Do not assume your absence is excused without getting written confirmation from the instructor.

Students are allowed a **maximum** of two excused absences. A significant part of this course is communal. If you are not in attendance, then you cannot participate. Absences for more than two classes for whatever reason will hinder your ability to understand the material. Absences totaling more than two days will result in the following grade reductions:

- **Three absences will result in reduction of a half-letter for the final semester grade.**
- **Four absences will result in a full letter off the final semester grade.**
- **Five absences will result in automatic failure of the class.**

The student is responsible for any work missed during absences, including any handouts given in class and any demonstrations. It is not the responsibility of faculty to re-teach what the student has missed. *If students need additional information regarding what they missed, they should follow up with at least two other students before contacting the instructor.* Attendance is also mandatory for all critiques whether the student has completed the work required or not.

Lateness will also have a detrimental effect on the student's final grade. If you are more than ten minutes late, you will be counted absent. If you have a class before that makes this difficult, it is your responsibility to let the instructor know ahead of time.

Note: All assignments must be turned in on the due date. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS:

In evaluating your work, I try to assess what has been learned and if it's reflected in your writing, i.e., have you demonstrated an understanding of the dramatic concepts discussed in class, and is that understanding demonstrated in your own creative work? Your final grade will reflect the quality and sincerity of your efforts. Equally important are the level and quality of participation in class.

As a student in a university, it is assumed you can write in complete sentences, using proper English grammar. You will need to be able to construct complete thoughts and communicate them on several levels. If you lack abilities in written communication, you are strongly encouraged to seek support through the campus Writing Center, <http://www.uta.edu/owl/services.htm>. Your grades will be based on the assumption that you can write at a level consistent with university students, but it is important that you take the lead in stepping up and seeking help.

ADVICE on peer review:

- With regard to criticism of your own work: start developing a thick skin. Remember that your instructor and classmates are commenting on your scripts, not on you.
- Don't hold back. If something has problems, it has problems. Say so. However ...
- Negative comments are a lot easier to make than positive ones. So, no matter how constructive your criticism is, try to match it with a compliment somewhere else. We will begin workshop with positive comments for each piece, then move on to constructive feedback. The writer should not "defend" their work or answer questions about the material until all comments have been voiced.
- Identifying problems isn't enough – also identify possible solutions. Don't simply say that a character or a scene doesn't work for you. Say why it doesn't work, then tell us

what changes would make it work for you.

Drop Policy:

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Regarding Student Support Services and disabilities:

UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

Writing Center: The Writing Center, 411 Central Library, offers individual 40-minute sessions to review assignments, Quick Hits (5-10 minute quick answers to questions), and workshops on grammar and specific writing projects. Visit <https://uta.mywconline.com/> to register and make appointments. For hours, information about the writing workshops we offer, scheduling a classroom visit, and descriptions of the services we offer undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members, please visit our website at www.uta.edu/owl/.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-

based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX: The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law "Title IX" such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

Academic Integrity:

Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Communication:

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university- related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox daily. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://>

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures:

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

	Day	Class Contents	Start working in the following Assignment(s)
INTRO and FORTMAT.	Monday Aug. 28	Introduction to the class. Intro to Screenwriting and software.	Read The Class Syllabi, Study the "Screenwriting Format Document"
	Wednesday Aug. 30	Screenwriting format and software. Class practice and evaluation	Reading 1: Snyder Ch. 1 Write your short film script idea Prepare to share your idea in 2 minutes.
	Monday Sept. 4	NO CLASS FOR LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	
SHORT SCRIPT	W Sept.6	Reading 1 quiz. Sharing original ideas and receiving feedback.	Reading 2: Snyder Ch. 2 Rethinking your short idea. Prepare a final 1 minute pitch.
	M Sept 11	Reading 2 quiz. Pitching your short idea. Review of introductory concepts in light of pitched short films.	Write the first draft of your short film script (4 to 6 pages)

	Day	Class Contents	Start working in the following Assignment(s)
SHORT SCRIPT	W Sept 13	Submission of the First draft of short film script.* Class reading and criticism of the first draft of short film.	Reading 3 : Snyder Ch. 3 Rewrite the first draft of your short*
	M Sept 18	Reading 3 quiz. The visible journey. The feature length film 5 story marks and 6 stages. The hero's journey.	
	W Sept 20	Submission of the Second draft of short film script. Class reading and criticism of the Second draft of short film. Character & backstory	Reading 4: Snyder Ch. 4 Start thinking about a story for a feature screenplay; be ready to describe your hero and her/his quest.
FEATURE SCRIPT	M Sept 25	Reading 4 quiz. The invisible journey. Class review and analysis of structure samples. Conversation about your initial feature script ideas (students expected to participate)	
	W Sept 27	The two journey review. Class review and criticism of feature film synopsis with 5 turning points and 6 stages.	Write your feature film synopsis indicating: 5 turning points and 6 stages.*
	M Oct 2	Submit feature synopsis* Dialogue and Review of feature film synopsis indicating: 5 turning points and 6 stages.	Reading 5: Snyder Ch. 5 Rewrite synopsis and structure*
	W Oct 4	Submit Rewrite of Synopsis and Structure* Review of synopsis and structure Subplots	Write the first 4 scenes of act 1*
	M Oct 9	Reading 5 quiz. Submit first 4 scenes of act 1* Review and criticism of first 4 scenes of act 1.	Rewrite the first 4 scenes of act 1* Write scene 5 to call to adventure*
	W Oct 11	When we know that we don't know: Research and sensorial references.	
	M Oct 16	Submit Scenes 1-Call to Adventure* Review and criticism of scenes 1-call to adventure	Read assigned first acts (1 and 2) of screenplays (TBA)
	W Oct 18	Screenplay analysis for structure and character	Read assigned first acts (2 and 3) of screenplays (TBA)
	M Oct 23	Screenplay analysis for dialogue and subplots	Reading 6: Snyder Ch. 7 Rewrite Scenes 1-Call to Adventure*
FEATURE			

	Day	Class Contents	Start working in the following Assignment(s)
SCRIPT	W Oct 25	Reading 6 quiz. Review and Writing with Partners.	
	M Oct 30	Submit Rewrite of 1-Call to Adventure* Review and criticism	Rewrite final feature synopsis
TV WRITING	W Nov 1 (Last day to drop class)	Introduction to TV writing	Reading 7: Epstein Chapter 1-2.
	M Nov 6	Submit Final Synopsis* and Reading 7 quiz. Analysis and discussion of TV shows, springboards and bibles. Organization of groups for TV Writing.and introduction to show	Read pilot episodes (TBA) Meet in groups to create and write TV show Bible.
	W Nov 8	TV analysis and brainstorm.	
	M Nov 13	Group bibles DUE Review and discussion: TV show Bible suggestions. Class votes for show proposal.	Reading 8: Epstein Chapter 3-5
	W Nov 15	Reading 8 quiz Polish the class show (characters, relationships, stakes)	Meeting (in groups): write a show episode
	M Nov 20	Reading of TV Episodes (in groups)	Rewrite TV episode
	W Nov 22 (Thanks-giving)	Reading of TV Episodes (in groups)	Rewrite TV episode
	M Nov 27	Episodes sequence discussion. Characters' personality analysis	
	W Nov 29	Submission of Second Drafts of TV Episodes* Review: TV draft 2	Rewrite final draft of TV episode
	M Dec 4	Submission of Short Films (Final Draft)* and Final Draft of TV Episode* Audio recoding of selected episodes	Preparing the class presentation at he Film/Video End of Semester Show
	W Dec 6	Audio recoding of selected episodes	
	Dec. 8-10	Film/Video End of Semester Show.	

(*) This assignment needs to be typed, printed and given to the instructor at the end of class.

As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. – Daniel E. García

