

ART 4354: Advanced Narrative Screenwriting Fall 2018

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Office Hours: Tuesdays. 2 - 4 PM and by appointment

Class Meetings: Tu. & Th., 11-1:50 PM Room: FA 164

COURSE OBJECTIVE AND CONTENTS:

In this course, we will study, analyze and write motion picture scripts. This is an advanced screenwriting class, thus it is expected that all participants have the basic knowledge of screenwriting; without this knowledge any progress will be seriously limited. This is also a reading and writing intensive class. You must be aware of the demanding nature of this class.

All class time is a community effort in study, research, writing and criticism. It is because of this that aspects as attendance, participation, non-electronic distraction as well as time breaks will be strict. Continuous active engagement is extremely important. Is expected for all participants not just to be present but, attentive and properly prepared.

The class has been organized in three parts: Analysis, Practice, and Project. Weeks 1-4: Analysis are **very reading and participation intensive**. This section ends with a **test**. Weeks 5-8 are for Practice focusing on the individual writing and rewriting of a short film script. The rest of the semester, weeks 9-15, are dedicated to the writing of a final project. You will choose between the two options for your final project and only be working on your project. You may choose a feature-length screenplay (Acts 1 and 2) or a long-form Short Film script (between 30 to 40 pages).

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES:

Students are expected to be prepared before class with assignments and readings completed.. 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 correct screenplay format.
- 3) Many times students will be required to bring 1 copy of writing assignments for class discussion.

This is an **advanced** class, thus, assignments that do not follow all these guidelines will not be accepted. Late assignments will not be accepted. More than 3 formatting mistakes in a given assignment will result in a full letter lower grade.

MATERIALS:

Required Texts: *Advanced Screenwriting*, Dr. Linda Seger

Readings and materials on the class Blackboard

Final Draft screenwriting software: (PROVIDED at school computers)

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

Note: We will be watching and reading short and feature films and screenplays that contain adult language and content. If you are concerned that we will encounter material which offends 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. At the beginning of class all students will be asked to place their phones in a designated place. Electronic devices will be allowed for use during all class breaks. Students who do not follow this procedure will be immediately asked to leave the classroom and an absence will be counted for the day of the event.

ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS:

Lateness: The classroom door will be closed **TEN minutes after** the official scheduled class time. **NO STUDENT WILL BE ALLOWED** to enter the classroom after this ten minute grace period. Students who arrive late will be welcome to enter the classroom during the next class break, however that **late arrival will still be considered as an absence.**

Absence: Attendance is required to all scheduled classes. There are occasions when absence is unavoidable (film shoot days, minor illness which does not require a doctor's visit, car troubles, etc). In these cases students need to be aware that they are allowed a **maximum of two absences.**

A student can ask to have an absence waived by explaining the situation and providing documentation (doctor's appointment information, etc) no later than 48 hours after the day of the absence. 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 absences.**

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.

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

ASSIGNMENTS, GRADES, AND EXPECTATIONS:

Grades are based on a points system (400 max. points) with a distribution as follows:

1) Preparation

Participation (60)

Test (60)

2) Practice

Short Script Draft 4 (80)

3) Project

Option 1

Final Project Feature

Draft 2 (200)

Option 2

Final Project Featurette

Draft 3 (200)

There is no extra-credit. The overall grade will thus be determined on the basis of the total points of 400 possible points, with 360-400=A, 320-359=B, 280-319=C, 240-279=D, below 240=F. We do not calculate grades on the basis of an average or mean score. Any grievance of any grade in this course must be launched within one week of receiving the grade. No paper or test grades will be changed beyond one week past the first day they are returned.

Participation: You are expected to speak-up in class in the form of reading discussions, presenting your work, and giving and receiving feedback. You will receive a preliminary grade for your participation at week 2 so that you have a clear idea of my expectations for the rest of the Preparation (initial 3 weeks).

Test: We will have one test at the end of the third week. This test will include multiple choice questions and short answer.

Short Script (5 pages): Everyone in class will write at least 3 drafts of a short script (4 to 6 pages), plus a one-liner, synopsis, and pitch. Be prepared to read aloud all work by class time during weeks 4-7.

Project Proposal: You must submit a Project Proposal to the instructor. This is a form (found on Blackboard) indicating your plan for the next half of the semester. You will have the chance to meet individually with your instructor at this time and the form will guide your conversation. This is worth up to 3 points added or 5 points subtracted to/from your individual final grade. If you write the Project Proposal using clear language, answering all questions, and it's ready on time, you will get plus 3 points. If you write it without answering all questions and/or with unclear language, you will have no change to your grade (0 points plus/minus). If you do not do it, you will get minus 5 points.

Final projects options:

Option 1: *Final Project Feature (Act 1 and 2: 75-90 pages)*: The Feature option for your final project includes writing-up a Treatment and your main Characters profiles, then two drafts of Acts 1 and 2 (together), plus a step outline of Act 3. The Treatment and the main Characters profiles (**20-30 pages**) will be read in class. Draft 1 and Draft 2 (with the step-outline of Act 3) will have due dates TBA.

Note: You can write at your own pace for this project. A guideline that may help is a goal of 23 pages per week. While you will find your own rhythm, if you consistently come to class with no writing to share, your participation grade will suffer.

Option 2: Final Project Short (25-40 pages): The Short option for your final project includes writing-up a Treatment, then 3 drafts of the entire script. The Treatment (**10-15 pages**) will be turned in for reading in class. Draft 1, Draft 2, and Draft 3 will have due dates TBA.

Note: Integral to this option is learning to incorporate feedback and going through the re-writing process. Differences between drafts need to be pronounced and strong in order to earn higher points. Keep in mind: the shorter the format, the less margin there is for errors.

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? In this advanced class, each draft will receive many points of feedback, and your final grade will reflect the quality and sincerity of your efforts in understanding and incorporating that feedback. Equally important are the level and quality of participation in class.

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://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

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.

Class Calendar

Day	Class Contents	Work in the following assignments
Tuesday Jan. 16	Introduction to the class. readings, and projects. Evaluation Test.	Readings: Feature Screenplay 1 - Hell or High Water
Thursday Jan. 18	Review and Discussion: Feature Screenplay: 1 Hell or High Water	Readings: Feature Screenplay 1 - Hell or High Water
Tuesday Jan. 23	Review and Discussion: Readings: Feature Screenplay 1 - Hell or High Water	Readings: Serge: Chapter 1 Screenplay of Shorts 1 and 2
Thursday Jan. 25	Review and Discussion: Discussion: Serge: Chapter 1 Screenplay of Shorts 1 and 2	Reading: Serge: Chapter 2 Feature Screenplay 2 - Juno
Tuesday Jan. 30	Review and Discussion: Serge: Chapter 2 Feature Screenplay 2	Reading: Serge: Chapter 3 Screenplay of Shorts 3 and 4.

Day	Class Contents	Work in the following assignments
Thursday Feb. 1	Review and Discussion: Serger: Chapter 3 Screenplay of Shorts 3 and 4.	Reading: Serger: Chapter 4 Feature Screenplay 3,
Tuesday Feb. 6	Review and Discussion: Serger: Chapter 4 Feature Screenplay 3	Review all readings. Thing about your Short script idea (5 pages)
Thursday Feb. 8	Test Short Films Pre-Presentations	Write: One-liner and Synopsis of Short Film Script.
Tuesday Feb. 13	Pitches and input of Short scripts.	Re-write: the One-liner and Synopsis of Short Film Script. Write the first page of short film script.
Thursday Feb. 15	Pitches and input of Draft 2 of Short Film One-liner, Synopsis and First page draft 1.	Write: Draft 1 of Short
Tuesday Feb. 20	Reading and input of Short Draft 1.	Re-write: Draft 1 of Short.
Thursday Feb. 22	Reading and discussing the Draft 2	Re-write: Draft 2 of Short.
Tuesday Feb. 27	Reading and discussing the Draft 3	Re-write: Draft 3 of Short
Thursday Mar. 1	Reading the Draft 4	Reading: Foundation of story development. Think: Feature Film Ideas.
Tuesday Mar. 6	Class Content: Foundation of story development. The map of a Feature: Analyzing <i>Juno</i>	Write: Synopsis of Feature or featurette (long short) screenplay.
Thursday Mar. 8	First Presentation of Project Proposals.	Write: Step-outline of stages 1, 2 and 3 of feature screenplay.
Spring Vacation. March 12 - 17		

Final Script Projects Writing Calendar
(To be posted bellow after students projects are determined)