

"My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see. That--and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm--all you demand--and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."

*Joseph Conrad (qtd. in A Community of Writers, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff)*

**CTVA 420 #11266 FALL 2009 MZ113**

**Thursday 7:00-9:45**

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**Prof. VA Gutierrez**

**OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 1 - 3**

**Student Learning Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge of the principles of screenplay adaptation.
2. Demonstrate a command of the principles of screen story structure.
3. Demonstrate an ability to improve screenplay material through rewriting.
4. Demonstrate a practicable understanding of the uses of screenplay character, dialog, and scene description.

**Department Learning Outcomes:**

This addresses the Department of Cinema and Television Art "Student Learning Outcomes #2: Research, structure, and write dramatic and non-dramatic scripts for cinema, television, and multimedia.

**The Course:**

Focuses on transforming a novel into a dramatically written screenplay. This goal will be achieved by building skills in dialog, character, conflict, visualization of the novel, and narrative "Story Showing."

You will be writing an 80 to 110 page screenplay adaptation based on a published novel.

**Required Text:**

*The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film.*  
Linda Seger

**THERE WILL BE A MIDTERM BASED ON THE REQUIRED TEXT.**

"The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say."

*Anais Nin*

**Week 1 – 8/27**

Class Exercise: Introduction to class.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 5 of Seger.

Pick a novel for adaptation you have already read.

"Drama is life with all the dull parts cut out."

*Alfred Hitchcock*

**Week 2**

Class Exercise: Structure. PLOT/CHARACTER.

ASSIGNMENT: Read preface, intro. Seger. Write synopsis of adaptation concept/logline and prepare a pitch of your story for the class.

"Writing is communication, not self-expression. Nobody in this world wants to read your diary except your mother."

*Richard Peck*

**Week 3**

Class Exercise: Due your adaptation synopsis (3) pages and pitch.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 1, Seger. Write sketches of you major characters.

"I write plays because dialog is the most respectable way of contradicting myself."

*Tom Stoppard*

**Week 4**

Class Exercise: Continue with pitches and turn in character sketches.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 2,3 of Seger and begin outline of story premise.

"It is a good deal easier to state an abstract idea than to describe and thus re-create some object they actually see."

*Flannery O'Connor*

**Week 5**

Class Exercise: Due very rough draft of outline.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 4 and 6 Seger. Continue with outline.

Writing Assignment: Continue working on outline.

"Endless conflicts, endless misunderstandings, all life is that. Great and little cannot understand one another."

*H.G. Wells*

**Week 6**

Class Exercise: Due outline

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 7,8 Seger. Write the first 5 pages of your script.

Bring 5 or 6 copies of script to next class to be read aloud.

"Do not the most moving moments of our lives find us all without words?"

*Marcel Marceau*

**Week 7**

Class exercise: Due first 10 pages of script.

ASSIGNMENT: Read Chapter 9,10 Seger. Write 10 pages.

"First, find out what your hero wants then just follow him."

*Ray Bradbury*

**Week 8**

Class Exercise: Due 10 pages.

ASSIGNMENT: 10 more pages.

"The essence of drama is that man cannot walk away from the consequences of his own deeds."

*Harold Hayes*

**Midterm.****Week 9**

Class Exercise: Due 10 pages. Read and analyze script pages.

ASSIGNMENT: Write another 10 pages.

"Don't mistake a good setup for a satisfying conclusion—many beginning writers end their stories when the real story is just ready to begin."

*Stanley Schmidt*

**Week 10**

Story meetings and work on screenplays.

ASSIGNMENT: Write 10 more pages.

**Week 11 – 11/03**

Class Exercise: Feedback on written work so far.

ASSIGNMENT: 10 pages.

"Everyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to nurture it in solitude and to follow the talent to the dark places where it leads."

*Erica Jong*

**Week 12**

Class Exercise: Workshop  
 ASSIGNMENT: 10 pages

"Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality."  
*Jules de Gaultier*

**Week 13**

Class Exercise: Workshop  
 ASSIGNMENT: Write 10 pages.  
 Readings.

"Always grab the reader by the throat in the first paragraph, sink your thumbs into his windpipe in the second, and hold him against the wall until the tagline."  
*Paul O'Neil*

**Week 14 (Thanksgiving)**

ASSIGNMENT: Write 10 pages.

"A writer wastes nothing."  
*F. Scott Fitzgerald*

**Week 15**

Finish screenplay. No late scripts will accepted after 12/3/09.  
 Readings.

"Writing fiction is a solitary occupation but not really a lonely one. The writer's head is mobbed with characters, images, and language."  
*Hilma Wolitzer*

"Give them pleasure. The same pleasure they have when they wake up from a nightmare."  
*Alfred Hitchcock*

**NO LATE SCRIPTS WILL BE ACCEPTED!**

Grades will be based on written work, class participation, and attendance.

Thumbnail sketch	15 %
Outline/beat-sheet	15
Midterm	10
First 10 pages of script	05
Second 10 pages of script	05
Third 10 pages of script	05
80 to 110 page script	45
	100 %

Poor attendance will result in a 15% grade reduction.  
Poor class participation will result in a 15% grade reduction. More than (2) absences shall be considered poor attendance.

CELLPHONES SHALL BE TURNED OFF. IF YOU TAKE A CELLPHONE CALL PLEASE LEAVE THE CLASS AND DO NOT RETURN UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS MEETING. YOU SHALL BE CONSIDERED ABSENT FOR THAT CLASS MEETING. NO LAPTOPS ON DESKS. NO TEXTING.

STUDENTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM PURSUING WORK IN THIS COURSE THAT HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED OR WRITTEN, UNLESS PERMISSION IS SOUGHT AND GRANTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR.

#### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a service agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at 818-677-2684.

Syllabus is subject to change.

Dear Students:

You are no doubt aware of the California's budget deficit and economic crisis. The CSU is facing a \$586 million dollar reduction in funding. The cut to CSUN is in the tens of millions. By cutting back on salaries for faculty, administrators, managers, staff, maintenance workers, nurses, librarians, etc., our campus can make up a part of this shortfall. This is on top of your tuition increases and cuts in classes. All of these are the ways this campus is trying to deal with the reality of the budget cuts to CSUN.

Most of the workers mentioned above voted for a furlough plan, which means the workers will see a 10% reduction in pay over the school year and a corresponding reduction in their workload. This semester you will see the whole campus closed on designated days. The faculty will also personally select nine furlough days for the semester, days in which we must designate in writing. We cannot do any work on a furlough day: no returning or taking phone calls, no reading emails, no grading papers, no teaching, nothing. You are paying more for your education than ever before but note that these new rules for faculty mean that your instructors may have to cancel some class meetings, may not get papers back as quickly as in the past and in many cases cannot do what we normally do. As you know this crisis has also meant that many course sections cannot be offered, have limited seats available and/or classes have been cancelled. Please know that this situation is outrageous and heartbreaking for us. We want you to have the best academic preparation possible, but that goal is becoming more difficult to reach given the economic realities we all face.

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