

Professor Jon Stahl
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Office Hours: T 5:00-6:00PM, W 2:00-3:30PM, W 6:15-7:00PM,
TH 3:15-4:00PM (hours subject to change)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Although many of the same principles that apply to the writing of a feature-length script apply as well to the writing of a short, there are differences. Some story elements and techniques that are typically critical to the success of a feature do not work as well, if at all, in a short film. Conversely, the short form allows for certain kinds of flexibility that usually are not available to the feature writer. This course will explore these differences, as well as reinforce the dramatic concepts applicable to all screen storytelling. Furthermore, the course will guide you in the writing of your short script in an incremental fashion.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, you should:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the principles of screen storytelling;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the differences and similarities between writing the short-form and the long-form film script;
3. demonstrate proficiency in short-form screenwriting by completing three drafts of a 10-12 page screenplay.

This course addresses CTVA Departmental SLO #2: research, structure, and write dramatic and non-dramatic scripts for cinema, television, and multimedia.

REQUIRED TEXT

Writing Short Films, 2nd Edition, by Linda J. Cowgill.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

The Art of Dramatic Writing, by Lajos Egri.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

There will be several writing assignments, each one directly related to the development and writing of your script. These are to be printed using the correct font (12-point Courier) on good-quality paper. You must proofread for typos and errors in spelling and/or grammar. The presence of such errors will affect your grade adversely.

It is strongly recommended that you use Final Draft. It is also strongly recommended that you back up your file(s) on an obsessively frequent basis, using CD-RWs and/or USB memory sticks.

All assignments must be written in the appropriate format and handed in on time. Do not use covers or binders; do use title pages. I will expect you to apply your full effort, intelligence, craft and creativity to each assignment, and I will grade accordingly. The final assignment, your polished, 10-12 page script, will be due in class on Wednesday, 12/9, the last session.

There will be one exam, which will be based both on the Cowgill book and information covered in class. Prompt attendance is expected and class participation is encouraged. Each will be factored into your final grade.

Please note that this course requires strict compliance with the Academic Honesty Standards contained in the University Catalogue.

GRADING (unless otherwise amended)

Punctuality, attendance, class participation	20 points
Character profile	5 points
Exam	20 points
Story sketch	10 points
First act	5 points
First draft	10 points
Second draft	5 points
Final script	<u>25 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

I will use plusses and minuses for the final grades, which will correlate to the total amount of points earned during the semester. There is no extra credit available. I reserve the right to penalize excessive tardiness, absence or disruptive behavior beyond the allotted 20 points. Therefore, come early, don't miss any classes, and act professionally.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE (unless otherwise amended)

- Wed. 8/26 Course introduction. Why make films? Story. The short vs. the feature. The student film. Assignment: Read Cowgill, Part 1, watch "Life Lessons," start thinking about your story.
- Wed. 9/2 Character. Conflict. Assignment: Character profile. Read Cowgill, Part 2.
- Wed. 9/9 DUE: Character profile. Connection. Scene structure. Dialogue. Assignment: Read Cowgill, Parts 3 & 4, start roughing out your story, study for exam.
- Wed. 9/16 EXAM. Screenings and discussion. The pitch. Assignment: 1-page story sketch, prepare to pitch.
- Wed. 9/23 DUE: 1-page story sketch. Pitches.
- Wed. 9/30 Pitches.
- Wed. 10/7 Writing visually. Writing economically. The step outline. Assignment: step outline.
- Wed. 10/14 DUE: Step outline. Student/teacher conferences. Assignment: 1st act.
- Wed. 10/21 DUE: 1st act. Screenings and discussion. Assignment: bring copies for readings (class set).

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

- Wed. 10/28 Scene readings.
Assignment: 1st draft, bring pages for readings.
- Wed. 11/4 DUE: 1st draft. Scene readings.
Assignment: bring pages.
- Wed. 11/11 NO CLASS -- VETERANS DAY.
- Wed. 11/18 Scene readings.
Assignment: 2nd draft, bring pages.
- Wed. 11/25 DUE: 2nd draft. The shooting script, scene readings.
Assignment: bring pages.
- Wed. 12/2 NO CLASS -- WRITING DAY. Pick up 2nd draft on Thursday,
12/3 in CTVA office (MZ 195), after 12:30PM.
Assignment: Final script, bring pages.
- Wed. 12/9 **FINAL SCRIPTS DUE.** Scene readings. Conclusion.