

"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 425 #11269 FALL 2009 3:30-6:15 M

MZ113

Vincent.gutierrez@csun.edu

Prof. VA Gutierrez

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 1-3pm

Student Learning Objectives:

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

1. Demonstrate a command of the principles of screenplay story structure.
2. Demonstrate an ability to improve screenplay material through rewriting.
3. Demonstrate a practicable understanding of the uses of screenplay character, dialog, and scene description.
4. Demonstrate use of screenwriting craft principles in the insightful analysis and accurate criticism of other people's script writing work.

CTVA Department Learning Outcomes:

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

The Course:

You will write a feature length screenplay of 80 to 110 pages in the Master Scenes format style. This will be an original story that will be developed in a **WORKSHOP** environment. Participation in the workshop section of our class is absolutely required. Non-participation will seriously affect your grade.

Required Text:

Screenwriting, The Art, Craft, and Business of Film and Television Writing. Richard Walter.

THERE WILL BE A MIDTERM BASED ON THE REQUIRED TEXT.

Keep File Draft Copies:

Print out file drafts of all your own work as you write and revise both to serve as evidence of your original work, and as a backup against any loss. Students are required to keep paper copies of all work handed in.

"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 – 8/24

Class Exercise: Introduction to class.

Lecture: Where ideas come from. What is story, theme, premise, plot.

Writing Assignment: Write a one-liner theme sentence and a paragraph of your chosen story.

Homework: Write a story summary and prepare a pitch.

“Drama is life with all the dull parts cut out.”

Alfred Hitchcock

Week 2 - 8/31

Class Exercise: give story summaries and pitches.

Lecture: Story structure.

Writing Assignment: Character work.

Homework: Refine story idea.

Week 3 – 9/07 (Labor Day)

Read Walter Chapters’ one-six.

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

Richard Peck

Week 4 – 9/14

Class Exercise: Firm up all story ideas.

Lecture: Format, outline, and treatment.

Writing Assignment: Do a thumbnail sketch of major characters.

Walter’s chapter seven.

Homework: Begin Treatment.

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

Tom Stoppard

Week 5 – 9/21

Class Exercise: Dialog scenes.

Lecture: Dialog and how it works.

Writing Assignment: Turn in thumbnail sketch and begin outline of story premise.

Homework: Continue with treatment.

“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 6 - 9/28

Class Exercise: Visual writing.

Lecture: Writing powerful visuals

Writing Assignment: Continue working on outline.

Homework: Turn in treatment.

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

H.G. Wells

Week 7 - 10/05

Class Exercise: Back-story.

Lecture: First set-ups and conflict.

Writing Assignment: more character work.

Finish Walter.

Homework: finish outline.

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

Marcel Marceau

Week 8 - 10/12

Class exercise: Playing the Film Game

Writing Assignment: Workshop exercise.

Homework: Begin screenplay, first 10 pages.

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

Ray Bradbury

MIDTERM**Week 9 - 10/19**

Class Exercise: Read work aloud.

Homework: next 10 pages

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

Harold Hayes

Week 10 - 10/26

Lecture: Plotting.

Writing Assignment: In class work.

Homework: 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 11 – 11/02

Story meetings and work on screenplay.

Homework: 10 pages.

Week 12 – 11/09

Class Exercise: Feedback on written work so far.

Lecture: Character.

Writing Assignment: Next 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 13 – 11/16

Writing Assignment: 10 pages.

"Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality."

Jules de Gaultier

Week 14 – 11/23

Lecture: Need to know.

Writing 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 – 11/30

Writer's Conference.

Readings.

Homework: 10 pages

"A writer wastes nothing."

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Week 15 – 12/07

Lecture: Getting your movie made.

Readings.

Homework: turn in completed screenplay. No late submissions will be accepted.

"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	10 %
Outline/beat-sheet	10
Treatment	15
Midterm	10
First 10 pages of script	10
Second 20 pages of script	05
80 to 110 page script	<u>40</u>
	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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