COM / ENG 267: Screenwriting Fundamentals -- Spring '14
Mon. & Wed. 10 – 11:50am L & L 307

Instructor: Maria Sanders
Assistant Professor, Film and Video Studies
sanderma@cwu.edu / (509) 963-1089

Office Hours: Bouillion 225
Mon. / Tue. / Wed. 2p-4p
(Other days/times by appt.)

Course Overview

Introduction to the basic script format, the creative story and style elements, and the writing process for screenplays, with an emphasis on feature films. Focus on the narrative script development process from idea conception to first draft. Course format: lecture.

Course Objectives & Outcomes:

• Demonstrate comprehension of the correct and specific use of grammar, punctuation and spelling for the script format and writing style of screenplays and teleplays.
• Demonstrate comprehension of the correct and specific script format requirements for screenplays and teleplays.
• Demonstrate comprehension of the creative story and style elements, and the writing process steps, for screenplays and teleplays.

Required Text


Blackboard & Email

The Blackboard classroom will contain the syllabus and calendar, assignment instructions, and related documents. As often as possible, your grades will be posted in the Blackboard gradebook so you can check your progress. This course is cross-listed (COM/ENG), but everyone will be enrolled in the COM 267 section of Blackboard.

I will use your CWU email address to contact you, announce any changes in the schedule, and share resources. Please check this address regularly and use it when contacting me. Include a proper subject heading which contains the course number and the nature of your message. Please avoid replying to old, unrelated emails, as this creates a misleading subject heading.
Requirements, Assignments, & Grading

You are expected to complete the required readings prior to each class session and arrive prepared to discuss them. You will also demonstrate your command of the subject matter through:

In-class and out-of-class writing assignments, exploring the concepts discussed in the book and in class. All assignment documents will be submitted in person or through Blackboard on the date specified in the calendar.

A five-page short screenplay adapted from one of the "Storycorps" stories. The script will be workshopped in class.

A first draft of 10 pages (first 10 minutes of a feature). You’ll develop your story through various exercises in & out of class, and your first ten pages will be workshopped in class.

A solid, revised draft of 20-25 pages (the first act of a feature). A rewrite of your first 10 pages, plus an additional 10-15 pages, will be submitted by the day/time listed in the course calendar.

Midterm and final exams which demonstrate your skills and understanding of the course material.

Students are expected to attend class regularly, be well prepared, and complete all assignments by the due dates. Assignments are eligible for full credit only if they are submitted on the due date by 11:59pm. Assignments may be submitted up to three days late, with a 25% deduction per day. Assignments will not be accepted after three days past the due date. If you miss class, the assignment is still due that day unless you were too ill to complete your assignment and have notified me before the due date. Even if your assignment is late, please submit it through Blackboard rather than emailing it. There will be no extra credit opportunities.

Value for assignments and participation:
Writing assignments 15%
Five-page short adaptation 15%
First Ten Pages 20%
Twenty-page Final Draft 25%
Final Exam 10%
Attendance/Participation 15%
TOTAL 100%

The grading scale below will be used to assess final letter grades (numbers are percentages):

100—93 = A  86—83 = B  76—73 = C  66—63 = D
92—90 = A-  82—80 = B-  72—70 = C-  62—60 = D-
89—87 = B+  79—77 = C+  69—67 = D+  59—00 = F
**Note: If you are a Film & Video Studies major, it is recommended you keep copies of your scripts and assignments for your senior portfolio.**

**Attendance & Participation**

Attendance will be recorded in order to accurately assess participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to inform me after class. **Three tardies (or instances of leaving class early) equal one absence.**

You may take 1 “free” absence without penalty. Here’s how your attendance grade will break down (out of 100%):

- 2 absences: minus 10%
- 3 absences: minus 40%
- 4 absences: minus 70%
- 5 absences: zero points possible

**6 or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course.**

Save your absences for sick days or taking field trips for sports or other courses. If there is a death in your family or you are hospitalized or otherwise detained, please contact me, and also inform Dr. Michael Ogden (Director of FVS), and Communication Department Chair Cesar Garcia.

There are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences. You are not required to inform me of an absence or the reason for it. The schedule may change, weird stuff comes up, life gets crazy for all of us. I understand that. Please communicate with me if anything is going on that affects your ability to succeed in the class, or if you are concerned, frustrated, overjoyed … let’s keep each other in the loop.

Your attendance grade will be supported by your active participation in class, and can be negatively affected by the lack of it. Active participation in the classroom includes being visibly engaged, as expressed by eye contact, body language, note-taking, etc., and verbally engaged, by asking and answering questions and discussing the material.

**Behavior and Workshops**

Disruptive and/or unkind words or actions will not be tolerated in this class and could result in your removal. Plagiarism (and any other forms of “academic dishonesty”) also constitutes unacceptable behavior. Please see the university’s policy on academic dishonesty (CWUP 5-90-010(4)). The Film & Video Studies Program holds to a "zero tolerance" policy on plagiarism. If you plagiarize in this or any other FVS-related class, you will receive a failing grade for the course and will be expelled from the FVS program.

During our workshops, we will maintain an open, inclusive atmosphere for reading and critiquing our writing. While being sensitive to the feeling of exposure that comes from sharing one’s creative work with others, we will strive for straightforward, constructive analysis. Because screenplay style and format are so specific, it’s crucial to know how others are “seeing” your movie based on the screenplay.
Screenplay Format

You must have software to write in proper screenplay format. If you do not already have software, please download and use Celtx (http://celtx.com/), which is free. Other options include Final Draft (the industry standard), and Movie Magic, but these must be purchased.

ADA Accommodation

If you have a disability and wish to set up academic adjustments in this class, please send me an electronic copy of your “Academic Adjustments” form so we can meet to discuss how the approved adjustments will be implemented. If you do not yet have this form, please contact Disability Services as soon as possible: Bouillon 140 / cds@cwu.edu / 509-963-1202.

[Please find the schedule in a separate “Course Calendar” document.]
| Week 1 | Wed. | 4/2 Intro to Class & Course Expectations  
|       |      | **A1.Coverage due Mon. 4/7** |
|       |      | **Read Chapters 1 - 4** |
|       |      | **Week 2** Mon. 4/7 Screenplay Format and Conventions  
|       |      | Wed. 4/9 Celtx skills; "Script to Screen" exercise  
|       |      | Theme & World  
|       |      | **A2.World due Mon. 4/14** |
|       |      | **Read Chapters 5 - 7** |
|       |      | **Week 3** Mon. 4/14 Character & Structure; Power & Conflict  
|       |      | Wed. 4/16 No class - Prof. in Yakima for diversity workshop  
|       |      | **WATCH: "Tales from the Script" -- Netflix**  
|       |      | **A3.Character & A4.Structure due Mon. 4/21** |
|       |      | **Read Chapters 8 - 10** |
|       |      | **Week 4** Mon. 4/21 Beats/scenes/sequences; Scene cards; 1st 10  
|       |      | Wed. 4/23 Workshop: Story ideas |
|       |      | **Week 5** Mon. 4/28 Workshop: Story ideas  
|       |      | Wed. 4/30 Workshop: Story ideas  
|       |      | **A5.Adaptation script due Mon. 5/5** |
|       |      | **Week 6** Mon. 5/5 Workshop: Adaptation scripts  
|       |      | Wed. 5/7 Workshop: Adaptation scripts |
|       |      | **Read Chapter 11, 12, 13** |
|       |      | **Week 7** Mon. 5/12 Genre  
|       |      | Wed. 5/14 Narrative & Dialogue  
|       |      | **A6.Genre due Mon. 5/19**  
|       |      | **A7.FirstTen script due Mon. 5/19** |
|       |      | **Week 8** Mon. 5/19 Workshop: First Ten script  
|       |      | Wed. 5/21 Workshop: First Ten script |
|       |      | **Week 9** Mon. 5/26 **No class - Memorial Day**  
|       |      | Wed. 5/28 Workshop: First Ten script |
Read Chapters 14 - 16

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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Mon.</th>
<th>6/2 Workshop: First Ten script</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>6/4</td>
<td><strong>Rewriting; Treatments &amp; Outlines; Marketing</strong></td>
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**Finals Week**

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<th>Week 11</th>
<th>Mon.</th>
<th>Act One (A8) due by TBD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>Final Exam (Blackboard) due by TBD</td>
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(no class meeting during Finals week)