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

Office Hours: Bouillon 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 following, in regard to screenplays:

• Correct and specific use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing style
• Correct and specific script format requirements
• Creative story and style elements
• Writing process steps

Required Text


Other material may be made available to students online or distributed in class. You may incur some fees when you make copies of your scripts for workshops.

Canvas & Email

The Canvas classroom will contain the syllabus and calendar, assignment instructions, and related documents. As often as possible, your grades will be posted in the Canvas 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 Canvas.

I will use your CWU email address to contact you, announce any changes in the schedule, and share resources. Make sure Canvas is set to forward your messages to your cwu.edu address. Please check email 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 – which include feature-length scripts in addition to your textbook chapters – prior to each class session. Arrive prepared to discuss them.

You will also demonstrate your command of the subject matter through:
• **In- 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 Canvas on the date specified in the calendar.
• **A five-page short screenplay adapted from one of the "Storycorps" stories.**
• **A first draft of 10 pages (first 10 minutes of a feature).** You’ll develop your story through various exercises in & out of 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.
• **Final exam** which demonstrates your skills and understanding of the course material.

Note: whenever possible, we will workshop your scripts and story ideas in class; this experience is important to your development as a writer. We have a large class this quarter, so it may not be possible to share all assignments aloud (although you will always get written feedback from me). At least once this quarter, one of your assignments will be shared.

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. Late assignments may be submitted up to three days late, but will only be worth 50%. 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 Canvas rather than emailing it. There may be extra credit opportunities, but you cannot replace a zero grade.

**Value for assignments and participation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-page short adaptation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Ten Pages</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twenty-page Final Draft</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
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**TOTAL** 100%

**Note: If you are a Film & Video Studies major, it is recommended you keep copies of your scripts and assignments for your senior portfolio.**

The following grading scale 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

**Attendance & Participation**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to inform me immediately after class. Three tardies (or instances of leaving class early) will equal one absence.
Your attendance will be graded based on the percentage of time you are present. However, your participation grade is determined by your active participation in class, and will be negatively affected by the lack of it. Active participation 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.

_I recommend you 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, your advisor, and either Prof. Jon Ward or Dr. Liahna Armstrong (Co-Directors of FVS).

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, things come up, life gets busy and complicated 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. I want to help you learn, be present, and have a good experience.

**Behavior and Workshops**

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, we will strive for straightforward, constructive analysis. Because screenplay style and format are so specific, it’s crucial to know how others are “seeing” and experiencing your story.

Whatever is happening in class at a given time, please don’t interfere with the experience of other students. Chatting, texting, using the internet, arriving or leaving early, and dominating discussions are examples of behaviors that can negatively affect others’ ability to be present and learn.

Disruptive and/or disrespectful 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 takes plagiarism very seriously. If you plagiarize in this or any other FVS-related class, you may receive one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and/or expulsion from the FVS program._

**Screenplay Format**

To write in proper format, you must have appropriate software. If you do not already have scriptwriting software, please download and use Celtx (http://celtx.com/), which is free. Final Draft (the industry standard), and Movie Magic may also be used but 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: Hogue Hall 126 / ds@cwu.edu / 509-963-2214.

[Please find the schedule of readings & assignments in a separate “Course Calendar” document.]
FALL '15 COM/ENG 267 -- Screenwriting Fundamentals  
Mon. - Thur.  10a - 10:50a  
Hogue 229

Week 1 9/23 Intro to Class & Course Expectations  
Screenplay Format and Conventions  
**A1.Coverage due Mon. 9/28**

Read Chapters 1 - 4  
Read assigned feature script by 10/5

Week 2 9/28 Celtx skills; "Script to Screen" exercise  
Theme & World  
**A2.World due Mon. 10/5**

Read Chapters 5 - 7  
Read assigned feature script by 10/12

Week 3 10/5 Character & Structure; Power & Conflict  
**A3.Character & A4.Structure due Mon. 10/12**

Read Chapters 8 - 10  
Read assigned feature script by 10/19

Week 4 10/12 Beats/scenes/sequences; Scene cards; 1st 10  
Workshop: Story ideas

Read assigned feature script by 10/26

Week 5 10/19 Workshop: Story ideas  
**A5.Adaptation script due Mon. 10/26**

Read Chapter 11, 12, 13  
Read assigned feature script by 11/2

Week 6 10/26 Workshop: Adaptation scripts  
Genre  
**A6.Genre due Mon. 11/2**
Read assigned feature script by 11/9

Week 7
11/2 Narrative & Dialogue

Read assigned feature script by 11/16

Week 8
11/9 Style & formatting review
11/11 **No class - Veteran's Day**
**A7.FirstTen script due Mon. 11/16**

Read assigned feature script by 11/23

Week 9
11/16 Workshop: First Ten script

Read assigned feature script by 11/30

Week 10
11/23 Workshop: First Ten script
11/25 **No class - special viewing or reading assignment**
11/26 **No class - Thanksgiving break**

Read Chapters 14 - 16

Week 11
11/30 Rewriting; Treatments & Outlines; Marketing

Finals Week
12/7 - 12/11 Act One (A8) due by 11:59pm Fri. 12/11
Final Exam (Blackboard) due by 11:59pm Fri. 12/11
(no class meeting during Finals week)