**EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**FILM AND VIDEO**

School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design  
Department of Cinema and Media Arts

**FA / FILM 1120 3.0 SECTION A**  
**INTRODUCTION TO SCREENWRITING**  
**FALL 2017 / WINTER 2018**

Last Modified Date: 09/07/2017

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**COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION**

Provides an overview of the role of storytelling in filmmaking practice, introducing students to the techniques used by screenwriters to craft stories in both fiction and non-fiction films and television programs and other moving picture media. Course credit exclusion: FA/FILM 1010 3.00 and FA/FILM 1121 3.00.  
Note: Required of all first-year BA and BFA film majors. Enrolment is limited to BA and BFA film majors.

**INSTRUCTOR(S)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
<th>Contact Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schechter, Rebecca</td>
<td>Sec. A / LECT / F</td>
<td><a href="mailto:srebecca@yorku.ca">srebecca@yorku.ca</a></td>
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**SPECIAL FEATURES**

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS, MEDIA, PERFORMANCE & DESIGN  
Department of Cinema & Media Arts

- **Course**: FA/FILM 1120 3.0 Introduction to Screenwriting  
  **Course Webpage**: https://moodle.yorku.ca/  
  **Term**: Fall 2016  
  **Time and Location**: Wednesdays 9:30-12:30 R N102 (Nat Taylor Cinema)  
  **Course Instructor**: Rebecca Schechter srebecca@yorku.ca  
  **Course consultation hours**: by appointment only  
  **Office**: CFT 227

**Tutorial leaders**: Josh Boles and Daniel Gennara  
**Tutorial Times and Locations**:  
- Tutorial 1: Monday 10:30-11:30 ACW 003 (DG)  
- Tutorial 2: Monday 11:30-12:30 ACW 002 (JB)  
- Tutorial 3: Monday 10:30-11:30 ACW 002 (JB)  
- Tutorial 4: Monday 11:30-12:30 ACW 003 (DG)

**Expanded Course Description**

**Special Features**

1. FA/FILM 1120 3.0, required of all first year Film majors, is a course designed to introduce students to the principles of moving picture storytelling.
It can be argued that moving-picture storytelling is the most important and powerful form of storytelling of our era. Motion pictures burst onto the entertainment scene around the turn of the 20th century. Over a hundred years later, the technology has changed. The business of making and distributing film, television and digital media has changed and keeps changing.

What remains constant is story. The medium gives us the power to tell mind-blowing, heart-stirring, and spine-shaking stories. In fact, without the skill at telling powerful stories, the "cinema" probably would have disappeared into history as a small blip, a fad with no staying power... as some of its inventors predicted. This course will introduce students to the basics of the craft of screenwriting, through the techniques used by screenwriters and directors as they engage with story in fiction films, television programs, and other moving-image media. This craft is a body of techniques that has developed to help the writer shape his or her story towards the goal of creating a moving and entertaining screen story.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

2. Topics and Concepts

Each week’s lecture will delve into a specific aspect of storytelling craft, using as examples short films, television programs, and feature films.

Week-to-Week Outline

Note: subject to change! Provided for information only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>What is Story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>What is Structure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>What is Structure? continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>Finding YOUR stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>What is Character?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>Character and Conflict.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>Character and Plot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>What is Suspense?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>What is Theme?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>What is Dialogue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 22</td>
<td>What is the Screenplay?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>Putting it All Together/Overview of the US and Canadian Film business</td>
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Recommended Reading:

*The Way of the Screenwriter*, by Amnon Buchbinder
*Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters*, by Michael Tierno
*The Screenwriter’s Bible*, by David Trottier

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

3. Learning Objectives with Examples

One can argue that storytelling is one of the fundamental activities that defines human beings and human cultures. Nevertheless, creating compelling screen stories and screenplays is not as easy as it looks. The good news is, once you master the techniques we’ll cover in this course, you will be able to use them as the
foundation for screenwriting work in increasingly complex forms.

This course is required of all first year film majors because a basic understanding of the role story plays in moving images is a crucial asset for all related study. Whether your ultimate goal is to make better student films, successfully analyze films and other media, write better screenplays, work towards a career in the film and television industry, or just to understand the crucial role of story in the moving image media, this course aims to provide you with some crucial tools of understanding and creativity.

Assignments will be geared to developing the student’s firm grasp on the most fundamental elements of moving image storytelling. They will be deceptively simple, and can be accomplished correctly only if undertaken with precision and with respect for the prescribed limitations. (Imagination is, of course, crucial to all good storytelling – and it’ll be up to you to bring that to the assignments.)

**GRADED ASSESSMENT**

4. Graded Assessment

Assignments will be rooted in the class lectures. Course texts are films that will be screened in-class, and course material is presented in lecture and discussion. **If you do not attend class you will not be able to complete assignments correctly.** In addition, attendance will be recorded in lectures AND tutorials to determine the 15% of your grade based on participation and attendance.

Detailed assignment sheets will be handed out in class. Weekly tutorials will provide an opportunity for further exploration of ideas and issues, and most importantly to get feedback on writing assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Grading Breakdown</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Sept. 27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Still Image Story Outline</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 Oct. 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concept Kit</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>#3 Oct. 26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Character Story Outline</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>#4 Nov. 9</td>
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<td>Dread/Surprise Story Outline</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>#5 Nov. 30</td>
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<td>Final Short Film Script</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture and Tutorial Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, B = 6, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments will be marked out of 15 or 25 (as indicated above) and the final total out of 100 will be converted into a letter grade.

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004/cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

**Assignment Submission:** Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Assignments are to be handed in as a hard copy, in person at the start of class on the due date. Email submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances. Work not submitted in class must be received before class starts in order not to be deemed late.

**Lateness Penalty:** Assignments received later than the due date – if accepted -- will be penalized 5 percentage points for the first day late, and 3 points per day after that. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Director but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

5. Additional Information

Last date to drop a fall term (F) course without receiving a grade: November 11, 2016

Academic Policies / Information

The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) provides a Student Information Sheet that includes:

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures / Academic Integrity Web site
- Access/Disability
- Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants
- Religious Observance Accommodation
- Student Code of Conduct

Additional information:

- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
- Alternate Exam and Test Scheduling

Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy

- The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (a) the grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and that, (b) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for 'full year' courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade.

Important University Sessional Dates (you will find classes and exams start/end dates, reading/co-curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more.
http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm

"20% Rule"

No examinations or tests collectively worth more than 20% of the final grade in a course will be given during the final 14 calendar days of classes in a term. The exceptions to the rule are classes which regularly meet Friday evenings or on Saturday and/or Sunday at any time, and courses offered in the compressed summer terms.

Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.

Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.
Moodle @ York University