COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Focuses on the initial stages of writing a feature-length screenplay. Explores idea of development, story groundwork and principles of story structure. Leads students through craft challenges in the creation of a fully developed story outline. The first of two year-long courses. Prerequisite: FA/FILM 2120; or FA/FILM 2121 and permission of the Film Department.

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>Wiseman, Howard M.</td>
<td>Sec. A / STDO / Y</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hwiseman@yorku.ca">hwiseman@yorku.ca</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SPECIAL FEATURES

DEPARTMENT OF CINEMA AND MEDIA ARTS

Course: FILM 3120 - Feature Screenwriting I

Term: Fall/Winter 2017/2018

Prerequisite / Co-requisite: FILM 2120 or FILM 2121

Course Instructor
Howard Wiseman

Email: hwiseman@yorku.ca

Office Hours: Thursday, 1:00-2 pm
Tues. 1:30-2:15 or by appointment

Office: CFT #229

Time and Location
Thursday 2:30pm-5:30pm  CFT #108 or #239

Course Webpage: moodle@yorku.ca Film 3120 (passport York ID necessary for access)

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

Expanded Course Description
FA/FILM 3120 is an intermediate screenwriting workshop, (the first of two courses that focus on feature film screenwriting).

The screenplay is perhaps one of the most difficult forms to master. It is also one of the most rewarding. The conception and execution of a good screenplay takes much longer than most writers ever imagine. Writing is rewriting. Even after the final shooting script, the rewriting continues, often during and even after production. A screenplay is a perfect imperfection, a work-in-progress. And yet the screenplay is also a physical blueprint from which the writer’s vision is converted into something real and tangible. In this way, a screenwriter is like an architect. But without a carefully considered plan, any building, no matter how marvellously conceived in the creator’s imagination, could not be built.

The screenwriter is driven by a passion to create a specific world and to tell a specific story within it. This story must be told clearly, in accepted screenplay form, so as to one day be realized by a team of people who will often be unknown to the writer. Just as inspiration and conception and a need to tell a particular story are of fundamental importance to the screenwriter, so are story design, narrative drive, overall craft, as well as story-editing, critique, rewriting, and perseverance.

It all begins with the evolution of story. The story and its themes, research, analysis of films and other dramatic arts, the craft of screenwriting, living and observing life, and doing the necessary hard work, are all key factors in writing great screenplays. In a workshop environment, this class will make use of all these elements in order to focus on story development and storytelling.

Over the course of nine months, in addition to gaining further insight into story, character development, film structure and adaptation, through screenings and writing exercises, students will conceive and evolve their own original feature film outlines, and treatments. Rewriting will play a major role in this process.

Attendance in class is crucial. Through witnessing and acting as story-editors on in-class exercises and stories of your peers you will acquire more tools and greater insight as to how to approach and improve your own work. If you miss a class you will soon fall behind, as the course is built on a progression of ideas and a particular approach to writing. It is cumulative and organic. The screenwriting process is a challenging one, but it is also an exhilarating and rewarding one.

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

Course Objectives
To expose students to the complex process of screenwriting by providing them with a supportive workshop environment, structured lectures and assignments, with the focus being to venture further and deeper into the stories they wish to tell in the evolution of their own screenplays.

Methods

1) Review of the basic concepts of dramatic screenwriting, and analysis of produced feature length screenplays. Exploring of the process by which a writer develops an idea into a story, and finally into a screenplay proposal.

2) Development of the world of the story and the characters, including research components or “walking the ground.”

3) An intensive investigation of the principles of feature film story structure: the shaping of dramatic conflict out of character. Students will each craft a scene-by-scene outline of their screenplay, then flesh this outline into a treatment, a full prose description of the dramatic action. As part of this process, original first acts from each student’s feature treatment in progress will be cast and read aloud with input from the class.

Course Texts / Required Readings
Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course:
“Story” by Robert McKee
“The Anatomy of Story” by John Truby
“Save The Cat” by Blake Snyder
“Girl on a Train” by Paula Hawkins

Recommended:
“Advanced Screenwriting” by Linda Seger
“Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters” by Tierno
“The Hero’s Journey” by Chris Vogler
“On Acting” by Sanford Meisner
“The War of Art” Pressfield

GRADED ASSESSMENT
Evaluation
Evaluation is based on assessment of both creative and technical components in the assignments. Attendance as well as completion of ungraded assignments is important both for providing feedback and to proper assessment of final versions. Because this is a workshop, overall participation will also be taken into consideration in final grading.

All submitted work must be properly formatted, typed, proofed and stapled. Marks will be deducted for poor presentation, spelling and grammatical errors. No assignments will be accepted for marking after the published due dates. Don’t rely solely on the spell check program. Buy the “Oxford Quick Reference Spelling Dictionary” or its equivalent.

All Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable in this course to write stories based on material from other produced sources (whether stage, film, TV, prose, or newspaper articles, etc.) other than your own original material -except for the one exercise on adaptation where source material will be provided. Otherwise this course focuses on developing your own original story into feature film treatment form.

For further information on basing your stories on pre-existing material, please see paragraph on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism.

Grading Breakdown
Sept. 15  Class 2
Early story ideas - 3 ox 1 paragraph ideas for discussion
Sept. 21  Class 3  
Assignment #1  
“The Moth” Adaptation Exercise  
10 pages minimum  10%

Sept. 29  
3 x 2 paragraph feature ideas for your story groups

Oct. 5  Class 5  
Assignment #2  
Two Story Proposals for Feature Screenplays: 2 x 5 pages each -1.5 spacing  
15%

Oct. 19 -  
Scene by Scene description of Act One of your movie

Nov. 23  Class 10  
Assignment 3  
Your Own Original Act One Screenplay Pages - minimum/ maximum 24-28 pgs.  
25%

Winter

Jan. 4/11/18/25/ Feb.1  
Class 1-6  Feedback on Pages/Script Readings in Class  
Scene Exercises  
--------

Feb. 8  Class 6  
Assignment 4  
Original Step Outline: 9-10 pgs min./ maximum ( 1.5 spacing)  
15%

Mar. 8  Class 9  
Story Editing Report:  5 pgs. min./max. (1.5 spacing)  
5%

Assignment #5

Revised Step Outline (for group)  
Mar. 29  Class 12  
Assignment 6  
Feature Film Treatment: 24-28 pages minimum/maximum (1.5 spacing)  
20%

Participation  
10%

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Important information
Attendance at classes is mandatory. Staying away from class to work on an assignment is not a valid excuse.

Classes begin promptly at 2:30 so plan to arrive a few minutes early. Late arrivals are disruptive. Arriving more than 15 minutes late will not count towards attendance for that class.

Written work is to be computer-printed in suitable font, presented free of errors in spelling, grammar and format. Spell Check can only do so much; make a habit of proofing your work!

Unless otherwise indicated, assignments should be formatted as follows: double-spaced, 12 pt. font, ragged right margin. Pages should always be Numbered. *** A Cover Sheet clearly indicating the Student's Name, Course Name and Number, and Assignment number/Title, is also required. Always Staple pages so that they are not lost.

The screenplay assignments must be submitted in correct screenplay format. For students not in possession of suitable screenwriting software, software can be purchased from Data Integrity in the York Lanes Mall with a discount. Also, online, ScreenPro97 (http://www.passarella.com/screenpro/details.html).

You can buy the Movie Magic Screenwriter program on line with student I.D. http://dramatica.stores.yahoo.net/movmagscreen4.html

Late assignments will not be accepted, other than under extraordinary circumstances and by prompt arrangement with the course director. Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized (one-half letter grade per day that the assignment is late), with a grade of F after one week. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness or compassionate grounds will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter). We have a very tight syllabus; those who miss assignments will quickly fall behind. Students who fail to hand in assignments on time will also miss out on significant feedback in the development of their material.

Pacing
The structure of the assignment schedule assumes that students will be working steadily on the development of their story throughout the year. Beginning work on assignments at the last minute will yield poor results. There will be a Course Materials Fee of $10.

Submission of Work:
Work is to be submitted as a hard copy, in person at the start of class on the due date. Email submissions will not be accepted. If in-person submission is not possible, work may be left in the course director’s mailbox in CFT 229, (please don’t slide them under the door as they may get trampled or lost). Your work is not considered received until it is in the course director’s hands, and no responsibility is assumed by the course director or the department for work so submitted. Also, BACKUP YOUR WORK at every stage. Don’t lose your script because you didn’t create a back-up copy.

A Note on Email:
The course director will use email or Moodle when necessary to communicate information to the whole class, (make sure I have your current email), but prefers not to engage in individual correspondence other than in exceptional circumstances. Please make use of office hours; face-to-face communication is preferred. Desperate night-before-due-date emails are discouraged.
Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious issue. It is also damaging to yourself as a writer and a student, as well as being grounds for severe academic penalties, as indicated in the undergraduate catalogue. Website: http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students.htm

The Instructor requires that each class member has taken the tutorial associated with Academic Honesty.

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information:

- Academic Integrity Website http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity.
- Accessibility/Disability Services: course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, learning and psychiatric disabilities www.yorku.ca/cds.
- Religious Observance Accommodation https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs


Student Conduct http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=82 Please note that this information is subject to periodic update. For the most current information, please go to the CCAS webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents): http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main

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

Moodle @ York University