COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Introduces the craft of screenwriting, taking a general view of screenwriting and its relationship to filmmaking, storytelling and writing. This course is a prerequisite for all upper-level screenwriting courses. Prerequisites: Film majors: FA/FILM 1010 3.00 or permission of committee. Open to Non-majors by permission of committee.

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorey, Maureen</td>
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<td>4167388643</td>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

A good screenwriter knows how to integrate creativity (the act of writing) with analysis (the ability to evaluate and improve the work). This course will take students in the direction of good screenwriting by working on creative expression through a variety of writing assignments, as well as enhancing the craft skills that enable the writer to identify and solve problems in their work. We’ll deepen the student’s understanding of the screenplay form and its various components: plot, character, theme, scenes, dialogue, subtext. We’ll examine the role of the writer primarily in feature films and short films. We will also briefly look at documentary and some television.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

This is largely a workshop course. You will be expected to write five short (10-15 page) screenplays, among other assignments. Exploration of concepts will be integrated into the hands-on screenwriting assignments. The class will be conducted through lectures and discussions, along with writing workshops and writing assignments. The lectures will be supplemented by screenings of films, feature length (and feature excerpts), and short films. Students will occasionally be asked to share their own material in class and in small groups in the process of creating characters, scenes, and short scripts. Students are expected to fully participate in all workshops and classes and to serve as story editors on specific work of their peers. They will also engage in reading and analyzing short and feature-length screenplays. They are expected to purchase a screenwriting book on formatting as well as screenwriting software.

Course Text / Readings* Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course.

“The Way Of The Screenwriter” by Amnon Buchbinder

“Screenwriter’s Bible” by David Trottier
"Writing Short Films" by Linda Cowgill

**Recommended Readings**

“The Hero’s Journey” by Chris Vogler
“The Virgin’s Promise” by Kim Hudson
“Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters” by Michael Tierno
“The War of Art” by Pressfield
“The Art Of Dramatic Writing” by Lazslo Egri

**LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF**

Students will learn to read and interpret screenplays with greater understanding and insight. They will learn to develop, present (pitch), and write (in professional industry format) 10-15 page screenplays based on their own original stories, as well as one assignment adapted from other source material. They will also learn to analyze produced short films, feature films, and, to an extent, the screenplays developed by their peers.

In the process of creating four original short screenplays, as well as a 10-page adaptation of existing material, students will be exposed to the key building blocks of screenwriting. Through hands-on experience with screenplay elements (dramatic conflict, plot, structure, character development, theme, scene making, dialogue, and clear communication, as well as learning standard screenplay format), students will create and develop original screenplays. Some of these original screenplays may be eventually be produced in the York film production program. Students will also learn to read and interpret a screenplay with greater understanding and insight.

**GRADED ASSESSMENT**

**Assignment Due Dates, Grading Breakdown**

**FALL TERM**

ASSIGNMENT #1 (10%): DUE SEPTEMBER 25, class #3
A 10-scene screenplay based on an original story, without dialogue, in screenplay format.

ASSIGNMENT #2 (15%): DUE OCTOBER 23, class #6
Adaptation: a 10-page screenplay, based on a fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson or the Brothers Grimm… stories to be assigned.

ASSIGNMENT #3 (15%): DUE NOVEMBER 20, class #10.
First Draft of an original screenplay for a short film (10-12 pages). Submit 2 copies, one to Course Director, one to assigned writing partner.

ASSIGNMENT #4 (5%): DUE DECEMBER 4, class #12.
Story editing notes: critique/analysis of partner’s script (Assignment #3). 2 pages minimum, 2 copies to be given to partner and instructor.

**WINTER TERM**

ASSIGNMENT #5 (10%): DUE JANUARY 8, class #1
2nd Draft of your original screenplay (Assignment #3), based on story-editing notes from partner (Assignment #4) and Course Director.

ASSIGNMENT #6 (15%) DUE FEBRUARY 26, class #7
Second original screenplay for a short film (10-12 pages).

ASSIGNMENT #7 (15%): DUE APRIL 2, class #12.
Third original screenplay for a short film (12-15 pages).

PARTICIPATION (15%): Includes attendance, participation in classroom discussions, attitude, collaboration with others, (Being late or absent, except in cases of verifiable illness or family emergency will result in a reduction of this portion of the final mark.)

- Workshops and In-class exercises: (subject to change)
  Attendance/participation expected
  FALL TERM
  WORKSHOP #1 OCTOBER 2, class #4
  Character Observation/Stream of Consciousness Piece

  IN-CLASS SCRIPT ANALYSIS OCTOBER 23, class #5
  Script Analysis of an assigned feature film

  WORKSHOP #2 OCTOBER 30 & NOVEMBER 6, classes #7-8
  Breaking story; creating beat sheets. Small groups work on each other’s stories for Assignment #4, then share the results with the class.

  WINTER TERM
  WORKSHOP #3 JANUARY 15, class #2
  Pitching practice in small groups and in front of the class.

  WORKSHOP #4 FEBRUARY 12, class #6
  Finding the theme: Small group discussion on themes in each other’s short film scripts.

  WORKSHOP #5 MARCH 12 & 19, classes #9-10
  Scene writing: in-class exercise writing scenes of conflict from Assignment #7.

Grading scheme Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties:
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, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g., A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.).

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)
Students may take a limited number of courses for degree credit on an ungraded (pass/fail) basis. For full information on this option see Alternative Grading Option in the Fine Arts section of the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation of creative materials will be based on the student’s handling of creative and technical elements. These include the creation, execution, and compelling nature of story, plot and character, strength of dramatic structure and effective use of accepted screenplay format. Each assignment will be graded on the basis of creativity/originality, content, mastery of the form from lessons learned in class, language skills, and clarity of communication.

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

**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 under any circumstances.** If in-person submission is not possible, work may be left in the department’s drop-box where it will be date-stamped. Your work is not considered received until it is in the course director’s hands, in person, or with a date-stamp from the drop-box. No responsibility is assumed by the course director or the department for work submitted in any other fashion. Please remember to BACK UP YOUR WORK at every stage. Don’t lose your script because you didn’t create a back-up copy.

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

Unless otherwise indicated, assignments that are NOT SCREENPLAYS should be formatted as follows: 1.5 spacing, 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.

Screenplay assignments must be submitted in correct screenplay format. See Trottier’s “A Screenwriter’s Bible,” required text, above. 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.

Also, see [http://www.oscars.org/nicholl/format.html](http://www.oscars.org/nicholl/format.html) (then print out pdf on format).

Screenwriting Software can be purchased from Data Integrity in the York Lanes Mall with a substantial educational discount.

Industry Standard Programs:

**Movie Magic Screenwriter** is available online for $99 US with student I.D.
[http://dramatica.stores.yahoo.net/movmagscreen4.html](http://dramatica.stores.yahoo.net/movmagscreen4.html)

**Final Draft** offers a free 20 page demo version, though this is not suitable for longer screenplays and leaves a water mark across all printed pages. They also have a discount for students on the regular version of the program. [https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-10-edu.html](https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-10-edu.html)

**ScreenPro97** This is free or very inexpensive, but will require further configuration in order to conform to acceptable format. You need to update format as instructed on homepage.
[http://www.passarella.com/screenpro/#3sqsg.html](http://www.passarella.com/screenpro/#3sqsg.html)

**FadeIn** has a free demo, and the full program costs $80 US. [https://www.fadeinpro.com](https://www.fadeinpro.com)

**Celtx** has a free version and a paid version. [https://www.celtx.com/index.html](https://www.celtx.com/index.html)
NOTE RE ORIGINAL MATERIAL: You may NOT adapt or base your original screenplays on pre-existing material, unless it is your own (with absolutely no collaborators), and it is specifically cleared with the instructor. You may not co-write your screenplays since you are being assessed on the basis of your individual performance. These are potentially serious issues. When in doubt, ask the instructor.

Lateness penalties:
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.

*If you know ahead of time that you can’t meet a deadline, discuss this with the Course Director as early as possible.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attendance at classes is mandatory. Staying away from class to work on an assignment is not a valid excuse. Classes begin promptly so plan to arrive few minutes early. Late arrivals are disruptive.

A Note on Email and class decorum:
The course director will use email and Moodle when necessary to communicate information to the whole class, (please 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 also discouraged.

Associated Fees: A $10 fee will be assessed each student for Course Materials.

DROP DATES:
Last date to drop a full year (Y) course without receiving a grade: February 8, 2019

For other important dates refer to (http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/fw11.htm)

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