EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
FILM AND VIDEO
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Cinema and Media Arts
FA / FILM 2120 6.0 SECTION B
SCREENWRITING FUNDAMENTALS (PRODUCTION)
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

Last Modified Date: 09/24/2019

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>Veninger, Ingrid</td>
<td>Sec. B / STDO / Y</td>
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<td>Paskaljevic, Vladimir</td>
<td>Sec. B / STDO / Y</td>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

Expanded Course Description:
This course will explore the process of screenwriting by engaging students in a variety of craft building exercises and writing assignments. This class will deepen the student’s understanding of the screenplay form and its various components: plot, character, structure, theme, dialogue, subtext. We’ll examine the role of the writer primarily in narrative fiction films; however, hybrid and non-fiction forms will also be briefly explored.

This is largely a workshop course. Students will be expected to write three original short film screenplays, among other assignments and exercises. The class will be conducted through lectures, readings and discussions. Occasionally, the lectures will be supplemented by screenings of feature films (excerpts), and short films. Students will be asked to share their own material in class throughout the process of developing their characters, scenes, and short screenplays.

Regarding Original Material: You may NOT adapt or base your original screenplays on pre-existing material, unless it is your own work (created 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.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS
**Course Required Reading:**
Every student will be required to purchase a copy of “The Way of the Screenwriter” by Amnon Buchbinder. $24.95. Available at the York University Bookstore.

**Readings:**
“Screenwriter’s Bible” by David Trottier  
“Writing Short Films” by Linda Cowgill  
“Aristotle’s Poetics for Screenwriters” by Michael Tierno

**Additional readings will be assigned and/or recommended during the course and distributed via Moodle or as handouts. It will be students’ duty to check Moodle document updates every week.**

Additionally, students will be required to acquire screenwriting software (see below), or create the equivalent required formatting styles in other word processing software. All students in this course are expected to format their screenplays in order to comply with industry standard and print hard copies of assignments.

**Screenwriting software and formatting resources:**
See http://www.oscars.org/nicholl/format.html for screenwriting formatting & resources.

https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/brilliant-script-screenplay-format/

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

Screenplays are available for reading through York University Library @ American Film Scripts Online.  
https://www.library.yorku.ca/find/Search/Results?lookfor=american+film+scripts+online+database&type=AllFields&submit=Go

Movie Magic Screenwriter is available online for $99 US with student I.D.

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

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

FadeIn has a free demo, and the full program costs $80 US. https://www.fadeinpro.com  
Celtx has a free version and a paid version. https://www.celtx.com/index.html

https://www.maketecheasier.com/best-free-screenwriting-software/

https://www.scriptreaderpro.com/free-screenwriting-software/
Also, alternative option is to format styles in Word. That has to be done according to industry standards.

**Learning Outcomes:**
Students will learn to develop, present (pitch), and write (in professional industry format) three short screenplays based on their own original ideas, as well as one assignment adapted from other source material. Throughout the course, students will be exposed to the key building blocks of screenwriting (dramatic conflict, plot, structure, character development, theme, scene making, dialogue). They will also learn to analyze produced films, and give feedback on the screenplays developed by their peers.

Note: Some of the original screenplays created in this course by Film Production Majors may eventually be produced in the second year film production program. A pitch session will be held in early February for production majors.

**GRADED ASSESSMENT**

**Evaluation:**
Evaluation of materials will be based on the student’s handling of the technical and creative elements of screenwriting. Grading of each assignment will consider the degree to which the submitted work satisfies the stated objectives of the exercise, the degree of imagination and originality displayed, as well as the quality of the prose including: grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling. Throughout the course, evaluation criteria for each assignment will be clearly communicated. The overarching guidelines are as follows: imaginative creation, competent execution, compelling nature of the story/plot/character, strength of dramatic structure, clarity of communication and effective use of accepted screenplay format. Students are expected to fully participate in class. All submitted work must be properly formatted, typed, proofed and stapled. Marks will be deducted for poor presentation, spelling, grammatical errors, and lateness.

**EVALUATION/GRADING**

**FALL TERM**

**ASSIGNMENT #1 (10%):** DUE September 24, class #3.
A 10-scene original screenplay (6-8 pages), with NO dialogue, in screenplay format.

**ASSIGNMENT #2 (15%):** DUE October 29, class #7.
Adaptation Assignment: A 10-page screenplay, based on a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. Stories to be assigned.

**ASSIGNMENT #3 (15%):** DUE NOVEMBER 26, class #11.
First Draft of an original screenplay for a short film (10-12 pages). Submit 2 copies, 1 to Course Director, 1 to peer/story editor.
ASSIGNMENT #4 (5%): DUE DECEMBER 3, class #12.
Story editing notes: critique/analysis (2 pages, minimum) of peer’s script (Assignment #3). Partners will be assigned. 2 copies to be delivered - 1 to partner and 1 to instructor.

WINTER TERM

ASSIGNMENT #5 (15%): DUE JANUARY (TBC).
Final draft of your original screenplay (Assignment #3), based on feedback from partner, peer group, and instructor.

ASSIGNMENT #6 (20%): DUE MARCH (TBC).
Third original screenplay for a short film (12-15 pages).

PARTICIPATION (20%): Includes attendance, participation in classroom discussions, in-class exercises, feedback, workshops, 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.)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Attendance: Classes start on time. Success in this course requires active engagement. Students are expected to be punctual, prepared, and attentive for classes. At the start of each class, there will be a 10-minute in-class assignment worth 1% of the participation mark. Students arriving late forfeit the mark. Each absence will equal a 2% deduction from the final participation mark, except for legitimate absences, given advance notification to Instructor via email and/or receipt of a medical certificate.

Email Policy: Instructor will aim to answer emails within 48 hours of receipt between September 4 and April 15, pending unforeseen circumstances. If you have a time-dependent matter to discuss, please make an appointment to see Instructor in person during office hours.

- Cell Phones: Cell phones are to be turned off for class, unless it’s break-time. Students who text during class or receive calls (pending emergencies) will be asked to leave the class.

- Laptops: Unless otherwise specified, laptops are for note taking, sharing assignments, class readings. Anyone found using their laptop for email, unauthorized browsing, etc. will have their privilege revoked.

Assignment Delivery: Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are 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. Your work is not considered received until it is in the Instructor’s hands, delivered in person, or with a date-stamp. No responsibility is assumed by the course director, or the department, for work submitted via any other fashion. Please remember to BACK UP YOUR WORK at every stage. Don’t lose your assignment because there was no back up. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments that are NOT SCREENPLAYS should be formatted as follows: 1.5 spacing, 12 pt. font (for screenplays it must be courier), and ragged right margin. Pages should always be numbered. A cover sheet should clearly indicate the student’s name, course name and number, and assignment title. Always staple pages so they do not get lost.

Assignment Due Dates: Any late assignments may be dropped off in the black Drop Box right beside Yukari Hayakawa’s office (CFT223) BEFORE 4pm. Papers delivered to another office, or slid under the Instructor’s door will NOT be accepted. And, any assignments dropped in the Black Box after 4 pm will be
date stamped on the next day.

Students must put the following on the first page of their assignments:
1. Full name
2. Student number
3. Course director name: Ingrid Veninger
4. Course code: FILM 2120B

**Lateness Penalty:** Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 50% of mark (up to 2 days late). Following 2 late days, overdue Assignments will receive 0%. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

**Drop Day:**

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<th>Term Fall (F)</th>
<th>Term Winter (W)</th>
<th>Full Year (Y)</th>
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<td>Last date to drop</td>
<td>Nov. 8, 2019</td>
<td>Mar. 23, 2020</td>
<td>Feb. 3, 2020</td>
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For other important dates refer to: https://registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/fw19

**Grading Scheme:**
The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York University (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)

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

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**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 yorku.ca/cds.
- Religious Observance Accommodation https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regnobs
IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Please note that this information is subject to periodic update.

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

Academic Honesty and Integrity
York students are required to maintain high standards of academic integrity and are subject to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=69.

There is also an academic integrity website with complete information about academic honesty. Students are expected to review the materials on the Academic Integrity website at http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity.

Accessibility/Disability Services
York provides services for students with disabilities (including learning, mental health, physical, sensory and medical disabilities) needing accommodation related to teaching and evaluation methods/materials. These services are made available to students in all Faculties and programs at York University.

Students in need of these services are asked to register with disability services in Counselling & Disability Services as early as possible to ensure sufficient advance notice so that appropriate academic accommodation can be provided. You are encouraged to schedule a time early in the term to meet with each professor to discuss your accommodation needs. Please note that registering with disabilities services and discussing your needs with your professors is necessary to avoid any impediment to receiving the necessary academic accommodations to meet your needs.

Additional information is available at www.yorku.ca/cds or by contacting the offices of the disability service providers:


Ethics Review Process
York students are subject to the York University Policy for the Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants at http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=94. In particular, students proposing to undertake research involving human participants (e.g., interviewing the director of a company or government agency, having students complete a questionnaire, etc.) are required to submit an Application for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Participants at least one month before you plan to begin the research. If you are in doubt as to whether this requirement applies to you, contact your Course Director immediately.

Religious Observance Accommodation
York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community, and making accommodations for observances of special significance to adherents. Should any of the dates specified in this syllabus for an in-class test or examination pose such a conflict for you, contact the Course Director within the first three weeks of class. Similarly, should an assignment to be completed in a lab, practicum placement, workshop, etc., scheduled later in the term pose such a conflict, contact the Course Director immediately. Please note that to arrange an alternative date or time for an examination scheduled in the formal examination periods (December and April/May), students must complete an Examination Accommodation Form, which can be obtained from Student Client Services, Student Services Centre or online at http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/exam_accommodation.pdf. Further information on religious observance is available at https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs.

- Student Conduct

Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the instructor to maintain an appropriate academic atmosphere in the classroom, and the responsibility of the student to cooperate in that endeavour. Further, the instructor is the best person to decide, in the first instance, whether such an atmosphere is present in the class. A statement of the policy and procedures involving disruptive and/or harassing behaviour by students in academic situations is available on the York website http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=82.

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

Moodle @ York University