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 exclusions: FA/FILM 1010 3.00, FA/FILM 1121 3.00 (prior to Winter 2011). Note: Required of all first-year BA and BFA film majors. Enrolment is limited to BA and BFA film majors.

SPECIAL FEATURES

FA/FILM 1120 3.0, required of all first year Film majors, is a course designed to introduce students to the basic principles of film storytelling.

It can be argued that moving-picture storytelling is the most important and powerful form of storytelling of our era. During more than a century long history of moving images the technology has changed. The way the movies are made, distributed and broadcasted changed and keeps changing, but what remains constant is story. The audio-visual medium provides a possibility tell mind-blowing and heart-stirring stories.

This course will introduce students to the basics principles of screenwriting, through the craft used by screenwriters in fiction films, television programs, and other moving-image media. This craft is a body of techniques that helps the writers shape in creating a moving and entertaining screen story.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

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

Week-to-Week Outline

NOTE: Subject to change!

Sept. 9: What is Story?
Sept. 16: What is Theme? What is Structure?
Sept. 23: What is Structure? (continued)
Sept. 30: Finding YOUR stories
Oct. 7: What is Character?
Oct. 12-16: Reading Week
Oct 21: Character and Conflict.
Oct. 28: Character and Plot.
Nov. 4: What is Scene?
Nov. 11: What is Suspense?
Nov. 18: What is Dialogue?
Nov. 25: Scene Outline and Screenplay
Dec. 2: Screenplay Formatting 2

Required Reading:
The Screenwriter's Bible, by David Trottier
Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters, by Michael Tierno

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

Creating compelling stories and screenplays is not only a matter of artistic inspiration and writers’ ingenuity – it is a highly structured job that you can learn. 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 you are aiming 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 provides you with 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 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

Attendance (during synchronous lectures and tutorials) as well as participation in the forums will be recorded to determine the 15% of your grade.

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.

Assignment/Grading Breakdown
Due date Assignment %
#1 Sept. 23 Still Image Story Outline 15%
#2 Oct. 7 Concept Kit 15%
#3 Nov. 4 Character Story Outline 15%
#4 Nov. 25 Dread/Surprise Story Outline 15%
#5 Dec. 10 Final Short Film Script 25%
Lecture and Tutorial Attendance and Participation 15%
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 at http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/

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 submitted through Moodle/e-class on the due date. Email submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

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).

Last date to drop a fall term (F) course without receiving a grade: November 6, 2020

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A way to determine Internet connection and speed: there are online tests, such as Speedtest, https://www.speedtest.net/ that can be run.

Useful links describing computing information, resources and help for students:
Student Guide to Moodle/e-class https://lthelp.yorku.ca/student-guide-to-moodle
Computing for Students Website https://student.computing.yorku.ca/
Student Guide to eLearning at York University http://elearning-guide.apps01.yorku.ca/
Learning Skills Services https://lss.info.yorku.ca/online-learning/

Academic Policies / Information

The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy Committee (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
• 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
• Manage my Academic record
http://myacademicrecord.students.yorku.ca/
• "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