COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Provides a broad introduction to the art and craft of screenwriting. Writing for film is very specific, both an art and a technical document. Students, through the examination of films, will discuss how film stories are told and the fundamental requirements to writing a script. However, unlike FA/FILM 2120 6.00, these scripts are not written to be produced and therefore do not cover the technical language of filmmaking (camera angles, production and crewing). This course is a degree requirement option for all BFA Screenwriting students and is a prerequisite to all upper level screenwriting courses in the department of film. Course credit exclusion: FA/FILM 2120 6.00.

Provides a broad introduction to the art and craft of screenwriting designed for students with a strong interest in the subject but who are not enrolled in the BFA program in the Department of Film Video, and therefore not versed in the technical language and syntax of students taking the prerequisite FA/FM 2120. Writing for film is very specific, both an art and a technical document. Students, through the examination of films, will discuss how film stories are told and the fundamental requirements to writing a script. However, unlike FA/FM 2120, these scripts are not written to be produced and therefore do not cover the technical language of filmmaking (camera angles, production and crewing). This course is a pre-requisite to all upper level screenwriting courses in the department of film and video.

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<td>Robertson, William</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 strong 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 and the work of their peers. We will deepen the student’s understanding of the screenplay form and its various components: story, plot, character, theme, scenes, dialogue, subtext. We’ll examine the role of the writer primarily in feature films and short films. We may also look at some television and documentary, depending on the specific interests of the class.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

This is largely a workshop course. Students will be expected to write four or five short 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 short films as well as scenes and sequences from features and/or series. 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/or feature-length screenplays. They are expected to purchase a screenwriting book on formatting as well as screenwriting software.

COURSE TEXTS/ READINGS * Additional readings may be assigned during the course

“The Way of The Screenwriter” by Amnon Buchbinder
Ebook is available at the York U library. Students must login with Passport York. Accept the terms for Electronic Resources. Free to read online. Most chapters are downloadable as PDFs. LINK: https://oculyor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_YOR/q36jf8/alma991029630599705164

“The Tools of Screenwriting” by David Howard & Edward Mabley

Other Recommended Readings:
“On Directing Film” by David Mamet
“So You Want To Be A Playwright?” by Tim Fountain
“Writing Short Films” by Linda Cowgill
“Screenwriter’s Bible” by David Trottier
Trottier is available for short-term loan at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/screenwritersbib00trot

SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE:
Students must acquire their own screenwriting software. Final Draft or Movie Magic Screenwriter are the industry standards. If you are serious about screenwriting, please invest in one of these. Please do not use Celtx.

For screenwriting formatting & resources visit:
Final Draft has student rates: https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-11-edu.html/
Movie Magic Screenwriter is available online with discounts for students: http://www.screenplay.com/products/movie-magic-screenwriter/screenwriter-academic-version.html
Many 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

There are also many excellent current screenplays for both film & TV available via: www.la-screenwriter.com

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) 8-15 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.
Workshops will include: creating strong characters; finding a theme; breaking story; creating beat sheets; pitching; writing dialogue.

In the process of creating 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.

**Due to the extraordinary circumstances in the world, this year’s class is being delivered completely online for the first time. You are encouraged to offer your constructive feedback as we move forward, to help shape
GRADED ASSESSMENT

Assignment Due Dates, Grading Breakdown (dates are subject to change)

FALL TERM

ASSIGNMENT #1 (10%): DUE SEPTEMBER 23, class #3
A 10-scene screenplay based on an original story, without dialogue, in industry-standard screenplay format. (6 pages MAX)

ASSIGNMENT #2 (15%): DUE OCTOBER 21, class #6
Adaptation: a screenplay (8-10 pages) based on an existing fairy tale. Stories to be assigned.

ASSIGNMENT #3 (15%): DUE NOVEMBER 18, class #10.
First Draft of an original screenplay for a short film (8-10 pages). Submit to Moodle, and please email to your assigned story edit partner.

ASSIGNMENT #4 (5%): DUE DECEMBER 2, class #12.
Story editing notes: critique/analysis of story edit partner’s script (Assignment #3). 2 pages submitted to Moodle and emailed to your story edit partner.

WINTER TERM

ASSIGNMENT #5 (10%): DUE JANUARY 13, class #14
2nd Draft of your original screenplay (Assignment #3), based on story edit notes from partner (Assignment #4) and Course Director.

ASSIGNMENT #6 (15%) DUE FEBRUARY 10, class #18
Original screenplay incorporating “Your Voice” for a dramatic short film (12-15 pages)

ASSIGNMENT #7 (10%): DUE MARCH 17, class # 22. EITHER a re-write of Assignment #6 OR one final original screenplay for a genre film – to be developed and written with a writing partner to explore the art of collaboration and how to subvert genre conventions. (8-10 pages).

ASSIGNMENT #8 (5%): ONGOING
Film Blog – students will create a blog journal that details their film & TV watching habits.

PARTICIPATION (15%): Includes attendance, participation in zoom discussions and breakout rooms, attitude, collaboration with others. Attendance to the synchronous portion of classes is mandatory. Staying away from class to work on an assignment is not a valid excuse. Classes begin promptly so plan to arrive a few minutes early. Being absent or late, except in cases of verifiable illness or family emergency will result in a reduction of this portion of the final mark. Missing more than three sessions may result in this mark being reduced to 0.

Submission of Work:

Work is to be submitted on Moodle before the start of class on the due date. Email submissions will be accepted only under exceptional circumstances. 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 in a 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.
Screenplay assignments must be submitted in correct screenplay format. See Trottier’s “A Screenwriter’s Bible,” required text, above. A Cover Page clearly indicating the Student’s Name, Course Name and Number, and Assignment number/Title, is also required. Or see http://www.oscars.org/nicholl/format.html (then print out pdf on format).

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. Except for Assignment #7, 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.

LATE 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.

EMAIL POLICY:
Instructor will aim to answer emails within 48 hours of receipt between September 9 and April 1, pending unforeseen circumstances. If you have a time-dependent matter to discuss, please make an appointment with Instructor during class time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Drop Dates:
- Term Fall (F)    Term Winter (W)    Full Year (Y)
- Last date to drop courses without receiving a grade    Nov. 6, 2020    Mar. 12, 2021    Feb. 5, 2021
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 www.yorku.ca/cds.
• Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants

• Religious Observance Accommodation
https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs
1.1.1 and http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/exam_accommodation.pdf for Religious
1.1.2

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

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 Counseling & 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:

Learning Disability Services - W128 Bennett Centre for Student Services (BCSS), 416-736-5383,
www.yorku.ca/cds/lds.


Physical, Sensory and Medical Disability Services - N108 Ross Building, 416-736-5140,
www.yorku.ca/cds/psmds.

The York Senate Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities is available at

Ethics Review Process

York students are subject to the York University Policy for the Ethics Review Process for Research

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.

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

Moodle @ York University