

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMA-TELEVISION
Writing Division
CTWR 513: Writing the Short Script
Fall 2013 – (Two Units, Required, Section 19226D)

Instructor: Don Bohlinger
Class Schedule: Tuesday 4:00-6:50
Class Location: SCA 362
Office Hours: Friday 1-5, SCA 354, or by appointment
Contact Information: dfb@usc.edu, (email is best) Cell phone: 323 804 0110

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

This is an intensive screenwriting workshop designed to help you master the basic tools of writing for the cinematic arts (visualization, the scene, the short script.) Working together with 514a the class will also provide weekly exercises designed to develop your cinematic imagination; you will be honing your skills of observation as well as studying how memory and experience can bring originality and brilliance to your characters and stories.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

513 is designed to fill your writer's toolbox, a supply of techniques and tricks of the trade that you will use throughout your career to help you to bring your film and television stories to life.

We will begin with visualization, the concept of telling a story with pictures. You will learn to bring the inner life of your characters to the screen without dialogue by using planting and payoff, action and activity, location, props, costume, atmosphere and motivation. We will discover that it is possible (and indeed necessary) to tell your stories visually, to make them compelling and rich with meaning by using these basic techniques.

Later, we will combine these techniques with dialogue in a second stage of exercises designed to teach you the major building block of cinema – the scene. We will expand our work with character and study the ingredients necessary to make any scene work. By exploring our character's goals, intentions, or "wants" we will discover that the lifeblood of any scene is conflict.

The third aspect of the class will deal with writing short screenplay. We will combine the lessons learned in 513 (visualization, scene) with what we are learning in 514a (ideation, character, tension, and the three-act structure) to outline and finally write a short film script (10-20 minutes in length.)

Your final weeks of the class will be spent writing scenes for you 514a feature script and polishing your short script for production.

Members of the class will be graded on attendance (more than one absence will cause your grade to drop by a half-grade,) fulfillment of the weekly assignments, class participation (you must read and respond to your colleagues work), the final short script and your feature scenes.

COURSE GOALS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Writers are encouraged to keep their scenes and characters unique and personal, to use their own experience and to strive to find their voice.

Writers will learn how to create compelling characters.

Writers will learn how to tell their stories visually.

Writers will learn how to write a dramatic scene.

Writers will learn how to write a short script.

Writers will learn how to rewrite their short script: character, theme, mood, dialogue and scene work will be emphasized.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Weeks 1-3 will deal with visualization

Aug 26	Atmosphere (In Class)
Sept 3	Prep for a date
Sept 10	Character Environment

Weeks 4-6 will deal with the dramatic scene.

Sept 17	Dramatic Scene
Sept 24	Dramatic Scene
Oct 1	Dramatic Scene

Weeks 7-9 will deal with writing the short script.

Oct 8	Short Story Patterns
Oct 15	Short Story Patterns
Oct 22	Short Script

Weeks 10-15 will deal with writing scenes from you 514a feature script.

Oct 29	Feature Idea
Nov 5	Feature Idea
Nov 12	Feature Script 1st 30
Nov 19	Feature Script 2nd 30
Nov 26	Feature Script 3rd 30
Dec 3	Feature Script 4th 30
Dec 13	Feature Script and Rewriting Short Script Due

READING LIST:

- On Film-making, Alexander Mackendrick (recommended)
- Your Screenplay Sucks, William M. Akers (recommended)
- I will be handing out other materials in class and via email.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

CTWR 513 grades will be based on careful consideration in the following areas of the students' work:

- Student must demonstrate understanding of the fundamental principles of visualization, creating compelling characters and writing the scene via the weekly assignments.
- The student must demonstrate an understanding of how to write a short script via the final short script assignment.
- The student must demonstrate the understanding of how to rewrite a scene.
- The student must demonstrate the ability to read and respond to other student's work.

GRADING WEIGHTS:

CTWR 513 grades are based on:

- Weekly Assignments.....30%
- Reading and Responding to Workshop Assignments.....20%
- Final Short Script.....20%
- Feature Script Scenes.....30%

LETTER GRADES:

100-93....A	82-80....B-	69-67.....D+
93-90.....A-	79-77....C+	66-63.....D
89-87.....B+	76-73....C	62-60.....D-
86-83.....B	72-70....C-	0-59.....F

LAPTOP AND CELL PHONE POLICY:

Laptops are welcome (but should be used for reading and responding to classwork, no facebook, no email, please!) Cell phones off.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Please activate your course in Blackboard with access to the course syllabus. Whether or not you use Blackboard regularly, these preparations will be crucial in an emergency. USC’s Blackboard learning management system and support information is available at blackboard.usc.edu.

Disruptive Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.