Script Coverage and Story Analysis:
Writing Coverage for Hollywood
CTWR 417:

Peter Exline  exline@usc.edu
Monday 10AM-12:50PM
SCA 259
Office Hours:  By appointment only Monday afternoon.  Please confirm via
e-mail the Friday prior to appointment.
Course #19206R

1. Learning to intelligently and constructively evaluate a feature length
   screenplay with an eye toward balanced criticism.

2. Familiarize students with the essentials to dramatic writing, the creation of
   conflict thru a central character who wants something badly and is having
   trouble getting it.

3. Students will synopsize and criticize five screenplays.

4. The class will follow the steps to adapting a novel into screenplay, then
   seeing the film and watching the choices made.

5. Students will write a set of notes describing one possible direction for a re-
   write of a screenplay applying the ideas discussed in class.

Students will learn to constructively analyze a novel or a screenplay with an eye
   toward balanced criticism.

Required Reading:  The Player; Michael Tolkin novel
                  5 Screenplays Custom Publishing Reader
CTWR 417 Class Syllabus

GRADES

Class Participation-----10 per cent
   If you don’t attend class, you can’t participate. Excessive absences and lateness can lead to a lower grade, as much as a ten per cent reduction in grade for two absences. More than three absences can lead to failing the class. The only excuse for missing a class is medical documentation.

Homework---------------40 per cent
   Each homework assignment constitutes 8% of the student’s final grade. Late papers will result in lowering the grade by at least one point for each day. A to A-, A-to B+, etc.

Students will receive mid term grades in class on March 10.

Final Exam--------------50 percent
   Students can demonstrate to the best of their abilities what they have learned during the semester in writing coverage on the final screenplay.

Suggested Reading:  Adventures in the Screen Trade/Goldman
                      Monster by John Gregory Dunne
                      The Tools of Screenwriting/Mabley & Howard
                      Elements of Style by Strunk and White

WRITING DIVISION ATTENDANCE POLICY

Please be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in a lower grade, by one full grade (A to A-). A third unexcused absence will result in another full grade deduction, and so on. Two late arrivals equals one full absence.

Only medical absences will be excused. Bring documentation from a doctor or hospital to the next class. If you have an emergency and must miss class, please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

Please note that Writing fr the Screen and Television Majors and Minors must receive a grade of C or better in order to receive degree credit.

LAPTOP COMPUTER/CELL PHONE POLICY

Students may not use laptops or cellphones during class. One point will be deducted for each reminder of the policy.
Jan. 12  What a Story Analyst Does:  
Forms of Coverage, Genre Lists, Glossary  
Assignment------Read Tootsie

Jan. 19  No Class:  Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday

Jan. 26  What a Story Analyst Sees:  The Three Act Structure  
Assignment------Tootsie  Coverage Due  
Start Reading The Player (Novel) by Michael Tolkin

Feb. 2  The Set-Up:  What it’s About, Who it’s About.

Feb. 9  The Novel Into Screenplay:  Transformation from Internal Monologue to Dialogue and Action  
Assignment:  ……The Player (Novel) Coverage Due  
Begin reading The Player (SP) by Michael Tolkin

Feb. 16  No Class:  President’s Day

Feb. 23  Conflict:  The Essence of Drama  
Assignment……The Player (SP) by Michael Tolkin Due  
Start Reading The Fugitive (SP)

March 2  Mid Term:  Screening: The Player  
Individual Consultations

March 9  Deconstructing “The Fugitive” and its problems.  
Conflict:  Who is this person?  What does s/he want?  
Why can’t s/he have it?  What will s/he do to get it?  
How will his or her life be changed by the outcome? 
Assignment……The Fugitive(SP) Coverage Due  
Begin Notes for a possible re-write of The Fugitive

March 16  No Class:  Spring Break

March 23  Rewriting:  How To Make It Better  
The Fugitive:  Who, What and Why:  Questions To Answer:  One possible re-write for The Fugitive

March 30  Screening:  The Fugitive  
Development Notes on The Fugitive due  
Assignment------Begin Reading Mother’s Day
April 6    The Three-Act Structure: How It Works
           Screening:.........Movie Clips

April 13    Mother's Day Coverage Due:
            Movies and Television
            Assignment-----Start Reading FINAL EXAM SCREENPLAY

April 20    Episodic Structure, Television, Review

April 27    Guest Speaker
            Assignment-----Final Coverage Due
            SCA 360, Adjunct Faculty Mailroom, Exline mailbox

Final Exam: Students will be given a screenplay which they must critically evaluate for character, plot, conflict, and commercial suitability.
If you want your final paper returned to you, please bring a self-addressed stamped envelope to class.

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 this letter is delivered to me 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. The telephone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

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

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please be familiar with the GRADING policy and Academic Standards section of the USC Catalogue and the information on University Governance in the SCAMPUS, particularly Appendix A: Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines.

The use of unauthorized material, communication with fellow students during an in-class examination, attempting to benefit from the work of another student, and similar behavior defeats the intent of an examination or other class work is unacceptable to the University. It is often difficult to distinguish between a culpable act and inadvertent behavior resulting from the nervous tensions
accompanying examinations. Where a clear violation has occurred, however, the instructor may disqualify the student’s work as unacceptable and assign a failing mark on the paper.

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.