
USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

CTWR 533B – REWRITING THE FEATURE SCREENPLAY SPRING 2015 (4 Units)

Instructor: Siavash Farahani
Email: karma@karmafilm.com
Section: 19286D
Time: THURS 7– 10pm
Location: SCI 209
Office hours: By appointment

Course Objective:

To learn troubleshooting an existing draft of a feature length screenplay and rewriting the 2nd draft for maximum dramatic impact and audience participation.

Class Description:

533B is a continuation of 533A where the student will revise the draft of the script completed last semester. The goal is here is to produce a polished and professional-grade feature screenplay by the end of the semester, with emphasis on significant improvement with regards to characters, structure, dialogue, visuals and theme in order to achieve maximum dramatic impact and audience resonance.

As such we will follow an aggressive and intense writing schedule. **Students should anticipate 10-12 pages of writing PER WEEK. The final screenplay must be no less than 105 and no more than 110 pages when formatted according to industry standards (Final Draft, WB, COLE&HAAG format or equivalent).**

Much like 533A this is a workshop class where you will be expected to contribute. As such, your attendance and participation will be key to the process and your final grade.

Our class time will be divided between lecture, discussion and in-class table readings of your pages, with emphasis on the latter. Students will be broken up into reading groups, with alternating reading shifts. Depending on progress, we may also have a guest speakers and in class screenings towards the end of the semester.

The ultimate objective here is to turn your existing draft into a well crafted and compelling screenplay that you can hopefully use as a calling card. Who knows. Do a good enough job and you might even get it sold!

Required Reading/Viewing:

The Tools of Screenwriting by Howard/Mabley
Save the Cat by Blake Snyder
Screenwriting is Rewriting by Jack Epps

We will be referring to these texts regularly so please read both ASAP. Additionally we will also read and discuss at least one screenplay from a recent major motion picture (to be determined). You will also be assigned to watch movies and scenes outside of class and pending our progress.

Suggested Reading:

Save the Cat Goes To the Movies by Blake Snyder
Save the Cat Strikes Back by Blake Snyder
The Hero with a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell
Stealing Fire From the Gods by James Bonnet
The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler
Story by Robert McKee
How To Build A Great Screenplay by David Howard

Grading Criteria/Evaluation:

As we all know there are many great and varied storytelling traditions in the world. This class, however, focuses exclusively on the Western tradition, in particular as it is practiced in Hollywood studio system today.

This includes a three act narrative with all its structural components as discussed during the semester including - but not limited to – Prologue, Status Quo, Catalyst, Main Tension, Midpoint, Climax, Resolution, Epilogue etc. All with an eye towards maximum dramatic impact and audience participation.

Equal emphasis will be placed on creating compelling/multidimensional characters with clear goals, needs, obstacles, conflicts and transformations. This includes believable and well rounded protagonists and antagonist who display a range of human of emotions and behaviors.

Your work will be evaluated based on your attention to character development and arc, plot structure, themes, visuals, cinematic appeal and, last but not least, proper format and grammar.

You will also be graded you on your ability to identify weak spots in your scripts and make the necessary improvements based on our discussions and class feedback. Of

course, this will be balanced against your ability to tell a unique story in your own personal voice.

*****UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED ALL WORK IS DUE IN PDF FORMAT BY NOON ON THE DAY OF CLASS AND CCD TO PROFESSOR AND CLASS.*****

Assignment/Grade Breakdown:

Diagnostic:	5%
Logline & Outline& Bio:	8%
Script/Film Breakdown:	2%
Act I:	25%
Act II:	25%
Act III:	25%
Participation:	10%

Total	100%

** 2% Extra Credit can be earned by doing additional script breakdowns. 3 max.

As per Writing Division policy the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A	100% to 94%	C	76% to 73%
A-	93% to 90%	C-	72% to 70%
B+	89% to 87%	D+	69% to 67%
B	86% to 83%	D	66% to 63%
B-	82% to 80%	D-	62% to 60%
C+	79% to 77%	F	59% to 0%

A : Work of **excellent** quality. Outstanding application of the dramatic principles and fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines as specified in the syllabus.

B : Work of **good** quality. Above average fulfillments of course requirements and deadlines.

C : Work of **fair** quality. Minimum fulfillment of course requirements and deadlines for passing graduate credit.

C-: **FAIL to meet minimum grade for credit. NON PASSING GRADE.**

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class.

Class attendance is mandatory, and includes being on time to class (otherwise, the students who present their material first are short-changed).

You are allowed one unexcused absence (documentation required for excused absences). Beyond one, you will receive a reduction of one-third letter grade for each unexcused absence. (e.g., A- down to B+, B down to B-)

Tardiness is unprofessional. You will be allowed one unexcused tardiness. Beyond that your grade lowered by one-third letter grade for each occurrence.

CTWR 533B is a WORKSHOP and relies on your timely attendance and delivery of work. Assignments turned in late will not be accepted.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit please check with your home department.

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.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Laptops and Ipads are encouraged. Use of cellphones is limited to reading scripts in class. Use of all of the above is a privilege and maybe suspended if used for anything unrelated to class (i.e. Facebook, Snapchat etc).

Class Schedule:

Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1:

Introductions.

LECTURE: A good story well told. Discussion. Clips.

Divide class into writing groups.

Assignment#1 : Diagnostic exercise. Identify 5 trouble zones in your script. 5% of final grade. Due before next class.

Assignment #2: Read all scripts from fellow classmates prior to next class and be ready to discuss.

Week 2 :

Loglines & Outlines. Bio's & Breakdowns. Lecture. Discussion.

Assignment #2: Create a logline, outline and character bio for your rewrite. Watch a related movie and do a breakdown. Combined 10% of final grade. Due before next class. **Send all 4 assignments in one PDF please.**

Week 3:

Act One. Lecture. Discussion. Clips.
Assignment#3: Start rewriting Act I.

Week 4:

Act I table read/discussion. GROUP A
Continue working on Act I.

Week 5:

Act I table read/discussion. GROUP B
Continue working on Act I.

Week 6:

Act I table read/discussion. GROUP A
Continue working on Act I.

Week 7:

ACT I due by noon . 25% of final grade.
Act I table read, discussion. GROUP B
ACT II. Lecture. Discussion. Clips.
Assignment #4: Start writing Act II.

Week 8:

Act II table read/discussion. GROUP A
Continue working on Act II.

Week 9:

Act II table read/discussion. GROUP B
Continue working on Act II.

******SPRING BREAK: MARCH 13-20 NO CLASS**

Week 10:

Act II table read/discussion. GROUP A
Farahani. Syllabus. 533B. SPRING 2016.

Continue working on Act II.

Week 11:

Act II table read/discussion. GROUP B
Continue working on Act II.

Week 12:

Act II table read/discussion. GROUP A
ACT III Lecture, discussion clips.

Week 13:

ACT II due by noon. 25% of final grade.
Assignment: Start working on Act III. 25% of final grade.
Act II table read/discussion. GROUP B
ACT III Lecture, discussion clips.

WEEK 14

Table read/discussion ACT III. Group A
Continue working on Act III.

Week 15: *FINAL CLASS**

Table read/discussion. Group B
Continue working on Act III.
Guest speaker. Evaluations.
Continue working on Act III.

*****COMPLETED FINAL SCRIPT DUE BY NOON MAY 5, 2016. Combined 75% of final grade.**

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty

are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.htm provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

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.

**PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY
INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**