

CTWR 100G (19182D) Story: Character, Conflict & Catharsis

4 Units

Instructor: Paul Foley

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Thurs: 10-11:20 (Fall 2016)

SCB 104

Office Hours: By appointment

"Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work... and the belief that things will grow out of the activity itself and that you will -- through work -- bump into other possibilities and kick open other doors that you would never dream up if you were just sitting around looking for a great art idea. And that a belief in the process, in a sense, is liberating... you don't have to reinvent the wheel everyday."

-- Chuck Close, painter

Mission Statement:

I believe the best way to learn how to write screenplays is to write screenplays. And read them.

All the time.

I may not agree with all of the opinions expressed in all of the documents that have been made available, but the purpose of this class is to expose you to a broad range of information with the expectation that you will develop your own ideas about story and put them to the test in your work.

I believe that writers learn from other writers -- including themselves -- and that we are all in charge of our own process, development, story and habits.

Screenplays are industrial documents. They can be beautiful and moving in their own right but they are, at their core, a plan for something that needs to be assembled. This inherent modularity makes it easy to examine all the elements and techniques screenwriters use as part of their craft.

I can't make you read more than what is required. I can however make scripts available to you, cross my fingers and hope that you will do what's in your own best self-interest. If you can't find a script, please ask and I will try find it for you.

This class is a mixture about what I think you need to know and what you decide to pursue on your own. No judgement. I simply want you to document your choices.

I would also ask you to remember that simply being at this school means you've made the choice to be a creator and not a consumer. If you don't like something, please find the intellectual

flexibility to understand why someone else might. Movies are expensive, they don't happen by accident and failure is often more educational than success.

And finally...

Please remember Gail Sher's "Four Noble Truths" at all times:

- 1) Writer's write.
- 2) Writing is a process.
- 3) You don't know what your writing will be until the end of the process.
- 4) If writing is your practice, the only way to fail is not to write.

Notebook:

All students are required to have a central place where they can take notes and keep track of all the things they are using to "feed their brain."

Please be prepared to answer the following for every class:

What did you read?
What did you watch?
What did you hear?

Required Text:

Screenwriting is Rewriting by Jack Epps, Jr., Bloomsbury Academic (2016)

Suggested Texts:

All of them.

The people you want to work for read screenplays and books about screenwriting. Figuring out which books and which scripts will give you insight into what they're thinking and seeking.

Laptops & Cellphones:

While I acknowledge that we live in the 21st century. I don't have to like it: Students caught e-mailing, surfing the interweb, or texting will lose their technology privileges for the rest of the semester.

Requests to regain technology privileges must be submitted in essay form via the U.S. Postal service, in triplicate. Essays may be written with either a fountain pen or typed on carbon paper using an IBM Selectric II.

Instructor Conferences:

Communication is key. I can't help you if I don't know you're having trouble.

Weekly Assignments:

Rough Drafts are due 24hrs before the start of the next scheduled class. PDF or JPG only.

Please remember:

- 1) Brevity is a skill.
- 2) It can't get better until it exists.

Midterm Portfolio:

Hardcopy: 3HP, Two Brads, Courier Font

- 1) Weekly Assignments - Second Drafts
- 2) Three Prompts: 1 Page Each
- 3) Script List
- 4) Quotes: Part I
 - A) Heard and Overheard
 - B) Mental Models
 - C) Wisdom
 - D) Dialog

Final Portfolio:

Hardcopy: 3HP, Two Brads, Courier Font

- 1) Weekly Assignments - Polished
- 2) Three Prompts: Rewritten.
- 3) Script List
- 4) Quotes: Part II
 - A) Heard and Overheard
 - B) Mental Models
 - C) Wisdom
 - D) Dialog
- 5) Final Prompts: 3 Pages Each

Grading Criteria:

Lecture: 25%

10% Participation
 20% Weekly Assignments
 30% Midterm Portfolio
 40% Final Portfolio

Discussion (Workshop): 75%

* Please consult your other instructor's syllabus.

Course Schedule:

8/25 3 A's & 2 More C's
 - Attitude, Aptitude & Application
 - Candor & Context
 Assignment: Movies "R" Fun: 1 script 25 images
www.amazon.com/Movies-Fun-Collection-Cinematic-Inappropriate/dp/1452122334

9/1 Process
 Read: Anything Pixar
 Assignment: One Movie, Multiple Theories

9/8 Mental Models, Narrative Theories & Vocabulary
 Read: Screenwriting is Rewriting
 Assignment: Vonnegut's Shapes: 1 Example of Each Shape

9/15 Compare & Contrast: Net/TV/Features/???
 Read: Twelve Monkeys (Short, Feature, Pilot)
 Watch: Just Between Us - Youtube
 Guest: Alison Raskin & Gabby Dunn
 Assignment: What would Chaplin do with a GoPro?
 or
 Colbert Show Packet Submission

9/22 Loglines, Cards, Beatsheets, Treatments, Drafts, etc.
 Read: WME Coverage Manual
 (And everything else in the folder.)
 Assignment: Cover a script From The Blacklist

9/29 Monomyth & Archtypes
 Read: Star Wars (all drafts)
 Assignment: Movies "R" Fun Characters: Who's what?

MIDTERM DUE: Portfolio Hand-In #1
 Prompt #1: Character
 Prompt #2: Conflict
 Prompt #3: Catharsis

10/6 Network Needs
 Read/Watch: Pilots
 Assignment: Binge & Breakdown: One show. All seasons.

10/13 Timing & Tone
 Read: Montauk (Pilot)
 Stranger Things (Pilot- Production Draft)
 Assignment: Stopwatch: Spielberg, Carpenter, King, etc.

10/20 Evolution & iPads
 Read: Crazy, Stupid, Love
 Assignment: One Genre, Four Decades

10/27 The Same... But Different
 Read: Walk The Line/Walk Hard
 The Godfather/Arrested Development
 Empire/ King Lear

SOA/ Hamlet
 Assignment: Modern Myths

11/3 Drafts & Ideation
 Read: Back to the Future (all drafts)
 Assignment: Ugly Babies

11/10 Look
 Watch: Soderbergh's Raider's Cut
 Assignment: Tell Me A Story: 8 Images

11/17 Listen
 Assignment: Headphones: Compare & Contrast

11/24 THANKSGIVING

12/1 Learn
 Read: A "Body of Work"
 Assignment: Career Path & Habits

12/7/16 Final Portfolio Due
 Prompt #4: Candor
 Prompt #5: Context
 Prompt #6: Bias

* The instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus in order to meet the needs of the class.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A to a (A-)). A third unexcused absence will Result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: B to a (B-)). Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

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.

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/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us](http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/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.html 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