

453 (19326D) Advanced Feature Rewriting  
Instructor: Paul Foley  
*foleypaulraymond@gmail.com*  
Tuesday 10 - 12:50  
SCI 209  
Office Hours: By appointment

"Decide out what you want to accomplish, then figure out which scenes would need to change." - John August

### **Mission Statement:**

Anyone can assemble 100 pages of "word salad", it's what you do next that can make the difference between a career and a hobby.

There are two kinds of rewriting: Rewriting yourself and rewriting other people. Although you will only be rewriting yourself, the purpose of this class is to help you master **both** skills.

### **Expectations:**

You will be expected to work hard: Rewriting is also a curse. At every step through to production you (hopefully) will be asked to do rewrites. Producers, executives, directors, actors and ultimately even a test audience may ask for changes and it will be your job to distinguish between what they want, what you want, and what the story needs.

You will be expected to have fun: That doesn't mean your script can't be deep or dark or intellectually challenging, but if you're not entertained by what you're writing, why would you expect anyone to pay to see it? If you're having fun, the reader/buyer can tell.

You will be expected to be yourself: As a writer you're selling your imagination, personality, experiences and personal ethos. They are your tools and learning how to use them can be harder than you think. Please remember: 1) everyone has an opinion, 2) pandering backfires, 3) denial helps no one and 4) silence is a waste of time.

You will not be allowed to start over: Rewriting isn't about throwing out the baby with the bathwater, it's about replacing the water and keeping the baby happy at the same time. "Page One" rewrites are common in Hollywood, but they usually happen after the original writer has been fired. Firing yourself is called quitting.

You will not be allowed to quit: Rewriting is a gift. Real life is a one shot deal, but within your script you are Zeus with a red pencil. Enjoy it. Once you zero in on what your story is really about, your drafts will start to improve.

**Reading:**

Various scripts may be assigned depending on the needs of the individual student.

**Class Materials:**

- 1 Small notebook. (Moleskine, etc.)
- 2 Hard Copies of your screenplay

**Required Text:****Screenwriting is Rewriting:****The Art and Craft of Professional Revision**

Epps, Jack Bloomsbury Academic; annotated edition  
(January 28, 2016)

**Recommended Texts:****The Writers Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 3rd Edition**

Vogler, Christopher *Michael Wiese Productions*; 3rd edition  
(November 1, 2007)

**One Continuous Mistake: Four Noble Truths For Writers**

Sher, Gail *Arkana/Penguin Group*  
(1999)

**Grading Criteria:**

- 10% Participation
- 10% Assignments
- 20% Mark-Up Drafts
- 60% Final Script

**Laptops:**

The instructor acknowledges that we live in the 21st century. He doesn't have to like it: Students caught e-mailing, surfing the interweb, texting, etc. 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.

**Script Notebook:**

I don't care what it looks like. It can be a moleskin, a spiral or a cigar box filled with bar napkins, but all students are required to have a central place where they can jot down ideas and notes.

The instructor reserves the right to inspect script notebooks at

least twice during the semester.

### **Instructor Conferences:**

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

### **Participation:**

I expect candor, not cruelty. If you don't know the difference, look it up.

### **Guest Speakers:**

Guests Speakers may appear occasionally. They will most likely be friends of mine doing me (and you) a favor. Please treat them accordingly.

### **Course Schedule:**

*This class is about approaching a re-write systematically. Tweaking dialog on a script with structure issues is like painting a house while it's on fire.*

### **All assignments are due 48 hours before class. PDF only.**

- 1/10:      Inspiration, Process, Memory & Vonnegut  
            Script Exchange #1
- 1/17:      Mamet's 3  
            Script Exchange #2
- 1/24:      One word. Six words. Ten Sentences.  
            Script Exchange #3  
            Whiteboard #1
- 1/31:      Knock it Down: Cards #1  
            Script Exchange #4  
            Whiteboard #2
- 2/7:       Build it Up: Cards #2  
            Mark-Up Drafts Due
- 2/14:      Beat Sheet: What's broken? What's changing?  
            Diagnosis: What now?
- 2/21:      Scribble Draft #1
- 2/28:      Scribble Draft #2
- 3/7:       Assignment: Re-Write of Pages 1-30
- 3/21:      Assignment: Re-Write Pages 30-45

- 3/21: Assignment: Re-Write Pages 45-60
- 3/28: Assignment: Re-Write Pages 60-75
- 4/4: Assignment: Re-Write Pages 75-90
- 4/11: Assignment: Re-Write Pages 90-110
- 4/25: FINAL DRAFT DUE

\* 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/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the 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 <http://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](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**