

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMA-TELEVISION
Writing Division
CTWR 513: Writing the Short Script
Fall 2017 – (Two Units, Required, Section 19228)

Instructor: Don Bohlinger
Class Schedule: Tuesday 10:00-12:50
Class Location: SCA 361
Office Hours: Friday 1-3, Tuesday 2-4, 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 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

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| Aug 22 | Atmosphere (In Class)
Homework: Type Feature Script (2 week assignment)
Read a feature script – answer story questions
Write Prep for a Date |
| Aug 29 | Prep for a date
Homework: Read a feature script – answer story question
Write Character Environment |
| Sept 5 | Character Environment
Homework: Read a feature script – answer story questions
Write Seduction Scene |

Weeks 4-6 will deal with the dramatic scene.

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| Sept 12 | Dramatic Scene – Seduction
Homework: Read a tv script – answer question
Write Interrogation scene |
| Sept 19 | Dramatic Scene – Interrogation
Homework: Read a script – answer questions
Write Creative Lie Scene |
| Sept 26 | Dramatic Scene – Creative Lie
Homework – Read a script – answer questions
Write Supernatural Story/Practical Joke |

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

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| Oct 3 | Short Story Patterns
Homework: Read a script – answer questions
Write Memory, Experience, Observation |
| Oct 10 | Short Story Patterns
Homework: Read a script – answer questions
Write ten page script |
| Oct 17 | Short Script
Homework: Read a script – answer questions
Prepare Three Feature Pitches |

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

Oct 24	Feature Idea
Oct 31	Feature Idea
Nov 7	Feature Script 1st 30
Nov 14	Feature Script 2nd 30
Nov 21	Feature Script 3rd 30
Nov 28	Feature Script 4th 30
Dec 5	Feature Script and Rewritten Short Script Due

READING LIST:

- 11 Feature Screenplays (you can substitute 3 Television Pilots)
- 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.

Presentation:

As you are hoping to enter the film industry as professionals, I expect your work to be prepared in a professional manner. Screenplay formatting errors, typos, bad spelling or grammar and overall sloppiness are NOT ACCEPTABLE.

Classroom Decorum

The professor expects all students to respect and support the ideas and writing of their fellow students. Writing is a fragile process and while we should ask questions, analyze and even challenge, we want to remain supportive, always keeping in mind that the screenplay is fragile work in progress. A working writer needs to develop *the art of collaboration* while working with their peers. As a working writer you will need to be able to work constructively with directors, producers and studio executives.

Laptop and Texting Policy

Students may use their laptops at the discretion of the professor. Laptops may be used for note taking, but not for surfing the web unless it is part of a class project. Texting is not allowed during class time. Texting is distracting and disruptive. There is nothing that needs to be communicated to anyone except your classmates during class time.

Save your texting and surfing until class break.

*Note: 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.

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/academicssupport/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.