

**Cinema-Television 514b**  
**Basic Dramatic Screenwriting II**  
**Spring 2020**

**Instructor: Ted Braun**  
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**Tuesday 10:00 am – 12:50 pm, SCB 304**  
**Office Hours: by appointment, SCA 348**

### **Purpose**

This is an intermediate course in writing for the screen in which you develop a story for a feature film then write a detailed outline and screenplay. It's a successor to 514a, the course in which you wrote a feature script that emerged from the inner life of an engaging cinematic character. This course will deepen your ability to develop and prepare a feature story and expand your focus from a single character to a character enmeshed in a network of relationships. You will apply fundamentals learned in the introductory courses, and you will learn additional tools and dramatic principles that screenwriters use to work in the feature form. The aim is to enable you to present two original feature ideas, choose and develop one in the form of a step outline (10-15 pages) and then express it as a screenplay. The emphasis is on original material, bold writing, and most importantly your imagination—not your ability to invent, but your capacity to observe and develop what you see around you.

### **Plan**

The course leads you through the development of your feature screenplay in three phases. The first weeks focus on finding a story you want to tell and understanding its dramatic possibility. You'll present two different feature ideas. We'll review what makes an engaging cinematic character, the dramatic possibilities in the world of your story, and your relationship to what you're writing about. We'll also review storytelling principles related to the audience's experience of your stories - conflict, tension, culmination, resolution, and theme. At the end of the three weeks you choose one story to write.

The next few weeks of the class concern the development of that story into a scene-by-scene outline of the feature script. The role and use of a number of storytelling techniques and tools will be introduced and explored in conjunction with CTWR 516 - Advanced Motion Picture Script Analysis – in particular sequences and subplots. A deepening attention will be paid to the telling of a story - the ways in which information is revealed to the audience and the relationships between what the audience knows and what the characters know. But the primary focus will be on the characters you write about and the worlds they inhabit.

The remaining weeks of the course are devoted to writing the script. Creating various types of tension - suspense, mystery, dramatic irony and forms of comic tension - will be explored and applied. Scene writing will be reviewed, with particular attention paid to key dramatic scenes – their preparation, presentation, and aftermath. The goal is for you to deliver an engaging screenplay built around a character's relationships with others.

### **Weekly Assignments**

There will be weekly assignments that relate directly and indirectly to the development of your story. These will be read in class each week and discussed. The give and take of classroom discussion is a substantial part of the course; it's expected that you'll participate and engage in the development of the stories of the other members of the class in a constructive, supportive and enthusiastic manner.

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**Schedule of Writing Assignments**

January 14	Feature Ideas
January 21	1 <sup>st</sup> Main Character(s)
January 28	2 <sup>nd</sup> Main Character(s)
February 4	World & Relationships
February 11	Key Scenes — Additional Characters
February 18	Story Treatment – Relationship Transformations
February 25	Outline – First Half
March 3	Outline – Second Half
March 10	Outline – Revised
March 17	SPRING BREAK
March 24	First Act + (A) (45 pp)
March 31	First Act + (B) (45 pp)
April 7	Second Act (A) (45 pp)
April 14	Second Act (B) (45 pp)
April 21	Third Act (A) (30 pp)
April 29	Third Act (B) (30 pp)
May 5	Final Due PLEASE HOLD FOR MAKEUP CLASS

**Films & Screenplays**

The course is designed to be taken in conjunction with 516 (Script Analysis). The films, concepts and principles presented in that course are intended to support discussion and provide an analytical backdrop for the development of your screenplay in this course.

From time to time additional films and/or screenplays will be assigned to further our conversations.

**Required Texts**

The Tools of Screenwriting, Howard & Mabley  
Your Screenplay Sucks, William M. Akers (His title. Not my sentiments.)

**Grading**

Your grade will be based upon the fulfillment and quality of the two feature ideas (20%), the step outline (30%), screenplay (40%), and your participation in class during the course of the semester (10%).

You cannot participate in the class if you are not in class. You are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. If you are absent three times you will have your final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter. Per SCA policy there are no excused absences. Two late arrivals are treated as one absence.

The first six assignments are due in class unless otherwise specified: one copy for you, one for the instructor, a .pdf file emailed to the instructor prior to class. The remaining assignments are due 9 am the day prior to class. All work should be professionally presented - properly formatted and free of typos, misspellings, errors in grammar and syntax. Late assignments are not accepted and receive a failing grade.

Phones off. Laptops closed.

## Blogging

Class discussion should be considered private academic communications. We'll be sharing personal stories and intellectual property. If you have a blog or another form of ongoing posts, anything covered in this class, including lecture material, is considered off limits when it comes to posting.

## 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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

### Support Systems:

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

*USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

**PLEASE NOTE:**

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