

School of Cinematic Arts
The John Wells Division of
Writing for Screen and Television

CTWR 206B – Advanced Writing Spring 2020

Instructor:	Toni Ann Johnson
Class Schedule:	Fridays 10:00AM–12:50 PM
Class Location:	SCA 361
Office hours:	By appointment
Contact Information:	toniannj@usc.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Students refine their existing outline and write a feature screenplay in a constructive, workshop environment. Each student will be expected complete a first draft of the screenplay.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Student will write their screenplays based on their 206 A outlines with a focus on visual storytelling, act breaks, character needs and wants, set ups and payoffs, subplots, original dialogue and subtext. Throughout, from outline to script, pages will be discussed via workshop in class.

Students will read essays and chapters from books on screenwriting. As a group we'll review handouts and watch film clips and videos that reinforce an understanding of the elements of screenwriting. We may also read and discuss excerpts of scripts and articles on screenwriting during class.

READING:

Students will be required to read and analyze (per instructions) **two** feature scripts from produced films that they select.

Required reading:

The Lost Art of Story by Adam Skelter (this can be purchased on Amazon)

The Anatomy of Story by John Truby (can be purchased new or used on Amazon)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Completion of a feature screenplay. Proper grammar, spelling and format are expected.

2) Your scripts will be discussed in class so you will need to email the assignment to the instructor and your classmates before class (**Wednesdays by 10AM**), as a PDF. You may feel free to submit early. Early submissions will be appreciated. (Points will be deducted for late delivery.)

3) Group Interaction: Students will be required to read each other's work, make notes on the PDFs of the outlines/scripts, and provide constructive feedback to their classmates. Because this class is a workshop students must contribute to all class discussions, read their classmates' work, and email notes by the start of class. (Points will be deducted for failure to deliver notes.) Being prepared, meeting deadlines, and participating with enthusiasm will be expected at all times.

4) Students will be required to read from *The Lost Art of Story*, by Adam Skelter and *The Anatomy of Story*, by John Truby. After you read the pages, write down one to three things you learned from what you read, or something you found useful for your own writing, or something you agree or disagree with and why. Be prepared to share in class. When time doesn't permit us to share these impressions we may post them in an online thread either via email or on Blackboard. You might want to keep these paragraphs in one document as a learning journal.

5) Assignments are to be completed in proper format, and submitted by specified due dates and times as discussed in class. Consistently late work will lower your grade.

6) Read two published screenplays and analyze per instructions. The goal is for students to learn to read like a writer. Ideally, you should be reading scripts and watching films as often as possible.

The first reading assignment is due **February 28th**. Second is Due **April 10th**.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Assigned Books study	10%
Reading Assignments:	10%
Participation:	10%
Homework and Notes:	20%
Screenplay:	50%

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%

Expectation of Professionalism:

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

Script Format: You will be required to write in standard script format. There are numerous software programs available. FINAL DRAFT typically offers a student discount. Celtx is a free software program. Amazon has a free screenwriting software program as well.

Internet Policy:

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

Laptops will be used in class for note taking only. **Cellphones should be turned off except during breaks.**

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

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

On the third absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

Note: This is a change in policy. Instructors will no longer distinguish between an excused or unexcused absence. An absence will be an absence.

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/or know you will miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

If a student has an emergency and additional accommodations are needed, those accommodations will need to come through the USC Campus Support and Intervention (CSI) office. The Writing Division recommends the student and/or advocate contact CSI at 213-821-4710 and their home department adviser for additional support.

OFFICE HOURS & CONFERENCES

Individual conferences will be available as necessary by appointment.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1, January 17th:

Introduction to the course. Students discuss any revisions they plan to make to their existing outlines. Students set their goals for the screenplay and the class. Class will divide into Groups A and B.

First reading assignment will be due February 28th.

Discussion on TIME MANAGEMENT: how to meet your deadlines.

Review Act structure.

Handouts provided via email

ASSIGNMENT: 1. Group A makes any necessary revisions/expansions and submits outlines by Wednesday Jan. 22 at 10AM.

2. Both groups read Group A's outlines. Prepare notes on each one and be ready to discuss in class, focusing on: 1) Is each scene moving the story forward as well as setting up character development? 2) Are the wants/needs/and character weaknesses clear? 3) Does the protagonist drive the story? 4) Are the characters active enough? 5) Are there enough subplots? 6) Is there a clear three act structure leading to a strong finish?

*** Reading Assignment*** (DUE in 6 weeks.) Read a script of a produced film that interests you. You might choose one that relates to what you're working on. Answer the questions per reading assignment instructions given out in class. Email to your instructor by February 28th.

Group A's outlines to be emailed by Wednesday Jan. 22 by 10AM.

WEEK 2, January 24th

Workshop Group A's outlines.

Discuss character development, lead character's conflict, and the difference between internal and external conflict. Do you know your characters well enough? Discuss ways to explore character and how theme is expressed via character.

ASSIGNMENT:

Group B's outlines to be emailed Wednesday, January 29th by 10AM. (Feel free to submit early.)

Both groups read Group B's outlines. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class.

Part 2: In John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story*, read CHAPTER 3: 7 Key Steps of Story Structure.

WEEK 3, January 31st

Discuss "7 key steps of Story Structure" (John Truby).
Does YOUR script have them?

Workshop Group B's outlines.

ASSIGNMENT: Group B revise outline as needed and write the First Act. (due Sat. Feb. 15th)

Group A's Act 1 pages to be emailed this Wednesday, February 5th at 10AM.

Both groups read Group A's first acts. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class.

Part 2: In John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story*, read Chapter 4: Character—pages 56—75 Up to: Creating Your Hero

WEEK 4, February 7th:

Discuss John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story*, Chapter 4 (to page 75): Character.

Workshop Group A's First Acts.

At this point in the script is the first act working? Are the protagonist's goals set up? What are the obstacles for the protagonist in the second act?

ASSIGNMENT:

Group B's first acts to be emailed by Wednesday February 12th at 10 AM. Both groups read Group B's first acts. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class.

Part 2: In John Truby's *Anatomy of Story*, read chapter 4 pages 75—102

Be prepared to do the exercise on page 102 (first 3 bullet points) in class
You'll list the characters from your screenplay—state their function/state
“moral problem”/ compare characters, etc.

Week 5 February 14th

Discuss John Truby's *Anatomy of Story* chapter 4 (pages 75—102)
In class exercise from first half of page 102

Workshop Group B's First Acts.

What's working and what's not? Does the opening hook the reader? Is the
story effectively set up? Is the dialogue effective?

ASSIGNMENT:

Group A revises first act and drafts Second Acts to midpoint.
Group A's Pages delivered by Wednesday, February 19th by 10AM.
Both groups prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class.

WEEK 6, February 21st:

Workshop Group A's Second Acts to midpoint.
Is the protagonist developing/learning/changing? Where is the plot? What
are the subplots?

ASSIGNMENT: Group B revises act one and drafts Second Acts to
midpoint. Due Wednesday February 26th by 10 AM.

Read Group B's screenplay pages. Prepare notes and be ready to
discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Wednesday by 10AM.
Reading assignment due next week.

WEEK 7, February 28th:

First reading assignment due.

Dialogue lesson
View scenes for subtext

Workshop Group B's Second Acts to midpoint.
Are you tracking the set ups? Is the character facing obstacles?

ASSIGNMENT: Group A drafts Second Act from midpoint to End of Act 2. Read Group A's screenplay pages. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Wednesday, March 4th at 10AM.

WEEK 8, MARCH 6th:

MIDTERM GRADES SENT VIA EMAIL

Workshop Group A's Second Acts from midpoint to End of Act 2. How is the pacing? Is the end of Act 2 strong with a low point or high point depending upon your Act 3?

ASSIGNMENT: Group B drafts Second Act from Midpoint to End of Act 2. Read Group B's screenplay pages. Prepare notes and be ready to discuss them in class. Pages to be emailed by Wednesday, March 11th by noon.

Part 2: In Adam Skelter's *The Lost Art of Story* read Chapter 8: "Mining for Meaning."

WEEK 9, MARCH 13th:

Discuss Adam Skelter's "Mining for Meaning"
View accompanying video

Workshop Group B's pages from Midpoint to End of Act 2.

Discuss beginnings and endings; View video on Opening and Closing shots

ASSIGNMENT: Group A to draft Act Three. Prepare notes on group A's pages and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Wednesday March 18th by 10 AM

Part 2: View Video: Michael Hague Act 3 in screenplay structure: Climax and resolution.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHgaxy0fmx4&t=19s>

Begin reading assignment #2. Deliver April 10th.

MARCH 20th - NO CLASS SPRING BREAK MARCH 15--22

WEEK 10, MARCH 27th:

Workshop Group A's Third Acts.

Is the conflict resolved in a satisfying way? How has the protagonist changed/ grown since first encountering the obstacles? What is the new tension building to the third act climax? What is the resolution?

ASSIGNMENT: Group B drafts Act Three. Prepare notes on Group B's pages and be ready to discuss in class. Pages to be emailed by Wednesday, April 1st by 10 AM.

Part 2: In Adam Skelter's *The Lost Art of Story* read chapter 9 "Aristotle Was Wrong: Story and the Mind."

WEEK 11, APRIL 3rd:

**Discuss "Aristotle Was Wrong." (Chapter 9 in *The Lost Art of Story*)
View accompanying video**

Workshop Group B's Third Acts.

**ASSIGNMENT: Group A revise script and email it by Wednesday, April 8th, by noon.
Prepare notes on group A's revised script.**

Part 2: In John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story*, chapter 5: Moral Argument read pages 108–139.

Complete 2nd reading assignment due next week April 10th.

WEEK 12, APRIL 10th:

Second reading assignment delivered

Discuss Moral Argument

View video on Story and Religion

Workshop Group A's revised script.

ASSIGNMENT: Group B revise script and email it by Wednesday the 15th by noon.

Prepare notes on group B's revised script.

Part 2: In John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story* chapter 6 Story World read pages 145--190

WEEK 13 , APRIL 17th:

Discuss Story world

Workshop Group B's revised script.

Homework: Group A does second revision

WEEK 14 April 24th

Workshop group A's second revision

View feature film

Homework: Group B does second revision

WEEK 15 May 1st

Workshop group B's second revision

View feature film

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>

<p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
