CTWR 415B – Advanced Writing Spring 2021

Instructor: Sean Hood
Class Schedule: Mondays 4 – 6:50 PM
Class Location: Online
Office hours: By appointment
Contact Information: shood@usc.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

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

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Students will review and analyze their outlines, focusing on creating complex characters while developing a strong story ad sequence structure. After revising their outlines, students will write their screenplays with a focus on visual storytelling, plot points, sequences and scene structure, character needs and wants, plants and payoffs, subplots, effective dialogue, and subtext. Throughout, from outline to script, pages will be discussed in class as they would be in a "writers' room" or producer meeting.

Students will read from **books** on screenwriting and watch pre-recorded **video lectures**. There will be a weekly **quiz** on Blackboard. Quizzes can be re-taken multiple times and are meant to be low stress checks that students have done the required reading and viewing. Lastly, the professor will recommend **professional screenplays** for each student to read over the course the semester.

COURSE READING:

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard
The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler

(Both these books are available new and used on Amazon.)

LECTURE VIDEOS

Each week the professor will record and post lecture videos on specific screenplay terms, the required reading, and other screenwriting topics. Watching these videos is required and will be covered by the weekly quiz.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Students will compete a **revised outline**, and then a first draft of a **feature screenplay**. Proper grammar, spelling and format, are expected.

2. Students will discuss outlines and scripts in class, so each student must upload the assignment **via Blackboard** on **Saturday by 12noon**, as a **PDF**. Points will be deducted for late delivery. Making deadlines is an essential, professional skill. Reading and Responding to assignments that are turned in late are optional.

3. Students will be required to read each other's work, to provide constructive feedback to their classmates in class, and to deliver written feedback in the **Blackboard Discussion Forum**. Because this class is a workshop students must read their classmates' work (if it was delivered on time,) contribute to all class discussions, and deliver written notes **by the start of class**. (Points will be deducted for failure to read assignments and/or deliver notes.) Working and collaborating in a "writers' room" environment is another essential, professional skill. Being prepared and participating with enthusiasm will be expected at all times.

4. Each week students will be assigned **30-40 pages** from the **required textbooks**. Each week students will also watch **prerecorded lecture videos** posted on Blackboard. There will be a **Weekly Quiz** on Blackboard on the assigned reading and videos.

PRIVACY POLICY:

Material discussed over Zoom is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, re-recorded or posted anywhere else.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Weekly Quizzes	**12%**	**12 quizzes, 20 points each**
Class Participation:	**12%**	**12 workshops, 20 points each**
Written Notes:	**12%**	**12 Forums, 20 points each**
Revised Outline:	**4%**	**1 revision, 80 points**
Screenplay Pages	**20%**	**4 batches, 100 points each**
Final Screenplay:	**40%**	**1 final draft, 800 points**
Total:	**100%**	**2000 points**

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%

SCRIPT FORMAT:

You will be required to write in standard script format using screenplay software. FINAL DRAFT offers a student discount. Celtx is a free software program. There are many others.

WRITING DIVISION ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected be on time and prepared for each class, which will begin exactly at 4 PM. If you have unavoidable conflict, time constraint, or emergency please email the professor in a timely manner before class. Don't just fail to show up.

On the second unexcused absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 3% (60 points) and an additional 3% (60 points) for each absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equals 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 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.

FILE FORMAT:

Every file you hand into class (or in any professional situations) should be **PDF.**

You should NAME every file in the following way:

Your full name - assignment name (date).pdf

For Example: **Sean Hood - Character Monologue (8-13-2020)**

All documents should either have a **TITLE PAGE** with author name and date, or the information should appear at the top of the first page.

NETIQUETTE:

Durring Zoom Lectures:

- Keep yourself **muted** unless called on.

- When your camera is on, please **dress** as you would in the classroom, and **behave** as you would in a professional environment.

- If you have a **question, comment,** just want to **agree with a note** while someone else is speaking, use the **Chat** function**.**

- If you want to be called on, use the "raise your hand" function on Zoom. A **little blue hand** will appear. Don't unmute until called on.

- I'll be available on Zoom in the fifteen minutes before and after class.

Posting Notes in Forums:

- Write notes as if you were speaking in a class discussion: relaxed in tone but respectful, polite, and **professional** in your choice of words.

- Your professor will be joining in forum discussions as well.

COMMUNICATION

When you have questions or comments there are a variety of ways you can contact the Professor:

1. For questions about the class, first check the syllabus.

2. For answers to questions about screenwriting or the class not covered by the syllabus, try the "**Ask Your Professor**" forum on the Discussion Boards. You may find the question is already answered. Response time: **48 hours**.

3. For short but important questions (or just to talk movies,) the Professor will be available fifteen minutes before and after each weekly Zoom session.

4. If you have a question about the class or the terms that you would rather not post publicly, you can email your professor. **Response time 48 hours**.

5. One-on-one meetings during office hours can be scheduled via email.

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Students will submit all written work in **two ways**:

1. They will submit the assignment to the professor via Blackboard. An "assignment" link will be available in each weekly module.
2. They will post the assignment as an attachment on the **Weekly Feedback Forum** on Blackboard, where students will give written feedback.

WRITTEN NOTES

Contribution to the **Weekly Feedback Forum** is mandatory and weekly. Your contribution to the boards is graded the same way as participation in class.

Each week, to get full credit simply respond to each set of pages submitted (on time) by your peers. In a reply to each post of weekly pages contribute at least **three meaningful "page notes"** or **expand on page notes already given.**

Cursory, half-hearted, or offhand notes ("I agree with everything that's been said" or "Great work.") will get only partial credit. Conversely, feel free to respond to comments on that you receive about your own pages. You may end up workshopping some of your best ideas in the forum.

Both written and oral feedback are essential professional skills. So, the class requires both. Often bigger, more general notes will be covered in class discussion, while more specific page and scene notes are delivered in the forums. Sometimes because of time constraints, not everyone can deliver oral feedback; in that case, students who weren't able to give oral feedback deliver all feedback, both general and specific, in the Weekly Feedback Forum as written notes.

The more insightful and useful notes you **give**, the more insightful and useful notes you will **get** back! Screenwriting, like all filmmaking, is a collaborative medium.

GRADING RUBRICS

Grading Rubrics for written notes, participation, weekly writing assignments, and the final script will be available on Blackboard.

Students can expect grades and feedback from the professor before the following class after the class in which it was discussed. In other words, about one-week turnaround.

DEADLINES:

Written Assignments	Noon on Monday (before Tuesday's class.)
Weekly Quizzes	Tuesday at 7 PM, class time.
Written Notes	Tuesday at 7 PM, class time.

(Written notes are NOT required for assignments turned in late, but they get extra credit. It's always good form to read and give notes if you have the time to do them.)

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Unexcused late assignments will be penalized **25%** if handed in after the deadline but before class. They will be penalized **50%** if handed in after class.

If you anticipate needing to hand in an assignment late, please communicate with the professor well before the deadline. Often accommodations can be met for students who plan ahead with the professor. Unexpected emergencies do come up, but please treat class time and deadlines as professional obligations.

It's better to get an imperfect assignment in on time than a perfect assignment in late!

Class Schedule (Overview)

(No Class January 18) - **Watch Welcome Video & Start Required Reading**

<u>Week One</u> **(January 25)**

    In Class:
- Course Introduction and Overview
- Students introduce outlines. Discussion of goals.
- Class divided into **A Group** and **B Group**.

    For Next Week:
- **Group A** **submits original outline** by Saturday at Noon.
- All students **read** Group A outlines before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

<u>Week Two</u> **(February 1)**

    In Class:
- Discussion of **Group A** outlines.

    For Next Week:
- **Group A** **revises outline** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- **Group B** **submits original outline** by Saturday at Noon.
- All students **read** Group A's revised outlines and Group B outlines before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

<u>Week Three</u> **(February 8)**

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group B** outlines and **Group A** revised outlines.
- **Group A** schedules 1-on-1 Zoom meeting with Professor

For Next Week:
- **Group B** **revises outline** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- **Group A** students have 1-on-1 meeting with Professor.
- Group A works on First Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group Group B revised outlines before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

(No Class February 15) - **Work on Scenes in your First Act!**

Week Four **(February 22)**

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group B** Revised Outline
- **Group B** students schedule a Zoom Meeting with Professor.

For Next Week:
- **Group A finishes First Act** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- **Group B** students have a 1-on-1 Zoom meeting with Professor.
- Group B works on First Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Five (March 1)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group A** pages (First Act.)

For Next Week:
- **Group B finishes First Act** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- Group A works on Second Act to Midpoint (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Six (March 8)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group B** pages (First Act.)

For Next Week:
- **Group A finishes Second Act to Midpoint,** submits by Sat/Noon.
- Group B works on Second Act to Midpoint (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Seven (March 15)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group A** pages (To Midpoint.)

For Next Week:
- **Group B finishes Second Act to Midpoint,** submits by Sat/Noon.
- Group A works on 2nd Act to end of 2nd Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Eight (March 22)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group B** pages (To Midpoint.)
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For Next Week:
- **Group A finishes 2nd Act to end of 2nd Act,** submits Sat/Noon.
- Group B works on 2nd Act to end of 2nd Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Nine (March 29)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group A** pages (To end of Second Act.)

For Next Week:
- **Group B finishes 2nd Act to end of 2nd Act,** submits Sat/Noon.
- Group A works on Third Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Ten (April 5)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group B** pages (To end of Second Act.)

For Next Week:
- **Group A finishes Third Act** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- Group B works on Third Act (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Eleven (April 12)

In Class:
- Discussion of **Group A** pages (Third Act)

For Next Week:
- **Group B finishes Third Act** and submits by Saturday at Noon.
- Group works on Polish Plan (Nothing to submit)
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Twelve (April 19)

In Class:

- Discussion of **Group B** pages (Third Act)

For Next Week:
- **Group A** and **Group B** finish **Polish Plan,** submits by Sat/Noon.
- All students **read** Group A's First Acts before class.
- All students post **written notes** in forum before class.
- Students do required reading/viewing and take **quiz**.

Week Thirteen (April 26)

In Class:
- **Group A and B** Discussion Polish Goals

For Final Script Deadline:

- Group A and B do a "Polish Pass" based on the Polish Plan.
- Group A and B do a "Proofread Pass" for logic errors, typos, artifacts, grammar, spelling, and formatting.

FINAL SCRIPT DUE: <u>MAY 10th</u>

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" 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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000,
HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.