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

CTWR 409
Spring 2022 —4 units
"Fundamentals of Screenwriting: Character, Conflict, & Story"

Instructor: Christopher J. Moore
Class Schedule: Monday, 4:00 — 6:50pm
Class Location: SCI 209
Office Hours: After class or by appointment (contact me in class, or by
email.)
Contact Information: **CMoore71@usc.edu**; or Department Offices
213-740-3303

Course Goals:

To learn the professional approach of writing relatable characters, in conflict driven scenes, with an authentic voice. In addition, students will learn the 3-act structure and how to create a compelling world. The culmination in this class will be the first act of a feature script.

Course Description:

As an introductory course for non-majors, "Fundamentals of Screenwriting" is a fundamental course that focuses on the craft of storytelling. The focus will be on discovering your creative voice, the mechanics of scene work, creating compelling character arcs, and understanding the 3-act structure of feature films.

Through scene work, character work, and story development students will learn the tools of crafting professional scenes. The culmination of this course will be a first act of a feature script of 25-30 pages.

Course Reading:

Book:
The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley

Screenplays:
"Hidden Figures" by Allison Schroeder "Moonlight" by Barry Jenkins
"Booksmart" by Sarah Haskins

Additional scripts as assigned by instructor*

*Note: Instructor will assign scripts of similar tone to your culminating project.

<u>Grading Criteria:</u>
Attendance and participation are vital to our room. Your fellow writers depend on your showing up and sharing your thoughts on their work, not to mention the note that can turn a scene or story around. Handling in assignments in a timely, complete manner is a routine every writer needs to get used to. In an ever-changing creative landscape your professionalism is one thing you can always depend on.

<u>Grading Criteria:</u>

Participation: 10%
Scene: Atmosphere 5%
Scene: Conflict 5%
Scene: Payoff 5%
Scene: Character 5%
Scene: Dialog 5%
Scene: Rewrite 5%
Character Bios: 15%
Outline: 15%
First Act 30%

Totaling 100%

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%

<u>EXPECTATION OF PROFESSIONALISM:</u>
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.

<u>Writing Division Attendance Policy:</u>
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. <u>An absence will be an absence.</u>

NOTE: Exceptions will be made in the case of religious holidays and DSP accommodations.

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 advisor for additional support.

<u>CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:</u>
Lively discussion and participation are encouraged, but please be courteous and respectful. Students must wear face mask at all times.

NOTE: CTWR 409 only meets once a week and attendance is a vital component for your success.

<u>LAPTOP POLICY:</u>
Laptops, a vital writing tool, are encouraged in class. Cruising the Internet and instant messaging are not. This writer's room is an "all for one and one for all" atmosphere. To turn your attention to anything but the work at hand is disrespectful, not to mention unprofessional. A warning will be given for the first infraction. The next will result in a loss of one grade. The same rule applies to cell phones.

<u>INTERNET POLICY:</u>
Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, snapchatted, or posted anywhere else on the internet.

<u>Recording Devices:</u>
You may not record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor.

<u>Class Schedule</u>:
Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:

1/10/2022
<u>WEEK 1</u>—Introduction to Course / Rules of Screenwriting / Finding Unique Characters
Screening: "Hidden Figures"

Reading: "Hidden Figures" on Blackboard
Assignment #1: Write scene of Atmosphere (5%)

1/17/2022
WEEK 2-—Workshop Scenes of Atmosphere / Developing conflict from emotional story of characters
Reading: "Moonlight" on Blackboard
Assignment #2: Write a scene of direct conflict (5%)

1/24/2022
WEEK 3 —Workshop scenes of Direct Conflict / Utilizing Plant and Payoff in your work to create tension for audiences.
Screening of Scenes:
Assignment #3: Write a scene utilizing plant and payoff (5%)

1/31/2022
WEEK 4— Workshop scenes of Plant and Payoff / Finding conflict through your location Assignment #4: Write a character introduction scene (5%)
Research: Listen in on at least two (2) conversations during the next week. Take notes of each person's use of diction and point of view in the situation.

2/7/2022
WEEK 5-—Workshop Character Introduction Scene / Creating unique dialog with authenticity.
Assignment #5: Write a scene with authentic dialog (5%)

2/14/2022
WEEK 6—Workshop Dialog Scene / Authentic characters
Assignment #6: Rewrite a scene from the tools learned over the last several weeks (5%)
Reading: "Booksmart" on Blackboard

FEB 21, Presidents' Day University Holiday.

2//28/22
WEEK 7— Workshop Rewritten Scenes / Character Development
Assignment: Choose a character from your scene work and write a 2-page bio of that character (ungraded)

3/7/2022
WEEK 8— Review of Character Bio / Dicussion of Worldbuilding from Character
Assignment: Write a paragraph bio of two important people in that main characters life. Be specific of the role they play in that characters life and points of conflict.
Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting – Basic Storytelling, pg 19-40

Character Bio Packet Due by Next Class (15%)

Spring session 3/13 to 3/20

3/21/2022
WEEK 9—Building your Story from Character / Outline
Research: Please watch assigned films (2) from instructor & Start Outline

3/28/2022
WEEK 10—Workshop of Outline of Feature Film / The Importance of Genre Reading:
The Tools of Screenwriting – Analysis, pg 114-274

4/4/2022
WEEKS 11—Workshop of Outline of Feature Film / Tension
Outline Due (15%)

Assignment: Write first 5 pages of Act One
Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting – Screenwriting Tools, pg 41-95

Note: Workshop will be divided into two groups. Please continue to turn in your assigned pages by the deadline. Folks who need additional time on their outline will be in Group B.

4/11/2022
WEEK 12 Final Exam —Workshop of Feature First Act Group A: Workshop first 5 pages
Group B: Keep writing (Individual Notes from Instructor) Assignment: Write the 10 next pages of Act One.

4/18/2022
WEEK 13 —Workshop
Group A: Keep writing (Individual Notes from Instructor) Group B: Workshop of first 15 pages of Act One Assignment: Write next 10 pages or til end.

4/25/2022
Week 13— Workshop
Group A: Keep writing (Individual Notes from Instructor) Group B: Workshop of first 15 pages of Act One Assignment: Write next 10 pages or til end.

5/2/2022
WEEK 14— Workshop
Group A: Workshop of 25 pages of Act One (or til end) Group B: Keep Writing (Individual Notes from Instructor)

Week 15: Individual Meetings with Students if needed to Discuss Act One.

Finals Week: **Act One of Feature Script Due (30%) TBA**

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:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710
Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.
https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/

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) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421
studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

Writing Division: Curriculum: Syllabus by Christopher J. Moore CTWR 324

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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
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.

Diversity and Inclusion
Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self- expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/

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