

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

CTWR 553: Advanced Rewriting Workshop  
Section: 19240D  
Spring 2023

Instructor:	Harold Apter
Class Schedule:	Tuesday 4:00 PM - 6:50 PM
Class Location:	SCA 245
Office Hours:	Always available by email. Meetings by appointment (Zoom preferred)
Contact Information:	haroldapter@gmail.com 818-259-5703 (cell)

**Course Objective:**

To enhance the best aspects of your screenplay, find ways to advance the development of your story and characters, and bring the work to the next level.

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to teach you how to focus your thinking and simplify the process of rewriting so that it no longer seems scary or insurmountable. You will develop your own set of skills to cut through layers of character and story and rearrange and enhance them without disturbing the spine of your screenplay. We will employ a step-by-step process, discovering the elements that work in your screenplay and making them better while at the same time removing ones that do not serve the whole.

**Course Reading:**

*Recommended:*

“The Tools of Screenwriting” by David Howard and Edward Mabley,  
“Screenwriting is Rewriting” by Jack Epps, Jr.  
“Aristotle’s Poetics”

**Grading Criteria:**

On time completion and delivery of work assignments: 35%  
Demonstration of working knowledge of all scripts thru notes and discussion: 30%  
Class participation: 10%  
Final rewritten draft (spelling and punctuation will be considered): 25%

As per Writing 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%

### **Writing Division Attendance Policy:**

This class is a workshop and your participation in the discussion is important. Participation includes full involvement in, and contribution to, class discussion, as well as reading (in advance at times; see schedule) the assignments of your colleagues and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and disrespectful to the class. Two late arrivals equal one full absence. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by a half grade point (Ex. A to A-) Any further unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered another two thirds of a point (ex: B to a C+) for each absence

Excused absences can include, but are not limited to: illness, both physical and mental; death of a loved one; personal emergency; sporting events (for Student-Athletes) or other university-sponsored activities; religious holidays, and so on.

If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact your professor as soon as possible so they can assist you in finding the appropriate University care and guidance. Your health and well-being are of utmost importance to the Wells Writing Division and to your faculty.

### **Class Decorum**

The professor expects all students to respect and support the ideas and writing of their fellow students. Writing **explores private concerns, troubling societal questions, emotional vulnerabilities, and strengths** - and while we should ask questions, analyze and even challenge, we want to remain supportive, always keeping in mind that the screenplay is a work-in-progress. We are here to help each other become better writers. Rather than trying to tell a student what is wrong, advise them on how to make it better. We should always strive for constructive criticism.

A working writer needs to learn to *collaborate* while working with their peers. As a working writer you will need to be able to work constructively with directors, producers, and studio executives. Learning how to get your "messaging across" is a skill worth developing.

### **Laptop and Cellphone Policy:**

Students are encouraged to bring laptops to class to take notes and review work. However, internet usage during class is not allowed. Cellphone use is not allowed except before and after class and during breaks.

### **Class Schedule:**

**Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.**

**AS YOU BEGIN YOUR REWRITE, PLEASE PRINT OUT YOUR SCRIPT AND KEEP IT HANDY. YOU WILL FIND THAT READING FROM THE PHYSICAL PAGE WILL GIVE YOU GREATER COMPREHENSION OF WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN AND WILL HELP CLARIFY YOUR NEXT STEPS.**

Week 1 1/10: Introductions. Review the syllabus. Discuss elements of story, character, and action. How they differ. Discuss approach to formulation of an overall game plan for the rewrite.

Notes from instructor and class on first four scripts ("Group A" TBD alphabetically\*).

**GROUP A ASSIGNMENT:** Create your game plan. Break down your script into three acts. Identify major sequences and be prepared to explain how they fit into the acts. Use the "eight sequence method". **Beat Sheets are to be emailed to the class and instructor no later than 9:00 AM on Sunday 1/22.**

Week 2 1/17 Notes from instructor and class on the remaining four scripts ("Group B" TBD alphabetically\*).

**GROUP B ASSIGNMENT:** Create your game plan. Break down your script into three acts. Identify major sequences and be prepared to explain how they fit into the acts. You may use the "eight sequence method" if preferred. **Beat Sheets are to be emailed to the class and instructor no later than 9:00 AM on Sunday 1/29.**

Week 3 1/24 Class discussion of "Group A" individual rewrite plans, including a full breakdown of scripts using your beat sheet and white board presentation.

Week 4 1/31 Class discussion of "Group B" rewrite plans, including a full breakdown of scripts, using your beat sheet and white board presentation.

Week 5 2/7 Put individual rewrite plans into action. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of pages.

**From this point forward we will no longer work in groups. At least 10 to 15 revised pages are due from each student no later than 9:00 AM Sundays. Time permitting each student's new pages will be discussed each week.**

Writing objectives for the next week will be determined by each student at each class. Written notes are to be emailed to your classmates **after** each class.

Week 6 2/14 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 7 2/21 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 8 2/28. Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 9 3/7 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

3/14 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK – ENJOY, BUT PLEASE DON'T STOP WRITING!

Week 10 3/21 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 11 3/28 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 12 4/4 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 13 4/11 Continue to execute your rewrite plan. Notes and discussion in class as to what specific elements will be worked on in the next set of 10-15 pages.

Week 14 4/18 Notes and discussion of new pages.

**Assignment:**

Finish your draft and make general notes on a potential game plan for your next rewrite. **Once again, please print out your draft and make notes on the physical pages.**

Week 15 4/25 Notes on final pages and discussion of potential game plans.

**Assignment:**

Take one more look through your script and new game plan. Revise accordingly.

**Finals Week:** Email your script and general notes on a new game plan to the professor no later than **Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup>**.

\* Please note: The class will be divided into two groups for the initial five weeks. Each group's scripts will be discussed in class every other week. In this way we will be able to dissect and analyze each script in depth. You will be expected to read every script in both groups and be prepared for all our classroom discussions. You are also expected to give verbal notes to your classmates in class and email your written notes to the instructor and the class **afterwards**.

**As previously stated, at least 10 to 15 newly revised pages per week will be required of each student from week 6 thru week 15 or until the rewrite is completed. Please include previous pages with each week's new set so we can review any new changes and keep an eye on continuity. Changes in the text should be in colored print.**

All scripts and revised pages are to be typed in standard script format. Use Final Draft, Movie Magic, or Writer Duet software to get the job done properly.

**A Personal Note:**

This is a course for students on a professional track and you will be expected to work as a professional. All students are also expected to be helpful to their peers and constructively critical but respectful of their work. I hope to get to know you as an individual, what you need to complete this course successfully and how I can help you achieve that end. If you get stuck, email me. I'll do my best to help you through the rough spots. I also encourage you to call and consult with your classmates; you are all in this together. Finally, know that I'm here for you. Your job is to learn, mine to teach, and I take both very seriously. Do the work, participate in class, keep an open mind about the notes you receive, and I guarantee you'll not only have an enjoyable experience, but you will also have a much better screenplay than you started with.