CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Script Analysis
Course code: SCRW 3001 PRFS
Programs offering course: Film Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 4
Contact hours: 60
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

This class is a core course for the Film Studies Screenwriting track and offers the screenwriting students an opportunity to experience how screenplays become transformed by factors outside of the sphere of writing. The screenwriting students join students from the CIEE film studies production track in three eight week sections of the following topics in production: acting, film language and editing. In these classes the students analyze and exercise how plays become transformed by the work of the actor, cinematographer and editor: exploring how story is divided into acting beats and tactics and the tools actors use beyond dialogue, how story is told with additional film language tools such as color, line, point of view, angle and movement, and how story is cut and rhythmically arranged in editing. All of these factors dynamically interact with the screenplay to put the story into filmic space.

Units Description:

Script Analysis 1: The purpose of this course is to study film language and form by close analysis of scenes and shots; looking at narrative construction and the significance of every detail in the film’s language. It has a strong practical dimension. Meets over 13 of 14 weeks, two academic hours weekly.

Acting: The course introduces the students to basic principles of acting, namely Goal/Obstacle, Other, Tactics and Expectations. Each principle is exercised separately and students engage in short scenes and improvisations to combine the principles and work additional techniques related to character portrayal and building a scene. In some exercises students gain practice directing each other, and specific
problems, such as casting or work with non-actors are addressed to prepare them for their upcoming shoot. Meets over 10 weeks, two academic hours weekly. Note: Meets weeks 1-7, then in weeks 11-14, Acting class time used as preparation for final presentation, plus acting exercises on handling dialogue.

Camera and Film Language: This unit complements the practical dimension of the cinematography lectures by focusing on those cinematic tools that serve a dramatic purpose in storytelling with film. Several styles of cinematography will be evaluated in terms of storytelling effectiveness. Technical elements such as shot sizes, axis rules, angles of view, color, composition, and especially, camera movement, are analyzed with a view to their cultivation of film language. Meets over 7 weeks, two academic hours weekly.

Editing: In editing class we focus on examples of editing in short films, as well as stylistic analysis of famous films. Main objectives: structure, creating empathy with a character, editing style as a tool of storytelling, work with time and space, influence of location and camera style on the editing, work with sound effects, music and voice over. Meets over 7 weeks, two academic hours weekly.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- To gain an awareness of how screenplays eventually interact with other modes of language specific to filmmaking.
- To become familiar with specific vocabulary in film language used by the actor, cinematographer and editor.
- To become familiar with specific tools for story-telling used by the actor, cinematographer and editor.
- To increase awareness of tools available in spheres beyond the written word that will eventually shape the work of the writer.
- To increase awareness of how story is shaped by many collaborative systems within filmmaking.
- To gain practical experience in the collaborative work of the screenwriter with other film artists.

In Script Analysis 1 class, through the intensive analysis of films, the following principles are examined and explained: three act story structure, plot points, turning
points, the function of exposition, the catalyst, rising action, crisis, climax, culmination, resolution, main tension, theme, as well as scenes and sequences, sub-plots, double-plots, multi-plots, and internal scene structure. Analysis will also cover the role of the protagonist, the creation of empathy, the journey of protagonist, active and passive characters, supporting characters, character arcs and character motivation, the concept of want and need, the role of the antagonist, as well as the use of conflict and obstacles, and a comparison of objective vs. subjective conflict, and action vs. activity.

The narrative tools of mystery, suspense, surprise, dramatic irony, twists, revelations and reversals will be explored and analyzed as will be the dramatic strategies of planting and pay-off, gags, marbling, foisting the audience, and devices such as the obligatory scene, scenes of revelation, scenes of preparation and aftermath, and the advertising of future events.

The course will also explore interpretations of film as a temporal-spatial art by examining pacing, rhythm, accelerating action, and the handling of time and space, montage, transitions, sound, and music.

The craft of creating dialogue, the dramatic use of props and costumes, staging and the creation of atmosphere as employed in the screenplay will also be covered.

Course Prerequisites

The course is part of the core curriculum of the Film Studies program, Screenwriting track.

Methods of Instruction

The course is team taught and each professors' methods vary. Classes in film language include lecture supported by powerpoint plus segments of films screened. Classes on editing involve lecture and screening of short films which are then discussed and analyzed in class, Classes in acting are largely devoted to in-class exercises revolving around a principle of acting, plus scene work in pairs.

N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.
Assessment and Final Grade

1. Acting, Camera and Film Languages, Editing units: 50%
2. Script Analysis 1 unit: 50%
   TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Acting, Camera and Film Languages, Editing units:

Active participation in classes - 40%

Final Exam on course material - 20%

Participation and reflection on pitch - 10%

Participation as crew member on shoot - 20%

Participation in Final Presentation - 10%

Script Analysis 1 unit:

Students will be expected to recognize the dramatic and narrative elements explained in class, and to present a cogent analysis of a film selected for a mid-term exam and for a final paper.

Active participation in classes - 20%

Mid-term examination - 20%

Take-home final - 60%

Attendance and participation are mandatory, and lack thereof can negatively affect final grade.

The student needs to regularly attend classes and prove their understanding of the material covered on a final exam. The attendance at the pitch with a written reflection on one of the stories pitched is another assignment considered important because it furthers the student's awareness that the writer writes for an audience beyond herself. Participating as a crew member in production is important for the student to
realize that the screenplay is a blueprint for a collaborative event. The final presentation of work on her own feature screenplay, which is work for another core class – Feature screenwriting - is also counted in the assessment of this class because the student will use her screenplay in further collaboration to make a presentation with and for others of its contents.

(In the event that in the feature screenwriting class the student realizes a work that does not lend itself to a staged reading, perhaps because of a lack of dialogue or perhaps because of a personal or delicate nature to the material, this final presentation could be waived for the student. The student is encouraged however to find an alternative form of presentation, perhaps through images evoking locations or themes from the work. It is not advisable that the student will be writing in the feature screenwriting class with a view toward the product presented during the last week. A few weeks before the end of the semester, choices concerning the presentation will be discussed among the students and professor.)

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class Acting, Editing and Film Language Classes meet.

  Acting – focus on basic acting principles; short scene to be memorized assigned as homework

  Editing – focus on basic editing principles

  Film language – focus on expressive tool of movement

Week 2

Class Acting, Editing, Film Language Classes meet

  Acting – focus on good acting choices; short text on choices distributed in class to be read as homework

  Editing – focus on basic editing principles

  Film language – focus on expressive tool of frame.
Attendance at Production track pitch.

Script Analysis meets – focus on three act structure and sequence structure

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1**: Aristotle Poetics in course reader, pp. 4-21

**Week 3**

**Class**

Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet

Acting – focus on scenework

Editing – focus on editing principles

Film Language – focus on expressive tool of POV

Script Analysis 1 meets: Screening of Kolya

**Week 4**

**Class**

Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet;

Acting – Focus on improvisation technique

Editing – Focus on editing principles

Film Language – Focus on Expressive Tool of Composition

Script Analysis 1 – lecture topics: character and conflict

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1**: Course reader selection from Story by Robert McGEE, pp. 43-49

**Week 5**

**Class**

Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet;
Acting – Focus on improvisation technique

Editing – Focus on editing principles

Film Language – Focus on Expressive Tool of Shot Sizes

Script Analysis 1 – Screening of Harold and Maude

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1**: Course reader selection from Story

pp. 32-33, 63-65

**Week 6**

**Class** Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet

Acting – Focus on inner monologue

Editing – Focus on editing principles

Film Language – Focus on expressive tool of angles and axis

Script Analysis 1 - lecture on scene by scene construction within the dramatic curve.

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1**: Course reader selection, pp. 60-62, 66-70

**Week 7**

**Class** Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet

Acting – Focus on Characterization

Editing – Focus on Editing principles

Film Language – Focus on Color as Expressive Tool

Script Analysis 1 - Screening of The Commitments

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1**: Course reader selection, pp. 81-90
Week 8
Class  Final Exam from Topics classes.

Script Analysis 1 – lecture topics: internal scene construction; advancing the plot

Reading due for Script Analysis 1: Course reader selection, pp.91-94

Week 9
Class  Script Analysis 1 class – Screening of Toy Story

Reading due for Script Analysis 1: Course reader selection, pp.95-97

Week 10
Class  Script Analysis 1 class meets - lecture topics: genre

Assignment – preparation of film analysis paper due in week 14

Week 11
Class  Acting class resumes – focus on dialogue

Script Analysis 1 class meets – Screening of Titanic

Assignment: – preparation of film analysis paper due in week 14

Week 12
Class  Acting class meets – focus on preparing scene for final presentation

Script Analysis 1 class meets – lecture topic: screenplay format, trimming; dialogue;

Instructions for Final Paper

Week 13
Class  Acting class meets, work on preparation for final presentation

Last Script Analysis 1 class – Review of topics and films
Assignment due for Script Analysis 1: Final Film Analysis paper

Week 14
Class Acting class meets, work on preparation for final presentation

Presentation from feature screenplay

Course Materials
Readings


