CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Feature Screenwriting
Course code: SCRW 3002 PRFS
Programs offering course: Film Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 4
Contact hours: 60
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description

The students will work on conceiving an idea for a story, creating a world for the story, outlining and developing it into a treatment, and then transferring the treatment into approximately half of a written feature screenplay. Progress from idea into draft form will be guided by the mentor through regular meetings with the students. During the course of those meetings, ideas and structures will be shaped and challenged in discussion with class participants. Principles underlying the art and craft of screenwriting will emerge in discussion about the work at hand.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- awareness of story elements
- discovering theme, testing relationships
- to give and test the solid ground of the story and its relation to an audience
- to test the dynamic between story and audience, to heighten the student’s awareness of the many interactive layers at work in the creation of a story that is meant to be shown in film language

Course Prerequisites

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

Methods of Instruction
Interactive, seminar style discussion of screenplays in progress

A final evaluation for the students will be made based on commitment to the work at hand, carried out through the exercises assigned.

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. Written Work Delivered 30%
2. Understanding of Principles of Storytelling 30%
3. Active participation in classes 40%
   TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Written Work Delivered

Students submit their project – a screenplay on a regular basis, developing it and adding to the script based on feedback from previous classes. They will be assessed on following employing the feedback and advice in their screenplay project.

Understanding of Principles of Storytelling

Students' understanding of principles of storytelling is assessed regularly, both through in-class exercises (see specifics below) and in application of the principles discussed in class to their scripts.

Exercise: “My First Bicycle”

Objective: awareness of story elements

Exercise: the single sentence, the three sentences

Objective: discovering theme, testing relationships

Exercise: writing the outline
The treatment: Ordering the world, understanding its possibilities and limitations, ruling principles, planning structures and planting motifs, POV considerations, character, genre and tone, foreseeing the obligatory scene...

Assignments: thinking through, writing and revising the treatment

Objective: To give and test the solid ground of the story and its relation to an audience.

Exercise: Projecting a scene. This exercise has to be conceived with the particular chemistry of student and story in mind. It could be as simple as the student reading aloud from her screenplay to a small audience, or a staged reading of a scene with actors. It could also consist of a series of shots related to a sequence of images or events from the story.

Objective: to test the dynamic between story and audience, to heighten the student's awareness of the many interactive layers at work in the creation of a story that is meant to be shown in film language.

Active participation in classes

Students are expected to actively participate in class sessions, preparing for each session, contributing to the development of their peers' writing through feedback and constructive criticism. Active participation will be assessed on a weekly basis.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students' participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.
Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor’s or other students’ line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students’ active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

**CIEE Prague Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences are treated equally regardless of reason for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

Missing classes will lead to the following penalties:

90-minute semester classes:
180-minute semester classes:

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.

Missing more than 20% of the total class hours will lead to a course failure, and potential program dismissal. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.

Late arrival to class will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.

Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student’s presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor’s note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor’s notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.

Should a truly extraordinary situation arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments
are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.

Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.

For class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), always contact the Academic Assistant to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the records. In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant within one week of the discrepancy date to have it corrected. Later claims will not be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

CIEE Academic Honesty Policy

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one’s own.

The first principle is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting
the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an “open book” basis).

The second principle applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.

The third principle is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another’s work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.

The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

### Weekly Schedule

#### Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Principles of Storytelling (whose, how, what for...)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>“My First Bicycle”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective:</td>
<td>awareness of story elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea into World</td>
<td>(sources of inspiration, raw material for story, models or archetypes...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-dimensional characters</td>
<td>(matching the world of the story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>(possible basic shapes: single character, triangle, ensemble...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students propose possible ideas and get feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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#### Week 2
Class  Relationship of parts to whole (theme)

Exercise: the single sentence, the three sentences

Objective: discovering theme, testing relationships

Students continue to propose story ideas and get feedback on development from professor and classmates

**Assignments:** student re-submit ideas reflecting feedback they received in Week 1

Week 3
Class  Shaping toward dramatic form

(exposition, collision, crisis, catastrophe, catharsis)

Expectations of audience

Exercise: writing the outline

**Assignment:** Read Of Scripts and Life

Week 4
Class  The treatment

Ordering the world, understanding its possibilities and limitations, ruling principles, planning structures and planting motifs, POV considerations, character, genre and tone, foreseeing the obligatory scene...

Objective: To give and test the solid ground of the story and its relation to an audience.

**Assignments:** outline

Week 5
Class  .
Students bring in treatments in progress and get feedback from professors and classmates; some treatments are approved; others continue to work on developing them;

Assignment: thinking through, writing and revising the treatment

Week 6
Class Drafting the screenplay

Considerations at the beginning

Scene structure (mini-dramas...)

Students start writing scenes and bring in copies for classmates to read and critique with professor

Assignment: second revision of the treatment

Week 7
Class

Students continue writing scenes and bring in updated copies for classmates to read and critique with professor

Assignment: submission of scenes

Week 8
Class

Students progress with writing and re-writing scenes, bringing in latest copies for classmates to read and critique with professor.

Several professors visit the class to give additional feedback as students present treatments

Assignment: submission of scenes

Week 9
Class

Students progress with writing and re-writing scenes, bringing in latest copies for classmates to read and critique with professor.

Assignment: submission of scenes

Week 10

Class

Students progress with writing and re-writing scenes, bringing in latest copies for classmates to read and critique with professor. 

Assignment: submission of scenes

Week 11

Class

Students progress with writing and re-writing scenes, bringing in latest copies for classmates to read and critique with professor.

Assignment: submission of scenes

Week 12

Class

Exercise: Projecting a scene.

This exercise has to be conceived with the particular chemistry of student and story in mind. It could be as simple as the student reading aloud from her screenplay to a small audience, or a staged reading of a scene with actors. It could also consist of a series of shots related to a sequence of images or events from the story.

Objective: to test the dynamic between story and audience, to heighten the student's awareness of the many interactive layers at work in the creation of a story that is meant to be shown in film language.

Assignment: submission of scenes
Week 13
Class .

Students progress with writing and re-writing scenes, bringing in latest copies for classmates to read and critique with professor

Assignment: final copy of their script

Course Materials
Readings

Fleischer, Jan. Of Scripts and Life. Mediterranean Film Institute, 2010