Course title: Feature Screenwriting
Course code: SCRW 3002 PRFS
Programs offering course: Film Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 4.00
Contact hours: 60.00
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

Throughout the course students 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 is guided by the mentor through regular meetings with students. During the course of those meetings, ideas and structures are shaped and challenged in discussion with class participants. Principles underlying the art and craft of screenwriting emerge in discussion about the work at hand.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- understand and analyze story elements;
- develop a theme and test relationships;
- test the solid ground of their story and its relation to an audience;
- analyze the many interactive layers at work in the creation of a story that is meant to be shown in film language;
- provide constructive feedback on their peers’ work;
- produce approximately half of a screenplay.

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.

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.

**Attendance**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program.

If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of course hours missed</th>
<th>Number of CIEE classes</th>
<th>Minimum penalty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>One to Three 90-min. classes; or One 180-min. class</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% - 20%</td>
<td>Four 90-min. classes</td>
<td>Written notification* to the student, followed by a warning letter to the student and home school; 3% reduction in the final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five 90-min. classes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two 180-min classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Six 90-min. classes; or Three 180-min. classes</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion with notification to the home school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The notification letters are intended to ensure that you are well advised in advance of any potential for failure or dismissal, so that you can take steps to avoid this.

As the table shows, **missing more than 20% of any class (e.g., due to undocumented illness, travel delays, flight cancellations, over-sleeping, etc.) results in automatic failure of the course.**

If you miss an assessment in class due to an absence, you will be able to make it up in the following instances:

- You provide a relevant doctor's note from a local medical professional to your Program Coordinator within 24 hours of your absence (a scan or photograph sent via e-mail are acceptable)
- A CIEE staff member verifies that you were too ill to attend class.
- You provide evidence of a family emergency to your Program Coordinator.
- You have an approved absence related to the observance of a religious holiday from the Academic Director based on a request submitted before you arrived onsite.

**Please note:** Absences incurred due to documented illness, documented family emergency or the observance of a religious holiday approved before arrival onsite do not count towards the total of absences. Students may self-certify one absence due to illness without providing a doctor's note as long as they notify the Program Coordinator within 24 hours of their absence by e-mail or a text message.

**Other attendance-related policies**

If you transfer from one CIEE class to another during the Add/Drop period, you will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of the new class provided you were marked present for the first session(s) of the original class.

If you are over 15 minutes late for a class, the instructor is required to mark you absent.

In case of class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips and make-up classes), always contact the Academic Department to decide the appropriate course of action.

Please remember to track your attendance on the Canvas Course Sites and report any errors in the record to the Academic Department within one week of the discrepancy date, as later claims may not be considered.

These attendance rules also apply to any required co-curricular excursion, activity, or event, and to for-credit internships.

CIEE staff does not manage absences at partner institutions providing direct enrollment classes (FAMU, ECES and FSV), but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

*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.*

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Class:** Principles of Storytelling (whose, how, what for...)

Exercise: "My First Bicycle"

Objective: awareness of story elements

**Idea into World** (sources of inspiration, raw material for story, models or archetypes...)

**Three-dimensional characters** (matching the world of the story)

**Outlining** (possible basic shapes: single character, triangle, ensemble...)

Students propose possible ideas and get feedback

**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.
**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

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**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

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**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

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**Week 14**

Class:  

**Students present one or two scenes in staged reading** to a public.

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**Course Materials**

**Readings**

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