

SCREENWRITING: THE CONSTRUCTION OF ACTION
Oklahoma Scholars' Leadership Enrichment Program
May 17 - May 21, 2010

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“The artists of today can no longer afford total solitude because forces of dehumanization challenge the very possibility of art. Naturally, each writer must work alone, but he needs to share knowledge and inspiration with others.”

Dr. Sam Smiley
Playwriting: The Structure of Action

“My souls (characters) are conglomerations of past and present stages of civilizations, bits from books and newspapers, scraps of humanity, rags and tatters of fine clothing, patched together as in the human soul.”

August Strindberg
Forward to Miss Julie

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is an intensive course aimed at the conception, planning and writing of a full length screenplay. Through a series of writing exercises, scenes, short scripts and treatments, the student will be expected to complete the first five pages of a larger work. This class will be concerned with the basics of character, narrative, structure, thematics, dramaturgy, texture, genre, and the ability to visualize in writing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Students know the six elements of dramatics.
2. Students understand and successfully employ story elements in regard to structure.
3. Students can create viable characters and dialogue.
4. Students understand dramatic action.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students can define the basic principles and concepts of the six elements of drama.
2. Students can analyze screenplays in terms of their story elements and structure.
3. Students can create rich, viable film characters with distinct voices.
4. Students can discuss and employ dramatic action as it occurs in film.

SYLLABUS:

- May 17th: FADE IN:
 Class Introduction and Requirements
 Test on McKees' "STORY"
 The Elements of Drama
 Germinal Ideas
 The Pitch
 (In - class assignment)
 The Story Elements
 THE RED BALLOON (1956)
 The Treatment
 Format
 Homework: Writing Your Treatment (1 - 2 pages)
- May 18th: Round Table Discussion: Your Treatment
 Time and Place
 (In - class assignment)
 Character Traits
 SUNSET BOULEVARD (1950)
 Discussion of Character and Story Elements
 The Protagonist and Character
 Homework: Scene Establishing Character (1 - 2 pages)
- May 19th: Round Table Discussion: Scene Establishing Character
 Tone and Mood
 MEAT (2004)
 (In - class assignment)
 Narrative and Structure
 TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (1962)
 Obstacle and Complications
 Diction
 Sound
 Homework: Scene Establishing Obstacle, Diction and Sound (1 - 2 pages)
- May 20th: Round Table Discussion: Scene Establishing Obstacle, Diction, and Sound
 Writing: The Twelve Commandments
 Genre
 STAGECOACH (1939)
 Spectacle
 Memorable Endings
 (In - class assignment: Scene Establishing Spectacle 1 - 2 pages)
- May 21st: Round Table Discussion: Your First Five Pages
 Selling Your Script

Class Review and Critique
FADE OUT.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

WRITING THE CHARACTER-CENTERED SCREENPLAY

Dr. Andrew Horton

STORY: SUBSTANCE, STYLE, AND THE PRINCIPLES OF SCREENWRITING

Robert McKee

As I will often be referencing these books in my lectures, it is imperative that you have a working knowledge of the texts prior to the first day of class.

FURTHER REQUIREMENTS:

1. Students must submit an e-mail address to OSLEP so that we may create a group mailing.
2. Students should bring a laptop computer to class in order to fulfill written, in - class, assignments. The university will provide a guest log - in.
3. Students should provide three screenplay ideas for discussion on the first day of class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend all classes.
2. Read and be prepared to discuss assigned reading chapters.
3. Hand in daily writing assignments.
4. Hand in first five pages of screenplay, May 21st.

GRADING:

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| Class Attendance and Participation | 50% |
| Daily Assignments | 25% |
| First Five Pages of Screenplay | 25% |

Late work is unacceptable unless previously approved by the instructor.

Absence will result in the loss of one letter grade and an additional letter grade for each subsequent absence.

Chronic tardiness (two) will result in the loss of one letter grade and one additional letter grade for each subsequent tardy.

DROPPING THE COURSE:

It is the student's responsibility to drop the course. The instructor is not required, nor should he be expected to drop the student from the official roster. Do not assume that failing to attend class will result in your being dropped from the class.

PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. The result of plagiarism will be the immediate dismissal of the guilty party from this class with a failing grade. Additional academic recourse may be taken.

CLASS CANCELLATION:

In the event a class meeting is cancelled due to an emergency, continue with the assigned work. We will catch up on all missed material in the next scheduled class. I will make every effort to notify you if I should happen to miss a class.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)

Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner.

CARE OF CHILDREN:

Parents must not bring children into university classes or leave them unattended while on campus.

DUE PROCESS:

If a student has a problem in class which cannot be directly handled by speaking with the instructor, or contact OSLEP Director, Helen DeBolt.

NOTE:

Enrollment in this class constitutes an agreement between the student and the instructor. Thus, you are responsible for all guidelines, assignments and regulations outlined in this syllabus and by the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to up-date and / or revise this syllabus at any time.