FILM TV C132 - Screenwriting Fundamentals – 2 units
Professor Richard Walter
Co-Chair, UCLA Screenwriting Program

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Class Website

Session A: https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/161A-FILMTVC132-2
Session C: https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/161C-FILMTVC132-4

Objectives

Learn the fundamentals of screenwriting—story structure, character development, plot, theme, conflict, and vision. Emphasis is on structural analysis of feature film writing. Students will develop a professional screenwriter’s conceptual vocabulary for developing, writing and rewriting his or her own work.

How Class Works

Students listen to bi-weekly lectures via a web browser. Reading assignments accompany each lecture. The final grade is determined by a midterm and final.

Readings

Richard Walter's Essentials of Screenwriting: The Art, Craft, and Business of Film and Television Writing is required for this course. You are also required to read three full-length screenplays, which are available for download from the Class Website.

Books are available for purchase at the UCLA Bookstore—either on campus or online. They are also available at stores and from online booksellers such as Amazon.com.

Screenings

Three films, titles TBA, are required viewing. Other films are recommended—not required—as companion viewing for each lesson.

Recommended films can be streamed at low resolution from the Class Website. Films chosen for assignments or papers should be viewed at full quality on DVD or via web services such as iTunes or Netflix.
Assignments

1 – First week – Read a screenplay – no submission
2 – Midterm – Analysis of assigned screenplay – 3 to 5 pages
3 – Final – Comparative analysis of two films – 3 to 5 pages

Grade Breakdown

Your final grade is calculated as follows:

Midterm – 50%
Final – 50%

Submitting assignments after the deadline will subtract 5 percent from the grade per day late, which means an A becomes a B if submitted two days past due.

Policies

This class takes advantage of MyUCLA and a third-party service known as Turnitin. Submissions are screened for improper citations and potential plagiarism. Quotes or ideas paraphrased from other work must be properly cited.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu. Disability accommodations needs should be communicated to the instructor and/or Teaching Assistant before assignments are due unless there are extenuating circumstances. These policies apply to both matriculated UCLA students and visitors in Summer Session.

SCHEDULE

Week One

Lesson 1: Integration

Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Introduction, Pages 3 – 32 (Chapters 1-3)
Lecture: It’s All About Story
Suggested Viewing: Back to the Future, Directed by Robert Zemeckis, 1985
Star Wars, Directed by George Lucas, 1977

Lesson 2: Theme and Conflict
Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 33 – 57 (Chapters 4-6)
Lecture: Avoid The Village of the Happy Nice People
*Tootsie*, Directed by Sydney Pollack, 1982

Assignment: Read a screenplay and watch the film

**Week Two**

**Lesson 3**: Story Assembly: Part One

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 58 – 71 (Chapter 7 - beginning of chapter through Exposition)
Lecture: Beginnings
Suggested Viewing:
*American Graffiti*, Directed by George Lucas, 1973
*The Big Chill*, Directed by Lawrence Kasdan, 1983
*Jurassic Park*, Directed by Steven Spielberg, 1993

**Lesson 4**: Story Assembly: Part Two

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 71 – 83 (Chapter 7 - Middles through end of chapter)
Lecture: Middles and Endings
Suggested Viewing:
*Do the Right Thing*, Directed by Spike Lee, 1989
*Thelma and Louise*, Directed by Ridley Scott, 1991

**Week Three**

**Lesson 5**: Character

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 84 – 94 (Chapter 8)
Lecture: No Stereotypes Allowed

Work on Midterm Assignment

Suggested Viewing:
*The Bridge on the River Kwai*, Directed by David Lean, 1957
*Moonstruck*, Directed by Norman Jewison, 1987
Week Four

Lesson 6: Dialogue

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 95 – 119 (Chapter 9)
Lecture: Lights, Camera… Talk?
Suggested Viewing:
  *12 Angry Men*, Directed by Sidney Lumet, 1957
  *Annie Hall*, Directed by Woody Allen, 1977
  *Patton*, Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Midterm

Lesson 7: Action and Setting/Format

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 120 – 164 (Chapters 10-11)
Lecture: Think Outside of the Restaurant
Suggested Viewing:
  *Big Night*, Directed by Campbell Scott and Stanley Tucci, 1996
  *Inglourious Basterds*, Directed by Quentin Tarantino, 2009
  *Running on Empty*, Directed by Sidney Lumet, 1988

Week Five

Lesson 8: Notes on Notes

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 165 – 207 (Chapter 12)
Lecture: Analysis of “The Hangover” screenplay by Jon Lucas & Scott Moore
Suggested Viewing:
  *The Hangover*, Directed by Todd Phillips, 2009

Lesson 9: Craft

Reading: *Essentials of Screenwriting*, Pages 211-259 (Chapters 13-15)
Lecture: Outlines and Treatments and Scene Cards! Oh my!
Suggested Viewing:
  *Adaptation*, Directed by Spike Jonze, 2002
  *Terms of Endearment*, Directed by James L. Brooks, 1983
  *Play Misty for Me*, Directed by Clint Eastwood, 1971
Week Six

Lesson 10: The Business of Screenwriting

Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 263-376 (Optional) (Chapters 16-17 & Part IV: The Whole Picture)

Lecture: They Don’t Call It Show-Art

Suggested Viewing:

Highlander, Directed by Russell Mulcahy, 1986
River’s Edge, Directed by Tim Hunter, 1986

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final due on the last day of the term.