**FILM 33** – Introductory Screenwriting (4 units)
Professor Richard Walter

*Area Head, UCLA Screenwriting Program*

*THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.*

**Class Website**

Session A: [https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/171A-FILMTV33-2](https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/171A-FILMTV33-2)
Session C: [https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/171C-FILMTV33-3](https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/171C-FILMTV33-3)

**Objectives**

Learn and apply the fundamentals of screenwriting -- story structure, character development, plot, theme, conflict, and vision.

Students work with TAs and classmates to write the first 10 pages and to develop an original story for a full-length screenplay, guided by lectures, readings, TA instruction and feedback.

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 weekly lectures via a web browser. Reading assignments accompany each lecture. Questions and exercises related to assignments and creative work are workshopped on a moderated Discussion Board. There are five written assignments.

**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 at least two 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

Our 4 core films and other optional features can be streamed at low resolution from the Class Website. For greater quality, we recommend DVD/Blu-ray or web services such as iTunes or Netflix.

Assignments

1 – Read a Screenplay – familiarize yourself with The Hollywood Structure and see how it applies to a successful film
2 – Screenplay Analysis – write a one-page report where you analyze a screenplay
3 – Screenplay Profile – write a one-page presentation of your film story
4 – Screenplay Page – write the first page of your screenplay
5 – Expanded Screenplay Profile – rewrite and expand your film story
6 – Screenplay Pages – write the first 10 pages of your screenplay

Discussion Board

The Discussion Board integrates what you learn in lessons with your assignments and the story you are writing. Your TA is both moderator and active contributor. He or she will reinforce concepts introduced in lecture and readings and provide feedback to advance the development of individual student storylines. Students are also encouraged to exchange ideas through replying on each other’s Discussion Board contributions.

Weekly Discussion Board Questions

2 questions are posted on the Discussion Board every Friday:

**Question 1** – integrates lectures, readings, screenings and story development
**Question 2** – helps students workshop their story profiles and screenplays

You must answer both questions. Please also engage with fellow students to share your journeys and to offer each other support by responding to the posts of others. Be generous and see this as an online workshop for your screenwriting.

Remember than receiving feedback can make especially new writers feel vulnerable, so please cultivate an open, but considerate and professional tone.

How to Write

These are not Discussion Board posts as you know them. They are mini-essays, and you are expected to write more than just a couple of sentences. Properly-written English is required. The more effort you put into this course, the stronger your screenplay understanding will be, and the more professional your first 10 pages will turn out.

Please ask your TA for guidance if you are unsure of what’s expected.
Grading of Discussion Posts

The Discussion Board participation grade is based on your two weekly contributions. Posts are evaluated on both individual merit and on what they offer to the unfolding discussion. Timely posting is required, but the earlier in the week you post, the greater the opportunity for comprehensive and continuing feedback.

Late posts will receive feedback from the TA, but points are deducted from your grade. Good effort with clear language will earn you an A. Confused or too short answers will result in a B, and failing to submit will lower your grade further. Points will be subtracted for each 12-hour period you submit late.

Be a presence on the board, have a voice, be memorable, an active citizen. Lively, thoughtful posts can help your grade overall.

Final Grade Breakdown

Your final grade is calculated on a point scale, as follows:

- Discussion Board participation – 30 points
- Lecture quizzes – 5 points
- Screenplay Analysis – 10 points
- Screenplay Profile – 10 points
- Screenplay Page – 5 points
- Expanded Screenplay Profile – 10 points
- Screenplay Pages – 30 points

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

Assignment 1: Read a Screenplay. Nothing due.

Quiz 1: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

Lesson 1: Integration
Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Introduction, Pages 3 – 32 (Chapters 1-3)
Lecture: It’s All About Story

Optional 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
Optional Viewing:

   Kramer vs. Kramer, Directed by Robert Benton, 1979
   Tootsie, Directed by Sydney Pollack, 1982

Week Two

Assignment 2: Screenplay Analysis. Due Friday by 11:00 PM PDT.

Quiz 2: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

Lesson 3: Story Assembly: Part One
Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 58 – 71 (Chapter 7 - beginning of chapter through Exposition)
Lecture: Beginnings
Optional Viewing:

   American Graffiti, Directed by George Lucas, 1973
   The Big Chill, Directed by Lawrence Kasdan, 1983
Lesson 4: Story Assembly: Part Two
   Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 71 – 83 (Chapter 7 - Middles through end of chapter)
   Lecture: Middles and Endings
   Optional Viewing:
       Do the Right Thing, Directed by Spike Lee, 1989
       Thelma and Louise, Directed by Ridley Scott, 1991

Week Three

Assignment 3: Screenplay Profile. Due Friday by 11:00 PM PDT.

Quiz 3: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

Lesson 5: Character
   Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 84 – 94 (Chapter 8)
   Lecture: No Stereotypes Allowed
   Optional Viewing:
       The Bridge on the River Kwai, Directed by David Lean, 1957
       Moonstruck, Directed by Norman Jewison, 1987

Lesson 6: Dialogue
   Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 95 – 119 (Chapter 9)
   Lecture: Lights, Camera… Talk?
   Optional Viewing:
       12 Angry Men, Directed by Sidney Lumet, 1957
       Annie Hall, Directed by Woody Allen, 1977
       Patton, Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970

Week Four

Assignment 4: Screenplay Page. Due Friday by 11:00 PM PDT.

Quiz 4: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

Lesson 7: Action and Setting/Format
   Reading: Essentials of Screenwriting, Pages 120 – 164 (Chapters 10-11)
Lecture: Think Outside of the Restaurant

Optional 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**

**Assignment 5**: Expanded Screenplay Profile. Due Friday by 11:00 PM PDT.

**Quiz 5**: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

**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
- Optional 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!
- Optional 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**

**Assignment 6**: Screenplay Pages. Due Friday by 11:00 PM PDT.

**Quiz 6**: Due Friday by 11:59 pm PDT.

**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
- Optional Viewing:
*Highlander*, Directed by Russell Mulcahy, 1986
*River’s Edge*, Directed by Tim Hunter, 1986