

COMM 341: SCRIPTWRITING FOR CINEMA/TV
Fall Semester, 2005
Prof. Warren J. Doody
M 6:00 - 9:00 Scott 117: Exam Group 10

Office Hrs.: 10:00 - 1:00 MWF; 10:00 - 12:00 TTh
or by appointment
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Texts: ARISTOTLE'S POETICS FOR SCREENWRITERS: STORYTELLING
SECRETS, Michael Tierno

GRACELAND, Ellen Byron

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course will serve as a foundation for dramatic writing. Students will develop and apply a critical vocabulary through in-class discussion and critique. Students will create thirty pages of a new work by the end of the semester, either the first half of a screenplay, or a thirty-minutes teleplay. This class also intends to develop the student's critical capacities as they address their own works, published works, and the work of their peers.

COURSE PROCEDURE: The early part of this course is designed to introduce students to various dramatic writing structures and the identification and application of those structures to screenplays. Various exercises will be assigned to assist the writer in accomplishing this outcome. Once this foundation has been laid, the writer will then develop an idea, taking it from its germinal stage to a treatment/outline, through a first draft, and then into one or two re-revisions, revisions aided by the notes received in class. All assignments should be typed/word processed.

ATTENDANCE: The nature of this class requires impeccable attendance, particularly during the latter part of the course when we will shift into workshop mode. Steps towards the completion of your new creative work will be clearly delineated and it is essential that you stay up to speed as we move along. I am aware that emergencies arise and I only ask that you keep me abreast of any absences or prospective absences. The Absence Policy will be that of VU: there are no excused/unexcused absences. Students may miss up to 20% of the class meetings, (3 absences for a course meeting once a week), after which the student is automatically dropped from the course.

PUNCTUALITY: Tardiness happens to be my pet peeve. Two days of tardiness equals one day of absence. Please make every effort to be here on time.

PLAGIARISM: Do not attempt to pass off someone else's work as your own. This is an extremely serious, punishable offense. Anyone caught plagiarizing in this class will receive an automatic F for the course.

GRADING: Your grade will be determined by the following:

Miscellaneous exercises/worksheets	10%
Script steps	10%
First draft of script	25%
Script revision (Final draft)	50%
Participation/Attendance	5%

Assignments will drop half a letter grade for each day late. Exceptions will be made for documented emergencies only. Typewriter, printer, and computer breakdowns will not be accepted as an excuse for tardy assignments. All major assignments must be printed in professional format.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: The following should serve as a map for our journey rather than a contract.

- Week 1: - No class, as the semester begins on a Wednesday.
- Week 2: 8/29 - Introduction to the course.
- Week 3: 9/5 - Labor Day - no class.
- Week 4: 9/12 - Basic Structure
- Basic structure application - Witness.
- Week 5: 9/19 - The Hero's Journey as Structure.
- Feminine Structure.
- Week 6: 9/26 - "Jaws" - Structure, Obstacle, & Character.
- Week 7: 10/3 - Continue with "Jaws."
- Week 8: 10/10 - Pitch ideas/Discuss elements of story.
- Two-page treatment.

Week 9: 10/17 - Character sketches.
 - Discussion of Graceland - Beats.

Week 10: 10/24 - Step outline/Event structure.
 - First three pages of script.

Week 11: 10/31 - First three pages.

(NOTE: From this point on, the writer will be responsible for five to ten pages of new material each week. Due to time limitations, however, the writer is only required to bring three to five pages of new material to class to be workshopped every third class period (give or take). These pages will need to be photocopied in order to pass out to peers and instructor.)

Week 12: 11/7 - Pages.

Week 13: 11/14 - Pages.

Week 14: 11/21 - Pages.

Week 15: 11/28 - Pages.

FINAL EXAM - Wed. Dec. 8 @ 6:00 - 9:00
 - Revised script due.