COMM 3305: Short Form Screenwriting & Analysis
CRN 10676 Spring 2020 MW (2 - 3:15pm) PAFFORD 112

University of West Georgia
College of Social Sciences
Department of Mass Communications
1601 Maple Street
Carrolton, Georgia 30118

Instructor: Robyn Hicks
Office: Humanities 216
Hours: MW (11am-1:30pm) & by appt.
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678-839-4935

Course Detail & Objective:
Welcome to Short Form Screenwriting & Analysis! This is a writing workshop where students will study storytelling structure and implement this in the creation of cinematic, televisual and web-based stories and series. This is also the writing-intensive course for two of our departmental concentrations, so extreme attention will be given to the technical, structural, and grammatical components of writing.

Course Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will distinguish and identify the fundamentals of compelling dramatic writing: including imagery, character, plot, narrative structure, primary terminology, formatting, basic practice, and literary conventions for the small and large screen.
2. Students will explore effective strategies for the appropriate context of page vs. screen.
3. Students will understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
4. Students will practice constructive criticism and think critically, creatively and independently.
5. Students will embrace the heartfelt nature of a story.
6. Students will recognize the inherent value of rewriting.
7. Students will begin to understand the medium’s function as a means of communication and creative expression
8. Students will write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
9. Students will critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

Mass Communications Department Learning Outcomes:
1. Awareness: Students will demonstrate awareness of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological
issues; and the role of principle personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines awareness as familiarity with facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.

2. **Understanding:** Students will demonstrate understanding of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological issues; and the role of principle personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines understanding as assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.

3. **Application:** Students will demonstrate effective application of mass communications scholarship, i.e., relate and/or apply concepts, theory/research, and professional principles to analyze and synthesize information, create, develop, produce, and/or write for converging digital, multi-media, and traditional media. ACEJMC defines application as competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

**Required Book(s):**
*Voice & Vision: 3rd Edition*

*The Hollywood Standard; 2nd Edition* by Christopher Riley

**Required Materials:**
Always Bring Pen and Journal to Class
Celtx (www.celtx.com) or another industry standard screenwriting software equivalent
Access to a printer and/or photocopier on a consistent basis
64 GB Flash Drive

**Recommended Books/Materials:**
*Your Screenplay Sucks* by William M. Akers
https://www.amazon.com/Your-Screenplay-Sucks-Ways-Great/dp/1932907459/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=your+screenplay+sucks+100+ways+to+make+it+great

*Save the Cat* by Blake Snyder
https://www.amazon.com/Save-Last-Book-Screenwriting-Youll/dp/1932907009

**Suggested Script Reference:**
http://www.script-o-rama.com
http://scriptcity.com
http://www.simplyscripts.com
http://scriptnotes.net
Save the Date:
MEDIA DAY - March 4th, 2020

Method of Instruction: Lecture, discussion, readings, writing, screenings, hands-on work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 6-9</td>
<td>Introductions + Course/Syllabus Review Why Do We Write? Write What You Know</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 13-15</td>
<td>Intro to Basic Structure, Concept Development and Short Film Storytelling</td>
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<td>Due: Response #1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jan 20-22</td>
<td>Monday: NO CLASS (MLK Day) Structure: Aristotle &amp; The Hero’s Journey</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Jan 27-29</td>
<td>Structure: Save the Cat Beats</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 3-5</td>
<td>Table Reads DUE: Short Story</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Feb 10-12</td>
<td>Intro to Format + Celtx Due: Response #2</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Feb 17-19</td>
<td>Table Reads</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Feb 24-26</td>
<td>Table Reads DUE: 3-5pg Screenplay Adaptation of Short Story</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mar 2-4</td>
<td>The Art of Pitching + Pitching Workshop Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 9-11</td>
<td>Pitching Due: Final Screenplay Pitches</td>
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<td>Mar 16-18</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Mar 23-25</td>
<td>Table Reads DUE: Final Screenplay Outlines</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Mar 30-Apr 1</td>
<td>Table Reads</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Apr 6-8</td>
<td>Table Reads DUE: First Draft of 8-12pg Screenplay</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>Apr 13-15</td>
<td>Writing and Rewriting Table Reads</td>
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<td>Apr 20-22</td>
<td>Preparing for the Industry Table Reads</td>
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<td>Apr 27-29</td>
<td>Table Reads Due: Final Draft of 8-12pg Screenplay</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>Online Final Exam</td>
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**Assignment Breakdowns:**

(2) **Exams** (10% each = 20%) - A total of 2 exams will be given over the duration of the semester. The exams will cover important keywords and material covered in our textbook, thus it is imperative to stay up to date on reading assignments.

(2) **Podcast & Film Responses** (5% each = 10%) – In this writing assignment, students will submit a 1-2 page, typed essay style response to an assigned podcast or film assessment. A more detailed handout will be provided as this is assigned.

2-4 pg **Short Story Writing Exercise** (10%) – In this writing assignment, students will craft a 2-4 page short story, demonstrating proper story structure and elements, written in present tense. A more detailed handout will be provided as this is assigned.

3-5 pg **Screenplay Adaptation of Short Story** (10%) – In this writing assignment, students will turn their 3-5 page short story into a screenplay, demonstrating proper screenplay formatting and structure. A more detailed handout will be provided as this is assigned.

**Final Screenplay Pitch** (10%) - Students must formally pitch their final screenplay concept and receive feedback from professor and peers before moving forward into the writing phase. More information will be given leading up to assignment.

**Final Screenplay Outline** (10%) - Students must submit a proper outline of their final screenplay. A template will be provided leading up to the assignment.

**First Draft of 8-12pg Screenplay** (10%) - A fully realized, 8-12 page screenplay demonstrating all elements covered in the course including development, creativity, formatting and structure elements of story learned throughout the course of the semester. During the last half of the semester, 5 phases of the assignment will be detailed including, outline, pitch, and pages will be due and students MUST participate in table reads and feedback, having time to rewrite their first draft and deliver a more polished second revision. A more detailed handout will be provided as this is assigned.

**Final Draft 8-12pg Screenplay** (20%) – A fully realized, 8-12 page screenplay demonstrating the development, methods, formatting and structure elements of story learned throughout the
course of the semester. During the last half of the semester, 5 phases of the assignment will be detailed including, outline, pitch, and pages will be due and students MUST participate in table reads and feedback, having time to rewrite their first draft and deliver a more polished second revision. A more detailed handout will be provided as this is assigned.

**Grading:**
A= 90-100%
B=80-89%
C=70-79%
D=60-69%
F=0-59%

All exams, if given, will cover the material in reading assignments, required viewings and class lectures. **Individual handouts/instruction will be presented as each assignment is distributed over the course of the semester with more detailed information and grading rubric criteria. Many assignments have multiple phases. You will not be able to get an A if you do not follow all the instructions and stick to all the deadlines provided.** The more you put into the class, the more you will get out of it, and more likely than not, the higher your grade will be.

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus is a general course plan of action. Assignments and screening material are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Please follow the SCHEDULE tab in CONTENT on Course Den for a more up to date version of the schedule week by week.

**Course Policies:**

**Attendance & Participation:** Students may miss no more than four (4) days over the course of the semester without receiving penalty. Thereafter, the student’s final grade will suffer. For example, your 4th absence will result in the devaluation of your final grade and further absence will result in further action. Students are responsible for obtaining any missed course material from their fellow students. An absence may be excused if the student presents a doctor’s note or another acceptable form of documentation explaining absence.

Students must show up to class on time. Arriving to class later than 15 minutes after it has begun will result in an absence. If you are going to be 15+ minutes late for class, it is best not to come. Further, students must come prepared to work and learn. Performing tasks unrelated to the course during class-time (e.g. sleeping, emailing, surfing the web, not paying attention, etc) will also result in that student being asked to leave, therefore acquiring an absence.

I expect you to be physically, mentally, and emotionally present during our time together. Your participation is vital to both your success and that of this course.
Usage:
- No cell phones are permitted during class.
- No recording devices are permitted during class.
- No activities on computers other than class work are permitted during class.

Classroom Etiquette: In order to create a safe, valued and expressive academic environment where individual expression and social interchange are respected, please observe the following guidelines: (1) Students must address each other with respect, even when in debate; (2) Students must contribute to discussions, without dominating them; (3) Students must stay focused on the topic being discussed. Extraneous conversations and chatter will be prohibited.

Make-up/Late Policy: All assignments are due in accordance with the Class/Assignment Schedule. Unless arrangements are made prior to an assignment/test due day, no late assignments will be accepted or make-up work given, resulting in a failing grade. As the instructor, I reserve the right to not accept late assignments and have final word as to the necessity of make-up work. Arrangements will only be made to makeup the missed work if a student has a university-sponsored activity absence or a documented excuse for missing an assignment/test.

Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty, cheating and/or Plagiarism within this class will result in a grade of F for the assignment. Submitting others’ writing or ideas as your own, without specific citations or references of any kind, is plagiarism and is directly prohibited by the UWG Student Code of Conduct. I consider it no different from property theft; plagiarism is, by definition, intellectual property theft. Therefore, I will respond to any instances of plagiarism with the following actions: the student will receive a zero for the assignment; the student will be removed from class for a day; and a Student Infraction Form will be filed with the Office of Student Development and Enrollment Management, where it will be reviewed and placed on file with the Dean of Students.

Emailing: Students must check their UWG email EVERY DAY. I frequently email documents and class-related updates – not checking your email is no excuse for incomplete work. Allow 24 hours for an email response from me. Allow 48 hours over the weekend. My official email for our correspondence, and the one I will check, is: rhicks@westga.edu

Academic Advising: Please take advantage of academic advising and correspond / meet with your advisor regularly or as needed as that you are on track with your academic success. https://www.westga.edu/advising/

Equal Opportunity Statement: No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, age, or disability, be excluded from employment or participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by The University of West Georgia.
Mass Communications Program Learning Outcomes

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies: As a unit seeking accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), the Department of Mass Communications is committed to preparing students with the requisite knowledge and skills to be successful in the media and communications industries after graduation. The Department has adopted as its degree program learning outcomes ACEJMC’s 12 professional values and competencies that all graduates of an ACEJMC accredited program should be aware of and able to demonstrate as scholars and professionals in the discipline. These include the six (6) values and six (6) competencies listed below.

For the detailed list of the ACEJMC professional values and competencies, see the UWG Undergraduate Catalog or ACEJMC - Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction.

When I write, I lose time. I'm happy in a way that I have a hard time finding in real life. The intimacy between my brain and my fingers and my computer... Yet knowing that that intimacy will find an audience... It's very satisfying. – Jill Soloway

What's important to me is offering perspectives into worlds that people don't often get to see. Do you know what I mean? From angles they don't often get to see. - Ryan Coogler

A good film script should be able to do completely without dialogue. - David Mamet

Cheat your landlord if you can and must, but do not try to shortchange the Muse. It cannot be done. You can’t fake quality any more than you can fake a good meal.

-William S. Burroughs

Every secret of a writer’s soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind, is written large in his works. - Virginia Woolf