GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES

CENTER FOR CONTINUING & PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION TO SCREENWRITING (XWRI-010)

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DESCRIPTION:

Writing is a craft. As with most crafts, skills improve with practice. This course will present the mechanical skills necessary to prepare scripts for television and film, using the standard, industry-accepted format for feature films. During the first several weeks of class we will focus on some basics. After that, each student will write an original short film. Though lectures will deal with essential elements such as plot structure, character, and dialogue, the bulk of class time, and the bulk of what you learn will come from in-class discussion of your work and the work of your fellow students.

CONTENT:

Class time will consist of a lecture followed by student readings and group critiques. Student readings are limited solely to the exercises assigned by the instructor.

GOALS:

By the end of the semester I want you to:

- Understand the basics of visual storytelling and know how it differs from works of fiction and stage plays.
- Understand how to format a feature screenplay.
- Understand the structure of typical American movies by having written one 20-30 minute original narrative script.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Students are required to complete weekly writing assignments. These assignments include writing proposals, treatments and dramatic screenplays for a 5-minute narrative "silent" film and a 20 to 30-minute narrative "sound" film.

Reading assignments are optional but <u>strongly</u> encouraged. Reading assignments are listed on the class schedule and due before the appropriate class meeting.

Students are also expected to see (and prepare to discuss) at least one movie per week.

Always keep a copy of your work for yourself.

GRADES:

The grading schema for non-credit classes follows below.

(SC) Successfully Completed
Successful completion requires completion of all course requirements and satisfactory attendance as defined by Georgetown University. Participants must meet three criteria to receive a grade of SC:

- **Attendance**: The participant must be in attendance for all contact hours of the course.
- **Course work**: The participant must complete all required course work assigned during the course.
- **Learning Objectives**: The participants must satisfactorily meet all learning objectives outlined in the course syllabus.

(AT) Attendance Verified
A grade of (AT) indicates that a student was in attendance for a majority of the course, but did not satisfactorily complete all course requirements or meet learning objectives.

(RE) Registered but Never Attended
A grade of (RE) indicates that a student was enrolled in a course, but failed to physically attend.

(W) Withdrawal
A grade of (W) indicates that a student formally withdrew from a course prior to the start of the course.

(I) Incomplete
A grade of (I) incomplete indicates that a student has made arrangements with the faculty member to complete the course work within two weeks after the last class. Once the course work has been completed, submitted and evaluated by the faculty member, the grade will be changed accordingly.

POLICIES AND GENERAL REMARKS:

- No guests, cell phones or taping of lectures.

- Please arrive on time. I begin promptly @ 7:00.

- Various topics cited on this syllabus may be subject to change.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Keep your ideas simple.
- Allot a specific period of time each week to write.
- Keep writing no matter what!

TEXT (OPTIONAL):

Trottier, David *The Screenwriter's Bible* Silman-James Press (5th edition)

SCHEDULE

1. Introduction

   WRITE: a 5-page visually descriptive story (double-spaced) in the 3rd person, present tense. The story should have a clear beginning, middle and end. It should also have a clear sense of conflict. One character should make an irreversible change. There should be NO SOUND necessary to convey the story and NO INNER MONOLOGUE to understand the characters. Due class #2.

   READ: TSB pgs 3-10, pgs 27-32

2. Conflict, Dilemma, Format Mechanics

   REVIEW: Stories

   WRITE: Master scene script for a silent film based on your story. Due class #3.

   READ: TSB pgs 129-168

3. Three-act Structure

   REVIEW: Scripts

   WRITE: Proposal for 20-30 minute film (2-3 double-spaced pgs). Due class #4.

   READ: TSB pgs 11-26

4. Proposals

   REVIEW: Story Proposals

   WRITE: Treatment for your 20 to 30-minute film (8-12 pgs). Due class #6. Have at least the first half done by class #5.

   READ: Michael Hauge Hand-out, TSB 325-333

5. Character

   REVIEW: Partial treatments

   READ: TSB 50-69

6. Dialogue

   REVIEW: Treatments

   WRITE: Master scene script for your 20-30 minute film. Due class #9. Have at least the first 5 pages for class #7 and the first 10 pages for class #8.

   READ: TSB 73-81

7. Writing scenes

   REVIEW: First 5 pgs of your script.

   READ: TSB pgs 82-87

8. Television, Documentaries, Shooting Scripts

   REVIEW: First 10 pgs of your script.

   READ: TSB pgs 208-214

9. Question and Answer

   Hand in finished scripts with your name and phone number. We can go over anything you want in this class. Many of you may want to know about other classes, contests, copyrights, agents, producers & contracts, etc.