Instructor: Stuart Voytilla
Classroom and Class Time: M-120, Wed 4-6:40 pm
Office/Hours: COM-109, T/W 2-3 pm (and by appointment)
Email: svoytilla@mail.sdsu.edu

Course Objective:

The purpose of TFM 110 is to introduce students to a variety of "story writing" styles, formats and skills used in media including feature films, documentaries, television, short films, videos and broadcast journalism. This course will help you develop and execute your ideas for ‘visual’ media, and understand the script development process including:

1. idea creation and the oral and written proposal of ideas
2. development of your ideas using story structure, character, genre, and theme
3. writing and rewriting of the script in the 'industry accepted' formats
4. finding your “voice” and shaping your experience within the form and format of the screenplay
5. development of writing skills necessary to create screen stories that can later be expanded into screenplays or short-film productions, as you move through the TFM curriculum

How We Get There:

This Course and Class Meetings will be a combination of: 1) Lecture, 2) Film Screenings, 3) Online and Classroom Assignments, 4) In-class “free writing” sessions, 4) Assigned Course Readings, 5) Readings of previously produced scripts, 5) Printed/online handouts for group discussion, 7) Tests/Exams, 8) A Writer’s Workshop where students share work and receive feedback for revision, 9) Active Participation (note the emphasis on Active)

Required Texts/Supplies:

2. Instructor/Online Handouts (distributed throughout semester)
3. Student’s Writing Journal. You are required to bring this to every class to receive credit for your “morning pages” and “cocktail napkins”. (see details below)
4. Read a Screenplay or Teleplay from www.simplyscripts.com (your choice). One of the best ways to learn about screenwriting is to read other screenplays, screenplays that have become produced films and television shows. Make sure when reading scripts from the internet that you are reading the actual screenplay, and not a transcript or “closed caption” version.

Your Writing Journal (your “Morning Pages”):

In order to retrieve your creativity, you need to tap into it every day. Put simply, the daily pages consist of one to two pages of writing per day - 7-14 pages per week. Strictly stream-of-consciousness stuff. Nothing is too petty, silly or weird to write. Best part is, I won’t read a word. No one has to know what words you wrote, only that you wrote them. That you primed the pump, as it were, for the day’s writing to follow. This portion of the class rewards the effort, not the content.

Your journal will also contain your weekly collection of “Cocktail Napkins” (ideas, situations, character names, snippets of overheard dialogue, etc. that come to you throughout the day).

Turning in your “Morning Pages”/“Cocktail Napkins” for Weekly Credit:

You can handwrite or type your “Morning Pages”/“Cocktail Napkins” in whatever format you wish; however, you’ll need to print/collect your work in a folder or binder that you’ll turn in at the beginning of each class session.

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Attendance: Prompt arrival and weekly participation are musts. Absences must be preceded by a timely email. Use the email listed above and in BB, and write “TFM 110” in your email’s subject line. Two UNEXCUSED ABSENCES or repeated tardiness (four or more late arrivals) will impact your participation grade (10% of your total grade). More than FOUR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES in the course will result in an F in the course.

2. Active Participation:
   • Willingness to complete all assignments on time.
   • Willingness to exchange input during lectures, group sessions and media screenings.
3. Dedication to Completing “Morning Pages” and “Cocktail Napkins”.
4. Completion of All Assignments. On time. NO make-up assignments or tests unless agreed to prior to your approved absence.

Grading Weights:

1) Participation 10%
2) Cocktail Napkins 10%
3) Online Assignments 15%
4) Midterm 15%
5) Writers Workshop 10%
6) Short Film Project 25%
7) Final 15%

Course Completion – What Will We Accomplish?

- Creating & Cultivating Ideas
  1) Collect Cocktail Napkins – Start War Chest
  2) Develop a Story Matrix and Story Engine

- Feature Film & TV Writing
  1) Story Construction
  2) Act Break Differences

- Short Film Writing
  1) Write Short Film Treatment
  2) Turn Treatment into a Short Film Script (5-7 min length)
  3) Breakdown Pages

- For Documentary Writing
  1) Differences Between Fiction/Non-Fiction Writing
  2) How To Write a Documentary Presentation

Criteria for Writing Assignments:

1) All work must be hard-copy submitted to instructor on time. Additional copies may be required for exchange with peers in the “Writers Workshop”.
2) Student/Teacher correspondence should be emailed. Use the email listed above and in BB, and write “TFM 110” in your email’s subject line.
3) All work submitted must be a copy. Save your original for your files.
4) All work must be word-processed using a COURIER 12 PT FONT. No exceptions!! (For Reference, this Syllabus uses the correct font.)
5) All work must be proofed. No hand corrections. No white-out.
6) Margins will be one inch from top, bottom and sides—justified left and ragged right. All but Page One must be numbered. Page One is never numbered.

7) Treatments/Scripts must have a Title Page containing Title, Author’s Name and the Date.

8) Barring extreme hardship (a category that say... the absence of toner does not fall into), late assignments will be docked ONE HALF-LETTER GRADE PER DAY that they are late.

9) All scripts/treatments/title pages must be written in proper Script Format. Script Formatting will be based upon the guidelines in David Trottier’s The Screenwriter’s Bible and class discussions.

10) All assigned work must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, BACK UP ALL OF YOUR WORK. MAKE THIS A DAILY HABIT.

Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Improper Behavior

Out of respect for fellow students and the instructor, no cell phones, beepers, iPods, or other annoying, non-life-supporting electronics in class. Please, silence them during class sessions.

Class begins promptly at 4 pm. Late arrivals disrupt the class, and repeated tardiness (four or more late arrivals) will impact the student’s participation grade.

A Note On Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of stealing another’s ideas, thoughts, and/or completed work in whole or in part and declaring it one’s own. It is an affront to you as a student and as an artist.
And its devastating damage reaches much further than academic institutions.

The mere threat of screenplay plagiarism in our film industry can ruin a prospective production deal; substantiated cases can ruin careers. It is because of this that I take even a single act of literary theft so seriously. Any suspicion of plagiarism will be forwarded to the department of Judicial Procedures, and if substantiated, may result in expulsion from the TFM department and the University. So please, don’t.

A Final Note:

Does the course seem a little scary at first glance? Believe me, it’s not. I’m here to help you bring out the best in yourself and to help you achieve your goal in a very competitive profession.

Give the writing a chance. It is a process, a building of creative choices and experience with the craft. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Hang in there, work at it, and you may find screenwriting to be one of your most rewarding of personal, scholastic, and professional experiences.

IMPORTANT SDSU DATES:

- February 2: Schedule Change Deadline
- March 28–April 1: Spring Break
- May 5: Last Day of Classes before Final Exams
- May 6–12: Final Examinations

**FINAL EXAM:** Wednesday, May 11th 4–6 pm
TFM 110 COURSE CALENDAR
SPRING 2016

Because of the nature of a creative writing class, the following schedule is subject to change depending upon the needs of the class.

Important Scheduling Note: The California Faculty Association is in the midst of a difficult contract dispute with management. It is possible that the faculty union will call a strike or other work stoppage this term. I will inform the class as soon as possible of any disruption to our class meeting schedule.

Using this Calendar: All reading and writing assignments are due for class on the designated week. For example, Week 3 (February 3) Reading and Writing Assignments are due for class on February 3.

Note: Reading is based on in the 6th Edition of The Screenwriter’s Bible (Trottier). If you have an earlier addition, please see Instructor for revised pages.

WEEK 1: JANUARY 20


WEEK 2: JANUARY 27

LECTURE: Story Structure – Trottier’s “Core”
SCREENING: Witness

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Trottier: pp. 3-57

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
Online Assignment #1 (Genre, Theme, Conflict/Problems)

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 3

LECTURE: The Screen Character
Screening: Erin Brockovich

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Trottier: pp. 57-109
Explore Book III “Proper Formatting Technique”
Read a Screenplay, your choice from www.simplyscripts.com

MORE...
WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 3 (CONT’D)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
Online Assignment #2

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 10

LECTURE:  Plots, Subplots. Suspense.
The Hero’s Journey Part I

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Catch up on Trottier.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
Online Assignment #3

Extra Credit Opportunity:  February 11, 12. TFM Best of the Best
Film Festival, 7:30 pm. Don Powell Theatre (Attend 1 Night,
Turn in Ticket with 1 Page response for Extra Credit)

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 17

LECTURE:  The Hero’s Journey Part II

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 24

LECTURE: Series Television -- Drama and Sitcom

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Catch up on Trottier.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
Online Assignment #4
WEEK 7: MARCH 2

LECTURE:  The Short Film / Review for Midterm

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
Online Assignment #5

WEEK 8: MARCH 9

MIDTERM

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
5 Cocktail Napkins
PREPARE FOR MIDTERM

WEEK 9: MARCH 16

LECTURE:  Writing/Producing the Short Film
Writing the Treatment; Script Formatting

GROUP LEADERS APPOINTED, GROUPS ASSIGNED

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Trottier:  Book III “Proper Formatting Technique”
Trottier:  pp. 365-386

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Morning Pages (1-2 page freewriting per day)
Brainstorm ideas for Short (5-7 minute) Fiction Film

WEEK 10: MARCH 23

WRITERS WORKSHOP!
Break into Groups; Submit/Read/Discuss Treatments
RING ENOUGH COPIES OF YOUR SHORT FILM TREATMENT FOR EACH
GROUP MEMBER (plus one copy for instructor)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Write 1-2 Page Treatment for your Short
(5-7 minute) Film

MARCH 28-APRIL 1   SPRING RECESS
WEEK 11: APRIL 6

LECTURE: Non-Fiction/Documentary Script Formatting II

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
Work on your Short Fiction script (5-7 pgs)

WEEK 12: APRIL 13

WRITERS WORKSHOP!
Break into Groups; Submit/Read/Discuss Short Scripts
BRING ENOUGH COPIES OF YOUR SHORT FILM SCRIPT FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS (plus one copy for instructor)

MINI-LECTURE: Breaking Down Your Script

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
Complete Short Fiction script (5-7 pgs)

WEEK 13: APRIL 20

WRITERS WORKSHOP!
Return and Discuss Short Scripts.
LECTURE: The Revision Process

READING ASSIGNMENTS:
Trottier: Use Book III for Formatting Questions, Explore Book IV for Style.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Read and Critique Group Scripts
Prepare Breakdown Sheets for Short Script
Work on Script Revision

WEEK 14: APRIL 27

LECTURE: Writing the Documentary
Submit Final Short Script Project

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
DUE: Short Script Project (includes 1st Draft, Revised Draft, Breakdown Sheets)
WEEK 15: MAY 4 (LAST CLASS)

LECTURE: Broadcast Media Writing
Review for Final Exam

ASSIGNMENTS:
Prepare for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MAY 11TH 4–6 PM