ADVANCED SCRIPT WRITING FOR TELEVISION & FILM

Instructor – Ron Najor
TFM 510 – Spring 2017
Monday 4-6:40 PM, Comm Room 108

SYLLABUS

Course Overview:

This class will further explore essential building blocks of writing for the screen – character, visualization, dialogue, scene structure, conflict, and sequence. We will also study the structure of a feature length screenplay and television pilot as well as analyze short films and feature length scripts.

This course can be repeated for credit as other semesters cover different topics, such as TV writing, rewriting, pitching, etc...

This semester you will learn how to create two short scripts and outline a feature or tv pilot.

As writers, you will learn the unique importance of telling short stories and how they differ from features.

The craft of screenwriting and its essential role in filmmaking will be emphasized, and you will attempt to learn the value of sharing your work and the re-writing process.

Your main assignments this semester will be:
1. 4 to 6 page short
2. 5 to 15 page short
3. Outline a feature or a tv pilot (Recommended to read a similar script)
4. Writing ten journal entries (One is due every week to get up to 10 percent)
5. Reading and analyzing two features and one TV Pilot
6. Coming up with 5 basic short ideas
7. Analysis of 10 short films

--The class will culminate in you writing and revising a detailed step outline for a feature screenplay or tv pilot that follows the “Save The Cat” Outline.
-- You will also create two short film scripts with the intention to make the shorts in your film production classes.
**Terms and Conditions:**

- No late work will be accepted (To be clear any late work will result in 0 percentage for that specific part of the assignment. You must still submit that assignment to move on in the grading process even if you only get 0 percent for that part of the assignment or risk getting 0 percent for all parts of the assignments)
- Students are expected to arrive to class on time!
- Watch SHORT TERM 12 (Netflix.com) and I AM NOT A HIPSTER (Netflix.com & Hulu.com)
- Read scripts for movies and tv shows you want to aspire to write

**Note:** For all assignments and correspondence this course will be on BLACKBOARD

**Course Objectives:**

1) To help students to better understand the differences between writing a feature, TV pilot, and short film; which all have inherently different and yet similar elements that need to be understood at there core.

2) To craft two short films that can be made while a student at San Diego State University or once one graduates.

3) To help develop a feature or TV Pilot that can be written.

4) To fine tune group skills in evaluating, giving feedback, and incorporating that feedback into students screenplays and outlines.

**Required Texts**

Save The Cat! The Last Book On Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need by Blake Snyder, Michael Weise Productions, 2005.

Short Term 12 (the feature screenplay on Blackboard)
Whiplash (the feature screenplay on Blackboard)
Breaking Bad (the pilot screenplay on Blackboard)

**Suggested Reading**

Roberto Rodriguez: *Rebel Without a Crew*
Robert McKee: *Story*
Lynda Obst: *Hello, He Lied*
Sharon Waxman: *Rebels on the Backlot*
Peter Biskind: *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*
Peter Biskind: *Down and Dirty Pictures*
Prerequisites:
For MFA students in the Film or Theater program: Graduate standing. For undergraduate students (all prerequisites to be completed with a grade of B (3.0) or better): TFM 110 Transcript proof of completion of prerequisites required.

Methods of Evaluation:
See “assignments” section for details and percentage of each assignment towards final grade.

Grade Scale:
93-100 = A  
90-92 = A-  
87-89 = B+  
83-86 = B  
80-82 = B-  
77-79 = C+  
73-76 = C  
70-72 = C-  
67-69 = D+  
63-66 = D  
60-62 = D-  
< 59 = F

Office Hours:
I will have my office hours from 2pm to 4pm on Mondays. The room is in the Communications building by Check Out. Comm 103 (Make an appointment)

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 make that contact as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that the instructor cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until he has received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.
ASSIGNMENTS

Everything is on Blackboard.
ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE PRIOR TO THE CLASS THAT DAY!

Weekly Journal: **10 percent total** 1 percent per journal for up to 10 percent max. Each journal entry will be 250 to 500-words and is a reflection of the class or ideas the student might have for their short films or feature/TV Pilot. One can also use the journal as a writing journal to put creative thoughts into it (NOTE: The journal will be read by the instructor and once the next class begins you can no longer turn in a journal entry for that specific week and have it count toward 1 percent.)

**10 Shorts Analysis: 10 percent total** You will watch 10 short films and write a brief description of each and what you did and did not like about each one (this doesn’t need to be any longer than 5 sentences per film).

**5 Short Ideas you want to make in this class: 5 percent total** You will have Five titles, each with a logline, and each will have three to five sentences describing the short story idea.

**3 Script Analysis: 15 percent total** Feature scripts are “Short Term 12” and “Whiplash” and TV Pilot Script is “Breaking Bad” (5 percent for each analysis)

**4 to 6 Page Short Script: 20 percent total**

First draft of the 4 to 6 page Short Script (5 percent)
Analysis of the 4 to 6 page drafts (5 percent)
Second Draft of the 4 to 6 page Short Script (5 percent)
Final Analysis of the 4 to 6 page Short Script (5 percent)

**5 to 15 Page Short Script: 20 percent total**

First draft of the 5 to 15 page Short Script (5 percent)
Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts (5 percent)
Second Draft of the 5 to 15 page Short Script (5 percent)
Final Analysis of the 5 to 15 page Short Script (5 percent)

**Feature/TV Pilot Beat Sheet: 20 percent total**

First draft of the Beat Sheet (5 percent)
Analysis of the Beat Sheet (5 percent)
Second Draft of the Beat Sheet (5 percent)
Final Analysis of the Beat Sheet (5 percent)
WEEK-BY-WEEK COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE
No Class as the Semester Started Mid Week

WEEK TWO
January 23
Topic: Course Introduction & Overview
- Course Overview
- BLACKBOARD
- Go through entire Syllabus
- Discuss short films and festivals and aspects of it

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Watch 10 films and write analysis on each
-- Write 5 short script ideas
-- Read Chapter 1 Save The Cat

WEEK THREE
January 30
Topic: 10 shorts and their favorite ideas to write for next week

Due Today:
10 Short Film Analysis (10 percent)
5 Short Ideas (5 percent)
Everything is on Blackboard. This is in the journal section (must be in before 4pm January 30th; ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE PRIOR TO THE CLASS THAT DAY!)

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Coverage of “Short Term 12” and “Whiplash”
-- First draft of the 4 to 6 page Short Script (5 percent)
WEEK FOUR
February 6
Topic: Discuss short version and feature script version of Whiplash and Short Term12; and their first scripts.

Due Today:
Coverage “Short Term 12” and “Whiplash (10 percent)
First Draft of the 4 to 6 page script (5 percent)

Assignments:
--Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Analysis of the 4 to 6 page drafts first 10 of them (5 percent)
-- Read Chapter 2 Save The Cat

WEEK FIVE
February 13
Topics: Film Festivals, Labs, Grants

Due Today:
-- Analysis of the 4 to 6 page drafts (5 percent)

Assignments:
--Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Analysis of the 4 to 6 page drafts continued second half
-- Chapter 3 Save The Cat

WEEK SIX
February 20.
Topic: Film Festivals, Labs, Grants

Due Today:
-- Analysis of the 4 to 6 page drafts continued

Assignments:
--Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- First draft of the 5 to 15 page Short Script (5 percent)
-- Chapter 4 Save The Cat
WEEK SEVEN  
February 27  
Topic: Beat Sheet

Due Today:  
-- We will finish the 4 to 6 page draft analysis in class second half  
-- First draft of the 5 to 15 page Short Script (5 percent)

Assignments:  
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)  
-- Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts first half due next week  
-- Read Chapter 5 Save The Cat

WEEK EIGHT  
March 6  
Topic: Beat Sheet Continued

Due Today:  
-- Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts first half (5 percent)

Assignments:  
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)  
-- Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts second half due next week  
-- Read Chapter 6 Save The Cat

WEEK NINE  
March 13.  
Topic: Save The Cat

Due Today:  
-- Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts second half

Assignments:  
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)  
-- Breaking Bad Coverage due next week (5 percent)  
-- Read Chapter 7 Save The Cat
WEEK WEEK 10  
March 20  
**Topic:** Discuss Breaking Bad  
**Film Festivals**

**Due Today:**  
-- Analysis of the 5 to 15 page drafts second half finish up  
-- Breaking Bad Coverage *(5 percent)*

**Assignments (Due April 3rd; after Spring Break):**  
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)  
-- Second Draft of the 4 to 6 page script *(5 percent)*  
-- First Draft of Beat Sheet *(5 percent)*  
-- Read Chapter 8 Save The Cat

(MARCH 27 WEEK ELEVEN– SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS)

WEEK TWELVE  
April 3  
**Topic:** Getting a feature or TV Pilot Made

**Due Today:**  
-- Second Draft of the 4 to 6 page script *(5 percent)*  
-- First Draft of Beat Sheet *(5 percent)*

**Assignments:**  
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)  
-- Beat Sheet Analysis *(5 Percent)*  
-- Second Draft of 5 to 15 *(5 Percent)*
WEEK THIRTEEN
April 10
Topic: Getting a feature or TV Pilot Made

Due Today:
-- Second Draft of the 5 to 15 page script (5 percent)
-- Beat Sheet Analysis first half (5 percent)

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Beat Sheet Analysis second half

WEEK FOURTEEN
April 17
Topic: Writing

Due Today:
-- Beat Sheet Analysis second half

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)

WEEK FIFTEEN
April 24.
Topic: Getting a feature or TV Pilot Made

Due Today:
Catch up day

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Beat Sheet Second Draft (5 percent)
-- Final Analysis 4 to 6 off of draft two (5 percent)
-- Final Analysis 5 to 15 off of draft two (5 percent)
WEEK SIXTEEN
May 1

Topic: What do you want to know that we haven’t covered

Due Today:
-- Beat Sheet Second Draft (5 percent)
-- Final Analysis 4 to 6 off of draft two (5 percent)
-- Final Analysis 5 to 15 off of draft two (5 percent)

Assignments:
-- Write your Journal Entry (due before the start of the next class)
-- Beatsheet Second Draft Final Thoughts (5 percent)

WEEK SEVENTEEN
May 8

Topic: Final Thoughts on the 510 Class

Due Today:
-- Final Analysis Beat Sheet (5 percent)

SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE

-- Writerduet (writerduet.com) You can use it for free and export a Final Draft. If you pay a student rate you can have a downloadable version on your desktop

-- Final Draft 8 or 9: The industry standard.

SOURCES FOR SCREENPLAYS & TELEPLAYS
-- Free scripts www.simplyscripts.com

www.script-o-rama.com

-- Scripts for purchase www.scriptcity.com