

THFM-2611-001 (3 credit hours)

INTRODUCTION TO SCREENWRITING

Fall 2017
Mondays 2:30 – 5:15 pm
Room: 3M54

Instructor: Noam Gonick

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the basics of screenwriting through scene writing exercises, the adaptation of a classic short story, and the development of an original short film script (8-15 minutes long). It includes a study of the language of film, narrative principles, formatting, script analysis, and adaptation. The course also deals with the role of the screenwriter in the filmmaking industry.

Students are required to have researched discussion points ready for some classes and to participate constructively in critiquing the work of classmates and to contribute to in-class discussions about screenwriting. Written assignments including (but not limited to) screenplays will be a mandatory part of this course. Story outlines, synopses, and other pre-script 'preparatory' writings will be a mandatory aspect to the successful completion of this course. Public readings (and "pitching") of assignments are also important aspects to this course.

REQUIRED TEXT

"The Chorus Girl" by Anton Chekhov (available at http://chekhov2.tripod.com/069.htm).

Note: Students are advised that every piece of writing presented for discussion must be distributed to all members of the class; i.e. your original plus 14 copies in total (13 for students and an additional copy for the professor). These copies must be made at the student's expense and should be viewed as necessary costs associated with taking this course.

ASSIGNMENTS

Table with 2 columns: Assignment Name and Percentage. Rows include Constructive participation in critiquing (20%), Adaptation of "The Chorus Girl" (40%), Short original screenplay (40%), and TOTAL (100%).

Late Assignments will not be accepted without a medical certificate.

GRADING SCALE

Table with 6 columns: Grade, Percentage Range, GPA, Grade, Percentage Range, GPA. Rows include A+ (90-100%, GPA 4.50), A (85-89.9%, GPA 4.25), A- (80-84.9%, GPA 4.0), B+ (75-79.9%, GPA 3.5), B (70-74.9%, GPA 3.0), C+ (65-69.9%, GPA 2.5), C (60-64.9%, GPA 2.0), D (50-59.9%, GPA 1.0), and F (Below 50%, GPA 0).

Work not submitted will be graded as 0.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

September 11 Introduction to Screenwriting Workshop

UNIT 1: SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

September 18 Reading Assignment due: "The Chorus Girl" by Anton Chekhov
Class Discussion: "The Chorus Girl" Summary
Reinterpretation (updating) versus Historical Films

September 25 Writing Assignment due: Adaptation Outline
Presentation of Outlines, discussion
Class Discussion: Opening Scenes

October 2 Writing Assignment due: Character Backstories
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique
Class Discussion: Characters and Conflicts

October 9 Writing Assignment due: Beat Sheet
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique
Research Assignment due: Presentation of Favourite Scene from a Pre-existing Screenplay
Class Discussion: Scene Design
Basic Script Formatting, Screenwriting Style

October 16 Writing Assignment due: "The Chorus Girl" Adaptation 1st draft
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique
Class Discussion: Crisis and Climax

UNIT 2: ORIGINAL SCREENPLAYS

October 23 "The Chorus Girl" Adaptation Script due

October 23 Core Values and Conceptualization

October 30 Writing Assignments due: Synopsis and Rationale
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique

Screenwriting Practices and Prospects

November 6 Inciting Events and Progressive Complications

November 10 VW Date

November 13 Writing Assignments due: Beat Sheet
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique
Character and Plot Development

November 20 Research Assignment for Class Discussion: Conflict, Crisis and Change

November 27 Writing Assignments due: FIRST DRAFT
Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique

Script Analysis and Revision

December 4 Original Short Screenplay due

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2017 is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses which begin in September 2017 and end in December 2017 (2017 Fall Term).

HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Life happens to everyone. If you are experiencing a crisis in your life, or if you have a physical or mental health issue, communicate with your Professor or Accessibility Services – let us know so we can provide support or direct you to those who can. The earlier we know, the earlier we can discuss what resources might be available. Students with documented disabilities, or temporary or chronic medical conditions requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams/presentations (e.g., private space or more time) or during lectures/labs (e.g., note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at 204-786-9771 or accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca to discuss appropriate options. All information about a student's disability or medical condition remains confidential <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. If you are registered with Accessibility Services, do not assume that Accessibility Services (AS) has informed your instructor that you have registered with them.

"THE REAL THING" LECTURE SERIES

The Department of Theatre and Film is presenting a series of six lectures which will be held on Wednesdays during the free period (12:30-13:20) in Theatre 1T15. Please note the dates in your diary **NOW**: Sept 20 (playwright Judith Thompson), Oct 18, Nov 15, Jan 17, Feb 28, Mar 14. This series will feature speakers from a range of areas in the performing arts: technical, performance, design, management, film, directing, playwriting, etc. These speakers will specifically address issues related to "the business of the business."

Attendance at **ALL** lectures is **MANDATORY** for **ALL** Honours students in Theatre (4000-level courses, all areas), **as well as** students in: THFM-3101 Acting III: General, THFM-3201 Styles in Design, THFM-3801 Production II, and THFM-3920 Musical Theatre. Penalties for absence may be assigned by individual instructors.

Attendance for potential Theatre Honours/Majors and for Film Majors is optional but highly recommended.

2017 ORIENTATION ASSEMBLY

Each year in September we hold an *Orientation Assembly* to welcome students to the new term, introduce our new students to faculty and other students; provide information about the department, its various activities and those of its professors; and deliver news about what's coming up. This year our *Orientation Assembly* will be held on **Wednesday, September 13, 2017, 12:30-13:20 in Theatre, 1T15**. **ATTENDANCE IS COMPULSORY** for all Majors and Honours students. Those considering Honours are strongly recommended to attend. All others are welcome and encouraged to attend.

TAFSA

All students enrolled in at least one theatre or film class are automatically members of TAFSA, the Theatre and Film Students' Association, which plans a number of exciting activities each academic year. We are looking forward to regular **Performance Jams**, **Socials**, **DioFest** (an exciting new play festival featuring student written and produced plays), and the very popular **24/7 Event** during which students move into our building and several plays are written, rehearsed, produced, and presented – all in a period of 24 hours! Please join TAFSA to find out more at its organizational meeting: Mon Sept 18, 12:30-1:20, Room 0T10. This is a great opportunity for students to connect with other like-minded people and a way to get involved in the department events.

BUILDING SECURITY

The Asper Centre for Theatre and Film (home to the Department of Theatre and Film) is open from 8:00 am and 5:30 pm weekdays only. Students are permitted to be in the building between 8:00 am and 10:00 pm seven days per week (except statutory holidays when the University is closed) **BUT PLEASE NOTE:** outside of regular building hours, it is **MANDATORY** that everyone in the building **EITHER** carry an access card **OR** have a booking confirmation form in their possession (hard copy or electronic). **ALL EVENING STUDENTS in the building for classes MUST have an access card.** If a Security Guard checks and you do not have proper accreditation, **you may be evicted.**

These rules are in place to protect our students and our equipment; please respect them.

ELECTRONIC COURSE OUTLINE ADDENDA

Students must check our website at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film> and read the menu items called *Fire Safety Instructions in the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film*, *Access Card/Building Use Policy* **AND** *Room Booking Instructions*. The link to the electronic *Online Room Booking Form* is also found at this location. Please read and note all instructions carefully.

GENERAL NOTES

This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.

Archival records such as videotapes, sound recordings, and photographs may be made or taken during class or lab times. The University uses such materials primarily for archival, promotional, and teaching purposes. Promotional use may include display at open houses or conferences, or use in advertising, publicity, or brochures. In reading and accepting the terms in this course outline, students acknowledge consent for such use by the University. Should a student not wish to convey such consent, s/he should withdraw from this course immediately.

Cellular phones **MUST** be turned off during classes and examinations; texting is **NOT** permitted in class.

Any student attending a test or final examination may be required to present proof of identity; photo identification is preferred.

It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or computer disk copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.

Students are strongly advised to read the sections 8, 9, and 10 of the *Academic Calendar* for information on Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals, (found on-line at: <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/regulationsandpolicies.pdf>).

Students conducting research interviews, focus groups, surveys, or any other method of collecting data from any person, including a family member, must obtain the approval of the appropriate ethics committee before commencing data collection. Exceptions are research activities in class as a learning exercise. See <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/research/human-ethics.html> for submission requirements and deadlines.

All students, faculty and staff have the right to participate, learn and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. The UW Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy may be found online at www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect.

Students may choose not to attend classes or write examinations on holy days of their religion, but they must notify their instructors at least two weeks in advance. Instructors will then provide opportunity for students to make up work examinations without penalty. A list of religious holidays can be found at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/important-notes.pdf>

STUDENT PARTICIPATION POLICY

Theatre is a communal art form in which a number of interdependent artists and crafts people co-operate to create a work of art. This fact is necessarily transferred to the learning situation, and is reflected in many of the Department's courses. Consequently, it is the Department's policy that students are required to: complete homework such as reading, line-learning, script analysis, prop lists, design drawings, etc.; attend classes; attend rehearsals both within and outside of class times; and, in short, to exhibit commitment towards the inevitably shared endeavours of our field of study.

Any student failing to fulfil these requirements is harmful to the progress of dedicated students and may, after due warning, be asked to withdraw from any individual Departmental course.

COURSE CONTENT NOTE

All Theatre and Film Classes

Dramatic Literature depicts a wide variety of human action, both elevated and base, public and private, physical and psychological, sexual and non-sexual, etc. The Department of Theatre and Film will not undertake to censor the subject matter of dramatic works.

Students who have concerns about dealing with the full range of content and style in drama/film are urged to discuss these concerns with the course instructor.

Performance-Related Classes

Much of an actor's work is based upon actual experiences of life which become translated into fictional circumstances. Because of this, the teaching of acting may involve encouraging the student to examine personal and even intimate areas of life to help him or her access life experiences appropriate to the demands of the work.

Dramatic literature depicts a wide range of human actions, both elevated and base, public and private, physical and psychological, sexual and non-sexual, etc. Acting students must learn to simulate life truthfully in interaction with other students in the safety of the acting class and the rehearsal hall through exercises, discussions, and directions which address rather than avoid truthful, particularized, personalized action.

Performance classes often require strenuous physical activity. Classes may also involve physical interaction between students as part of class exercises or character development and occasional physical contact by instructors for purposes such as the demonstration of a technique or to make a posture correction. Students are responsible for wearing clothing appropriate to these activities.

Students who have concerns about dealing with the full range of actions and subject matter involved in drama are urged to discuss these concerns with their course instructor.