

THFM-2611-001 (3 credit hours)
INTRODUCTION TO SCREENWRITING

Winter 2019
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1 – 2:15 PM
Room: 3M58

Instructor: **Noam Gonick**
Office: 4T06 (Office Hours by Request)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the basics of screenwriting through scene writing exercises, the adaptation of a Chekhov short story, and the development of an original short film script. It includes a study of the language of film, narrative principles, formatting, script analysis, and adaptation. The course also discusses the position of the screenwriter in Winnipeg’s regional filmmaking industry.

Students are **required** to have researched discussion points ready for class and participate constructively in critiquing the work of classmates, contributing to in-class discussions. Written assignments including (but not limited to) screenplays will be a mandatory part of this course. Creating your “personal banner”, writing script outlines, synopses, character backgrounds, and other pre-script ‘preparatory’ writings will be required elements for the successful completion of this course. Public presentations and “pitching” of assignments and the constructive critiquing of others’ work are all integral aspects to this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- "Oysters" (1884) by Anton Chekhov (sometimes titled "About Love")
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Kiss_and_Other_Stories/Oysters
- "Some Ideas on the Cinema" by Cesare Zavattini
<http://www.f.waseda.jp/norm/Realism11/Zavattini.pdf>

School Supplies: Each student is required to purchase a package of standard index cards, available at Staples, Portage Place. <https://www.staples.ca/products/570561-en-white-blank-index-cards-3-x-5>

Note: Students are advised some assignments will be required in duplicate for each member of the class. These copies are made at the student's own expense and should be viewed as a necessary cost associated with taking this course.

GRADING

Constructive Class Participation (see comments below),.....	20%
Adaptation of "Oysters" (due February 25, 2020).....	40%
Short original screenplay (due April 2, 2020)	40%

TOTAL	100%

Late Assignments will **not** be accepted without a medical certificate. Typo-free and organized presentation of written work is an integral part of the overall mark.

GRADING SCALE

A+	90 - 100%	GPA 4.50	C+	65 - 69.9%	GPA 2.5
A	85 - 89.9%	GPA 4.25	C	60 - 64.9%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 – 84.9%	GPA 4.0	D	50 - 59.9%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 - 79.9%	GPA 3.5	F	Below 50%	GPA 0
B	70 - 74.9%	GPA 3.0	Work not submitted will be graded as 0.		

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (all dates subject to change)

January 7, 2020 Introduction by Noam Gonick, Syllabus & Writers' Room Workshop

UNIT 1: SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION

January 9 Reading Assignment due: "Oysters" (1884) by Anton Chekhov
Class Discussion: "Oysters" summary, themes
Research Methodologies, interpretive inspirations

In Class Discussion: Who is your favourite Screenwriter; what is your favourite screenplay; what is your favourite film scene

January 14 Research Presentations in-class: expanding upon Chekhov's "Oysters"
Class Discussion: Reinterpretation (updating) versus Historical Films

January 16 Class Discussion: Your "Banner", interpretation and obsessions.

January 21 Assignment due: Adaptation Outline (1 Paragraph, approx. ½ page)
Presentation of Outlines in class, discussion

January 23 Continuation of Outlines presentations, discussion

January 28 Assignment due: Character Backstories (1 Page)
Presentation of Character Backstories, discussion

January 30 Continuation of Character Backstory presentations, discussion
What is a story beat?

February 4 Assignment due: Beat Sheet on index cards
Sticking the Beats to the wall (with class feedback/discussion)

February 6 Completion of Beat Sheet presentations/critiques

Basic Script Formatting, Screenwriting Style, "The Lighthouse"

February 11 FIRST DRAFT due: "Oysters" Adaptation (up to 8 pages MAX)
Assignment Readings: Class Critique

February 13 Completion of FIRST DRAFT readings

February 25 FINAL DRAFT due: "Oysters" Adaptation (up to 8 pages MAX)

UNIT 2: ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

In-Class Reading: “Some Ideas on the Cinema” by Cesare Zavattini
 Class discussion: Neorealism and “Walk About” prep
 Class discussion: revisiting your “Banner”, interpretation and obsessions.

February 27	“Walk About” – All Students are required to walk the neighbourhood surrounding the university – dress accordingly – layer!
March 3	<u>Assignment due: Pitch Ideas for Final Script</u> (up to 1 page)
March 6	Completion of pitching of ideas for Final Script
March 11	<u>Assignment due:</u> Beats on recipe cards
March 13	Completion of Beats on recipe cards VW Date
March 18	<u>Assignment due: Character Breakdowns (1 Page)</u> Assignment Presented: Class Critique
March 20	Completion of Character Breakdown presentations
March 25	<u>Assignment due: FIRST DRAFT ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY</u> Assignment Reading Aloud: Class Critique Discussion: Script Analysis and Revision
March 27	Continuing to present the First Drafts
April 1	The Screenwriter in Winnipeg’s film/television industry
April 3	Original Short Screenplay FINAL DRAFT due

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Source: Some of the preceding remarks on participation are borrowed from <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/seminars.htm> - and used with permission from the Department of Sociology, University of Winnipeg

Six Hallmarks of Constructive Class Participation

- a. The most difficult and important skill in effective class participation is good listening. You need to attend carefully to what others are saying. And, then you need to learn to respond intelligently and helpfully. A class is not just a collection of individual points of view declared one after the other. It has a rhythm, often an unpredictable rhythm, which is established, above all, by the ways in which the participants respond to each other. If someone’s contribution is puzzling, then ask her/him to continue, taking care of a particular trouble you have with a point she/he raised. If the contribution is very good, tell the speaker so. If you disagree or have an alternative point, then put that on the table.

As in a conversation, in a classroom discussion the participant has to be prepared to be flexible, adjusting her/his participation to what is happening moment by moment. This is the major challenge of the process.

- b. Participants need to be careful of interrupting someone else before she/he is finished. This habit can close some participants down so that they are reluctant to contribute. By the same token, participants should recognize that they have the responsibility for keeping the discussion focused on the matter at hand. Thus, you should, when necessary, challenge the relevance and the direction of certain remarks. Just because you need to be polite does not mean you cannot be firm in requesting a return to the main point or to a previous point that has been abandoned too quickly.
- c. It is entirely appropriate to decline to respond if someone asks you a direct question. If you have nothing relevant to say on the point, there is no need to pretend. Simply decline the invitation, and let the class session continue.
- d. Good class participation does not depend upon the frequency or length of one's remarks. In fact, the person who is always ready to jump in at the slightest opportunity or whose opinions are delivered at great length can often harm a class, first, by excluding others and, second, by encouraging others to rely on her/him to pick up any slack moments. Hence, you should constantly assess the nature of your contributions. Are you speaking up too much? Do you tend to make very long comments? Is the group getting to depend upon you too much? In this regard, you need to consider what one might call one's conversational "trigger finger". This phrase refers to the time people take to react to a question or to someone else's point. Some people react very quickly and are ready to jump in with their views almost immediately; other people need some time to reflect on how they are going to respond. If those with a quick conversational "trigger finger" take over, then others rarely get a chance to speak up, because by the time they are ready the conversation has shifted to something else. So you need to assess how you, in your keenness to respond, may be closing out someone whose reaction time is slower than your own. If you have already spoken a few times, try delaying your next entry into the conversation, setting up a pause which may invite someone who has not spoken to say something.
- e. It is particularly important for good participation that you remain alert to the group dynamics in the class. For example, some people find it difficult to speak. Perhaps you could invite them to state their views on something, encourage them to pursue a point they have just introduced, or encourage them in some way to join in. The best participants are those who not only provide interesting and relevant comments themselves but also actively encourage others to join in.
- f. An effective participant will reflect upon the nature of her/his contributions, paying particular attention to any habits she/he is falling into. Are you always sitting in the same chair? Do you sit at the back (wayyyyyyyyy back) of the classroom, away from everyone else? Do you always speak up early? Do you have one particular form of comment that you always use? How much time do you usually take to make a point (are you too brief or too long-winded)? And so on. To derive the best learning from the classroom experience, you should learn to experiment with different styles. For example, if you like to speak up and generally do so quite early, try for a couple of class sessions not saying anything too early on, reserving what you have to say until later. If you are by nature someone who initiates the discussion by putting new points on the table, why not try for a few sessions being reactive, that is, taking your cue from points others have raised. If you usually offer only brief remarks, take a chance on expanding your views. If you are by nature quite talkative and like to offer long comments, think about trying a more concise approach as an experiment.

- **Six Criteria for Grading Participation**—The criteria the instructor considers in assigning participation marks includes the following points (which reflect the above remarks):
 - a. **Preparation:** Was the student prepared for class, including demonstrating she/he read the required readings in a timely manner?
 - b. **Quality of the participant's contributions to the discussion:** Did the student contribute some relevant remarks about matters arising in the discussion?
 - c. **Nature of the participant's interaction with others:** Did the student listen well? Did she/he encourage others to speak up? Did she/he ask helpful questions or offer useful follow-up remarks to keep the flow of the conversation polite and relevant?
 - d. **Some negative points:** Excessive digressions; verbal or non-verbal hostility, indifference, boredom, ridicule; over-eagerness to contribute; refusal to put any views on the table; Facebooking, texting, emailing, and the like.
 - e. **Environment conducive to scholarly interactions:** The student helped maintain an environment conducive to scholarly interactions (e.g. respecting fellow students, which is important since it is more likely to lead to lively debates and discussions). In other words, students helped generate an environment where all participants felt comfortable and motivated.
 - f. **Attendance:** Students should note very, very carefully that in this scheme missing several class sessions will lower one's mark exceedingly. Even if your participation is very good, missing many classes can result in a very low participation mark.

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. If you are registered with Accessibility Services, do not assume that Accessibility Services (AS) has informed your instructor that you have registered with them. Please see <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. If you do not register with AS, you cannot be granted special consideration (e.g. extra time to write exams/tests, attendance issues because of physical or mental health conditions, etc.).

The University of Winnipeg promotes a scent-free environment. Please be respectful of the needs of your fellow classmates and your instructor by avoiding the use of scented products while attending lectures. Exposure to perfumes and other **scented products (such as lotion)** can trigger serious health reactions in persons with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities. We are asking for your cooperation to create a scent-free environment **on campus** by students, faculty and staff.

"THE REAL THING" LECTURE SERIES

The Department of Theatre and Film presents a series of six lectures which will be held on **Wednesdays during the free period (12:30-13:20) in Theatre 1T15**. Winter term dates are as follows:

FRIDAY, January 24th (note this is Friday rather than Wed): Kayla Gordon: Producing Independent Theatre
Wednesday, February 12th Sharon Bajer: Navigating Intimacy in theatre and film for actors, directors and Stage Managers
Wednesday, March 4th Kelly Thornton and Audrey Dwyer: Meet the new Artistic Team at RMTC

This series features 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 3110 Screen Acting, 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.

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. 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. Activities organized by TAFSA include regular **Performance Jams, Department parties** and **Socials** as well as **DioFest** (a new play festival featuring student written and produced plays), and **24/7** (an event in 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 their meetings, every second Monday from 12:30-13:20 pm, Room OT10. 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 to 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.

All studios and labs are locked outside of building hours. Evening and weekend access can be added to your student card by visiting Melinda in the Department office, 3T03.

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.
- When it is necessary to cancel a class due to exceptional circumstances, instructors will make every effort to inform students via uwinnipeg email (and/or using the preferred form of communication, as designated by the instructor), as well as the Departmental Assistant and Chair/Dean so that class cancellation forms can be posted outside classrooms. ***Students are reminded that they have a responsibility to regularly check their uwinnipeg e-mail addresses to ensure timely receipt of correspondence from the university and/or their course instructors.***
- 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>).
- Detailed information regarding these policies can be found at the following:
 - Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/policies/academic-misconduct-policy.pdf> and <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/policies/academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf>
 - Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf> and <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/institutional-analysis/docs/student-non-academic-misconduct-procedures.pdf>

- *Misuse of Filesharing Sites.* Uploading essays and other assignments to essay vendor or trader sites (filesharing sites that are known providers of essays for use by others who submit them to instructors as their own work) involves “aiding and abetting” plagiarism. Students who do this can be charged with Academic Misconduct.
- *Avoiding Copyright Violation.* Course materials are owned by the instructor who developed them. Examples of such materials are course outlines, assignment descriptions, lecture notes, test questions, and presentation slides. Students who upload these materials to filesharing sites, or in any other way share these materials with others outside the class without prior permission of the instructor/presenter, are in violation of copyright law and University policy. Students must also seek prior permission of the instructor /presenter before photographing or recording slides, presentations, lectures, and notes on the board.
- 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>

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATES

The voluntary withdrawal dates for each term, without academic penalty, are:

- **FALL TERM COURSES:** November 12, 2019 for Fall courses which begin September 2019 and end December 2019
- **FALL/WINTER TERM COURSES:** February 14, 2020, for Fall/Winter courses which begin September 2019 and end April 2020
- **WINTER TERM COURSES:** March 13, 2020, for Winter courses which begin January 2020 and end April 2020

Please note that withdrawing before the VW date does not necessarily result in a fee refund.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION POLICY & COURSE CONTENT

Theatre & Film are communal art forms in which a number of interdependent artists and crafts people cooperate 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, meetings or shoots both within and outside of class times; and, in short, 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

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.