

University of Winnipeg Department of Theatre and Film

THFM 3611-001 (6 credit Hours)
Advanced Screenwriting

Fall/Winter 2019/20
Friday 2:30 – 5:15 pm
Room 3M50

Instructor: Brad Simkulet
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Office Hours: by appointment

“A good film script should be able to do completely without dialogue.”

~~David Mamet

“The wise screenwriter is he who wears his second-best suit, artistically speaking, and doesn’t take things too much to heart. He should have a touch of cynicism, but only a touch. ... He should do the best he can without straining at it. He should be scrupulously honest about his work, but he should not expect scrupulous honesty in return. He won’t get it. And when he has had enough, he should say goodbye with a smile, because for all he knows he may want to go back.”

~~Raymond Chandler

Required Texts:

- Dara Marks. *Inside Story: The Power of the Transformational Arc* (Ojai: Three Mountain Press, 2007).
Christopher Riley. *The Hollywood Standard: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Script Format and Style*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Michael Wiese, 2009).
Quentin Tarantino. *Natural Born Killers*. (New York: Grove Press, 2000).

Recommended Texts:

- David Mamet. *On Directing Film*.
Robert McKee. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (London: Methuen, 2005).

Course Description

This advanced screenwriting course is designed to turn aspiring screenwriters into working screenwriters with practical experience in the rigours of writing directly for the screen. To this end, the course will begin with screenwriters writing “for themselves” in a workshop format and will culminate with screenwriters writing for “the collective” on a fully scripted television series (approximately 10-12 episodes) in a classic writers’ room format. Scripts will move from synopsis through treatment to final draft. Students will also engage in the pitch meeting experience with real stakes involved: these pitches will determine what television series we will be writing during the Winter semester. The course will discuss plot structure, action, character development, dialogue, and screenplay analysis, using a combination of readings, screenings, lectures and discussions. Students will gain a working understanding of creative processes, story structure, scene design, screen composition and collaborative techniques.

Assignments and Grading

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 an additional copy for each of your peers and the instructor. These copies must be made at the student's expense and should be viewed as a necessary cost associated with taking this course.

Short Screenplay -- Treatment due October 11, 2019	5%
Short Screenplay -- First Draft due November 1, 2019	5%
Short Screenplay (20-30 pages/minutes) due November 15, 2019	15%
Pitch Meetings (2x10 mins) due November 22 & 29, 2019	10%
Teleplay -- Synopsis, Outline and Treatment due March 6, 2020	15%
Teleplay -- Script (pages/minutes tbd) due April 3, 2020.....	30%
Class Participation *	20%
TOTAL	100%

***Participation:** ***Participation:** Class participation will be determined by a combination of factors, including but not limited to attendance (which will be recorded for every class, and 1% of the final grade will be taken off for each unexcused absence), active engagement with your own writing and the writing of others during workshops, active engagement in Writers’ Meetings and Script Bible meetings, and active participation in film discussions.

GRADE EQUIVALENTS

A+	90-100	B	70-74	F	<50
A	85-89	C+	65-69		
A-	80-84	C	60-64		
B+	75-79	D	50-59		

Work not submitted will be graded as 0.

Reminder: SAVE ALL YOUR WORK

There will be no Final Exam.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**Fall -- On Spec**

September 6:

- Housekeeping / Syllabus
- film screening: Raiders of the Lost Ark

September 13:

- Marks, One: In the Beginning: The Word
- Action
- film discussion: Raiders of the Lost Ark

September 20:

- Marks, Two: Plot: Lights, Camera, Action!
- Story Synopses
- Structure and Outlines

September 27:

- Marks, Act I / Act II / Act III
- Treatment Intro
- Synopses and Outline Workshop

October 4:

- Marks, Four: Theme: Defining Intention
- Riley, 1-57, 140-150: Screenplay Format
- Short Screenplay Treatment Workshop 1

October 11:

- Short Screenplay Treatment due
- Copyright
- Dialogue
- Short Screenplay Treatment Workshop 2

October 18:

- Reading Week. No class.

October 25:

- Marks, Character: Getting to the Heart of the Matter
- Character Workshop

November 1:

- First Draft of Short Screenplay due
- Short Screenplay Workshop 1

November 8:

- Intro to Winter semester
- Short Screenplay Workshop 2

November 15:

- Short Screenplay due
- Intro to the Pitch
- Pitch Brainstorming

November 22:

- Pitch Meetings Day 1
- Pitch Debriefings 1

November 29:

- Pitch Meetings Day 2
- Pitch Debriefings 2
- Last Day of Fall Class.

Winter -- Writers' Room

January 3:

- discussion: Quentin Tarantino's *Natural Born Killers*
- film screening: Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*
- Greenlit TV Series and Head Writer announced.

January 10:

- lessons of Chuck Pfarrer
- Television Screening TBA
- Writers' Meeting 1

January 17:

- Marks, Six Inside Structure: Swimming in the Deep End
- Writers' Meeting 2 (Character)
- Show Bible Meeting 1

January 24:

- Writers' Meeting 3 (Overarching Plot)
- Show Bible Meeting 2
- TV Screening TBA

January 31:

- Writers' Meeting 4 (Individual Plots)
- Individual Episodes

February 7:

- Writers' Meeting 5
- Synopses

February 14:

- Writers' Meeting 6
- revised Synopses
- Outlines

February 21:

- Reading Break. No class.

February 28:

- revised Outlines
- Treatments
- Show Bible Meeting 3 (Revisions)

March 6:

- Final Synopses / Outlines / Treatments due
- Writers' Meeting 7 & Writing

March 13:

- Episode Workshop

March 20:

- Writers' Meeting 8 & Writing
- Episode Workshop

March 27:

- Episode Workshop

April 3:

- Writers' Meeting 9 & Writing
- Last Day of Winter Classes.
- Teleplay PDF due @ 11:59 pm via email.

IN CASE OF CLASS CANCELLATION

Should I need to cancel a class due to exceptional circumstances, I will make every effort to inform you via webmail or nexus, as well as via the Departmental Assistant so that class cancellation forms can be posted outside the classroom.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

All work submitted for evaluation must be typed and delivered as a hard copy. I prefer papers to be handed in during class, but I will accept papers in my departmental mailbox (3G14) as long as they fall within my acceptance policies. (See below.) If you use my mailbox, it is in your best interest to have our department assistant (3G14), computer supervisor (3G10) or member of the department timestamp your submission and sign it before you put it there. **I ask that you submit assignments in hard copy, not by email, except under exceptional circumstances and then only with prior permission.**

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**. Please note the dates in your diary **NOW**:

September 18th (Yvette Nolan, playwright/director/author/arts administrator)
October 30th
November 13th
January 22nd
February 12th
March 4th

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, and THFM-3801 Production II**. Penalties for absence may be assigned by individual instructors.

2019 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 11th, 2019, 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. 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 its organizational meeting, tentatively scheduled for Mon Sept 16th, 12:30-13:20 pm, 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 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 (all courses)

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 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, 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.