F/TV 6A: SCREENWRITING FUNDAMENTALS FOR FILM AND VIDEO I

COLE QUIRK

Fall 2022

Online

www.deanza.edu/creativearts

She, Her, Hers

Office Hours: Fr 12:30-1:30 PM on Zoom

(see link on Zoom tab in Canvas)

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Description:

F/TV 6A: This is an introduction to screenwriting for film and television with an emphasis on preparing scripts in proper formats, including fundamental technical, conceptual, and stylistic issues related to writing fiction scripts for entertainment purposes in film and television.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Demonstrate a command of story structure, dialogue, and character development. Demonstrate a command for writing short scripts for fiction films.

Producers, development executives, directors, and writers gain practical experience adapting and developing their own stories for motion pictures and television, starting with developing a short film. Emphasis is placed on studying dramatic structure, learning techniques that strengthen character development, and understanding the importance of collaboration with writers. You are called upon to give feedback, receive notes, and actively participate in online class discussions and the writing process. You also learn how to assess the marketplace by determining what network and studio executives are looking for, as well as the best way to quickly and effectively pitch an idea, starting with crafting the logline. You will submit written works in progress for critiques. At the end of the course, you have honed your storytelling craft by writing an original short story script developed in class.

Goals: Through the study of original content written and curated for this class by the instructor, the student will learn to:

1. Brainstorm strong short film concepts with potential to expand them into a film and TV project.
2. Develop those concepts into unique, well-structured stories.

3. Assess the fundamental elements of stories from films and TV shows that they love (tone, characters, structure, dialogue & theme).
4. Collaborate with classmates through questions, critical thinking, and development notes.

<u>GOAL:</u> The goal of the course is to **come up with an idea for a film or TV show**, **craft a story document**, **full outline** and have a **completed Act One script of a feature film or TV pilot**.

Methods: Assigned readings, lectures, video screenings, online class discussions and workshops, with a focus on written work.

Note: Due to the nature of the course, the films, and the instructor, adult themes and language may be used. If you are sensitive, other classes might be worth exploring.

Required Reading:

You will be expected to read your classmate's work, read news articles, and screenplays linked from Canvas.

<u>Optional</u> Recommended Reading:

<u>The TV Showrunner's Roadmap: 21 Navigational Tips for Screenwriters to Create and Sustain a Hit TV Series</u>

- **Author:** Neil Landau
- **Publisher:** Focal Press
- **Edition:** 2013
- **ISBN:** 0415831679

Great for those interested in focusing on TV story development and idea sustainability for a TV series.

<u>Writing Movies for Fun and Profit: How We Made a Billion Dollars at the Box Office and You Can, Too!</u>

- **Author:** Thomas Lennon and Robert Ben Garant
- **Publisher:** Touchstone
- **Edition:** 2012
- **ISBN:** 978-1439186763

A fascinating, humorous, and no-nonsense look at screenwriting from two successful screenwriters.

Attendance & Policies: This class is **asynchronous** and collaborative in nature. Each week's lesson and writing exercises lead into the next. In order to succeed, submitting all assignments by the due date is necessary.

Disruptive Behavior: The college will enforce all policies and procedures set forth in the *Standards of Student Conduct* (see catalog or https://www.deanza.edu/judicial-affairs/rights-responsibilities.html). Any student disrupting the class may be asked to leave that class. Administrative follow-up may result.

Laptops & Cell Phone Policy: Laptop use is acceptable for reading and responding to classwork only. For more information about minimum technical requirements, as well as some free internet and tech resources visit www.deanza.edu/online-winter/#Learning

Add/Drop: It is the student's responsibility to add, drop, or withdraw from the class in compliance with De Anza's deadlines & guidelines. Failure to do so will result in an "F."

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be taken lightly. Please refer to the De Anza Student Handbook section on Academic Integrity.

Recording Policy: To ensure compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), student recording of class lectures or other activities is prohibited without the explicit written permission of the instructor and notification of other students enrolled in the class section. Exceptions may be made for approved accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Recording of lectures and other class activities may be made by faculty to facilitate instruction, especially for classes taught remotely through Canvas. Participation in such activities implies consent for the student to be recorded during the instructional activity. Such recordings are intended for educational and academic purposes only. Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his approval.

Student Success Center: Need help? De Anza's Student Success Center offers tutoring and workshops. Visit http://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess (Links to an external site.) for hours and information.
Online resources available on Canvas: https://deanza.instructure.com/enroll/MAF7Y8 (Links to an external site.)
Students eligible for accommodations by Disability Support Services (DSS), please follow up to ensure that your accommodations have been authorized for the current quarter. If you are not registered with DSS and need accommodations, visit https://www.deanza.edu/dsps (Links to an external site.) for additional information.

Grades are based on the following:

Students must complete and deliver all assignments on time in order to receive full points. Because we are modeling real industry conditions, these are hard deadlines.

* <u>There are no points for late assignments</u>. If you have a legitimate reason that meeting a deadline is not possible, you must contact me at least 24 hours before the due date/time so we can work together for a potential due date extension. *

* It is your responsibility to check that the document uploaded is the correct assignment, and not blank. *

10% Participation - Actively engaging in class discussions on Canvas. Once we get into writing, you will be expected to give constructive feedback to your peers.

25% Homework Assignments - Turning in weekly assignments completed and on time.

30% Two Page Synopsis (MIDTERM) - A two-page synopsis of the original story idea chosen in class.

35% Script - A completed Act One script for a film or TV pilot (FINAL).

Scale (Based on Total Points Earned):

97-100 = A+, 93-96=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, 77-79=C+, 73-76=C

Rubric:
Screenplays will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Character: Do they have clear wants, goals, and flaws?
- Conflict: Is there conflict and does it escalate, propelling the story forward?
- Pacing and Tone: Do the scenes feel rushed? Too slow? Is the script evenly a comedy, drama, or the intended genre?
- Clarity: Is the script properly formatted? Is the story easy to track and follow?
- Overall: Do I stay emotionally engaged in the story and characters from start to finish? Does the story make me feel something?

<u>SCHEDULE</u>

Class materials are posted **SUNDAY.**

Assignments are **DUE FRIDAY by midnight.**

Once we get into writing scenes and story documents, you will be required to read each other's assignments, providing encouraging and constructive feedback to your group members (which counts towards participation).

Class 1 - Week of 9/26

Introduction and Course Overview

What is a Logline?

Story Genres

Generating Ideas

Homework:

1. Submit 3 Loglines. One sentence each, can be two sentences if needed, with one logline having a personal connection to you.
2. Discuss on Canvas – What is your favorite movie or an episode of your favorite TV show, and why?

Class 2 - Week of 10/3

Crafting Active, Memorable Characters

Writing Natural Dialog and Subtext

Choosing your story. Why this Story? Why Now?

Homework:

1. Submit One Paragraph Character Bios for 3 Main Characters.
2. Discuss on Canvas – What is an unforgettable character from TV or film, and why?

Class 3 - Week of 10/10

Writing Scenes

Script Formatting and Structure

Homework:

1. Submit One 3-5 Page Scene Between Your Protagonist and One Other Character.
2. Discuss on Canvas – What is a memorable scene from a TV or film, and why?

Class 4 - Week of 10/17

Structure - Discovering Your Beginning, Middle and End.

What is a Story Document/Beat Sheet?

Homework:

1. Submit a 1 Page Story Doc, written in essay form in a Word Document/PDF.
2. Discuss on Canvas – Give feedback to another student on their Story Doc.

Note: From here on out the class will transition to a workshop.

Class 5 - Week of 10/24

World Building - Adding unique details to your story.

Using specifics in Character, Voice, Tone, Location and More.

Notes - How to Give and Accept Productive Feedback.

Homework:

1. Submit a 2 Page Story Doc **(MIDTERM)**, which builds onto your one-page story doc.
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Story Doc.

Class 6 - Week of 10/31

Writing the Outline

Act Structure for Short Films, Features and TV Pilots (Three Acts vs. Six Acts)

What is an Act Out or an Act Break?

Homework:

1. Submit your Act One Outline.
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Act One Outline.

Class 7 - Week of 11/7

Hollywood Overview – Entertainment news outlets (Deadline, Variety) to be reading daily and why.

Writing and Workshopping Outlines.

Homework:

1. Submit your Act Two Outline (For Drama Pilots, Acts Two and Three)
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Act Two Outline

Class 8 - Week of 11/14

Hollywood Overview – The Importance of Networking: Using social media (Twitter, LinkedIn) as a networking platform in the entertainment industry.

Writing and Workshopping Outlines.

Homework:

1. Submit your Act Three Outline (For Drama Pilots, Acts Four and Five)
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Act Three Outline

Class 9 - Week of 11/21

Hollywood Overview - Film Festivals, submitting scripts to contests, and other places to get beneficial recognition for your work.

Writing and Workshopping Outlines.

Homework:

1. Submit your Opening Scene Script
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Opening Scene Script

Class 10 - Week of 11/28

Hollywood Overview – The Business of Screenwriting. You Have a Finished Script, What Are The Next Steps? How do Agents and Managers work, ways to get them, and do you need them?

Writing and Workshopping Outlines.

Homework:

1. Submit your Second Scene Script
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Second Scene Script

Class 11 - Week of 12/5

Hollywood Overview - Working in Entertainment: How to Find and Secure Internships (why internships are important) and Entry Level Jobs.

Homework:

1. Submit your Third Scene Script
2. Discuss on Canvas - Give feedback to another student on their Act Three Script

*EXTRA CREDIT: In a short two paragraph essay, identify if your film or pilot would be right for identify which studio (for Film projects) or network (for TV projects) and why it makes sense with their brand and current programming.

Class 12 - Week of 12/12

Working on a TV Show – What's it like? What are the roles of the support staff, and the writers, in a writer's room? How do you get a job on a TV show?

Optional Resume critiques

Homework:

1. Submit your Act One script. **(FINAL) due 12/16 by midnight.**