

Professor Jon Stahl

Office: MZ 322

Phone: 818-677-2838/3192

E-mail: jon.stahl@csun.edu

Office Hours: T 5:00-6:00PM, W 2:00-3:30PM, W 6:15-7:00PM,
TH 3:15-4:00PM (hours subject to change)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

You have been struck by inspiration. You have turned that epiphany into a screen story by inventing dimensional characters, developing a plot structure, and writing a treatment. Now it is time to write the first-draft screenplay. Is there any room left for further creativity? Absolutely. All the decisions you made and all the planning you did in CTVA 525 are the springboards that now will allow you to breathe life into your screen story. In this course, you will create the scenes -- the settings, images, actions, dialogue -- and orchestrate them into a continuously engaging narrative. You might find the need to deviate from your treatment as new inspiration strikes, and that will be acceptable and appropriate, as long as you can ensure the integrity of your hero's journey and that you maintain fidelity to the story's Deep Structure.

The bulk of this semester's classroom sessions will be devoted to workshopping pages from your script-in-progress. The end result will be a complete, feature-length screenplay. Fasten your seatbelts, folks. It's going to be an invigorating ride.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, you should:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the principles of screen story structure;
2. demonstrate an understanding of film dialogue writing;
3. demonstrate an understanding of film scene writing;
4. demonstrate proficiency in screenwriting by completing the first draft of a feature-length film script.

This course addresses CTVA Departmental SLO #2: research, structure, and write dramatic and non-dramatic scripts for cinema, television, and multimedia.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

The Art of Dramatic Writing, by Lajos Egri.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Over the course of the semester, you will write the first draft of a feature-length screenplay, based on the project that you began in CTVA 525. Several assignments will be handed in as you write the script in a progressive, incremental fashion. These are to be printed using the correct font (12-point Courier), on good-quality paper. You must proofread for typos and errors in spelling and/or grammar. The presence of such errors will affect your grade adversely.

It is strongly recommended that you use Final Draft. It is also strongly recommended that you back up your file(s) on an obsessively frequent basis, using CD-RWs and/or USB memory sticks.

All assignments must be handed in on time. Do not use covers or binders. Short assignments are to be stapled; the final project is to be printed on 3-hole-punch paper and fastened with brads. I will expect you to apply your full effort, intelligence, craft and creativity to each assignment, and I will grade accordingly.

There will be no exams. The final assignment, the feature-length, first-draft screenplay, will be due in class on Tuesday, 12/8, the last session.

As this is largely a workshop class and we meet only once a week, prompt attendance and class participation are expected. Each will be factored into your final grade.

Please note that this course requires strict compliance with the Academic Honesty Standards contained in the University Catalogue.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at 818-677-2684.

GRADING (unless otherwise amended)

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| Punctuality, attendance, class participation | 10 points |
| Two-page story sketch | 5 points |
| Expositional script pages | 5 points |
| Inciting incident scene | 10 points |
| First turning point scene | 10 points |
| Midpoint scene | 10 points |
| Second turning point scene | 10 points |
| Complete feature-length screenplay | <u>40 points</u> |
| TOTAL | 100 points |

I will use plusses and minuses for the final grades, which will correlate to the total amount of points earned during the semester. There is no extra credit available. I reserve the right to penalize excessive tardiness, absence or disruptive behavior beyond the allotted 10 points. Therefore, come early, don't miss any classes, and act professionally.

CLASS SCHEDULE (unless otherwise amended)

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| Tues. | 8/25 | Course introduction. Story. Structure review. Pitches. Assignment: Two-page story sketch. |
| Tues. | 9/1 | DUE: Two-page story sketch. Character. Dialogue. Assignment: Watch <i>Gladiator</i> and <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> , analyze each structurally. |
| Tues. | 9/8 | Film analyses. The scene. Assignment: expositional script pages (first 2-4 pages). |
| Tues. | 9/15 | DUE: expositional pages. Subplots. Assignment: inciting incident scene. Make copies for in-class readings (class set). |
| Tues. | 9/22 | DUE: inciting incident scene. Page readings. Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages. |
| Tues. | 9/29 | Page readings. Assignment: First turning point scene. Bring pages. |
| Tues. | 10/6 | DUE: first turning point scene. Page readings. Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages. |

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

- Tues. 10/13 Page readings.
Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages.
- Tues. 10/20 Page readings.
Assignment: midpoint scene. Bring pages.
- Tues. 10/27 DUE: midpoint scene. Page readings.
Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages.
- Tues. 11/3 Page readings.
Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages.
- Tues. 11/10 Page readings.
Assignment: second turning point scene. Bring pages.
- Tues. 11/17 DUE: second turning point scene. Page readings.
Assignment: keep writing. Bring pages.
- Tues. 11/24 Page readings.
Assignment: complete script (due 12/8).
- Tues. 12/1 NO CLASS -- WRITING DAY.
- Tues. 12/8 **FEATURE-LENGTH FILM SCRIPTS DUE.** Conclusion.