

**Carleton University
Fall 2016
Department of English**

ENGL 3902A: Writing for Stage and Screen

**Thursday, 11:30-2:30
Southam Hall, room 315**

**Instructor: Nadia Bozak
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Office: Dunton Tower, 1918
Phone: 613-520-2600 x 2330
Office Hours: Thursday, 2:45-3:45**

Admission to this workshop is based on the submission of a portfolio and permission of the instructor.

Course Description:

This creative writing workshop is an introduction to writing for screens; thus, no previous screenwriting experience is required though knowledge of how storytelling works will be an asset. And though the workshop is titled “Writing for Stage and Screen,” the emphasis will be on screenwriting. Yes, we will discuss stage-play writing briefly, but mostly in terms of its historical relationship to screenwriting, placing emphasis instead on how to effectively craft your story ideas for a moving-image medium. (That said, even if you have your heart set on writing for the stage, this workshop will be immensely valuable.) While thus engaging with screenwriting (reading and analyzing the “masters” and writing their own scripts), students will acquire such tools as: writing effective dialogue, dramatic scenes, and characterization; introducing, sustaining and resolving conflict; writing while using applicable formatting software.

Over the course of the term, students will:

- Read, critically analyze, and discuss assigned scripts
- Watch, critically analyze, and discuss assigned films
- Learn to edit and revise their own work, and that of their peers
- Write a number of targeted exercises to help students generate ideas and become acquainted with screenwriting formatting and its applicable software
- Write a short screenplay of 10-12 pages

Course Outline

Weekly Schedule

Date and Topic	Read/ Discuss	Watching	Due
<p>Week 1</p> <p>Thurs. Sept 8:</p> <p>Course outline; Choose workshops and presentations; discuss the short vs. the feature</p>	n/a	<i>The Karman Line</i>	n/a
<p>Week 2</p> <p>Thurs Sept 15:</p> <p>Structure/Turning Points/ Plot Points/ Character</p>	<p><i>Bible:</i> 3-36; 147-165</p> <p>Presentations: 1-3</p> <p>Workshop Assignments: 1-4</p>	<i>Witness Russian Roulette</i>	Visual Writing Assignment due
<p>Week 3</p> <p>Thurs. Sept 22:</p> <p>Story-layering/ Plot/ Genre/ Character/ Theme</p>	<p><i>Bible:</i> 36-82; 185-207</p> <p>Presentations: 4-6</p> <p>Workshop Assignments: 5-8</p>	<i>The Fly</i>	Character Assignment due
<p>Week 4</p> <p>Thurs. Sept 29:</p> <p>Dialogue/ subtext/ exposition</p>	<p><i>Bible:</i> 82-92; 207-229</p> <p>Presentations: 7-8</p> <p>Workshop Assignments: 9-12</p>	<i>Juno Actor Seeks Role</i>	Dialogue Assignment due
<p>Week 5</p> <p>Thurs. Oct. 6</p> <p>Scenes</p>	<p><i>Bible:</i> 92-109; 165-185</p> <p>Presentations 9-10</p> <p>Workshop Assignments: 13-16</p>	<i>Whiplash</i> (Short and feature)	Dramatic Tension Assignment due

<p>Week 6</p> <p>Thurs. Oct 13</p> <p>Review so far... getting started on our own scripts</p>	<p><i>Bible: 113-133</i></p> <p>Presentations: 11-12</p> <p>Workshop Assignments: 17-20</p>	<p><i>La Jetée</i></p> <p><i>12 Monkeys</i></p>	<p>Dream/ No Dialogue Assignment due</p> <p>Logline due</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>Thurs. Oct. 20</p>	<p><i>Bible: 134-143</i></p> <p>Presentations: 13-14</p> <p>Workshop loglines and pitches – ALL</p>	<p><i>Smoke Signals</i></p>	<p>Step outline and treatment due</p>
<p>Reading Week</p>	<p>Reading Week</p> <p><i>Bible: 241-303</i></p>	<p>Reading Week</p>	<p>Reading Week</p> <p>First drafts due</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Thurs. Nov 3</p>	<p>Workshop first drafts</p> <p><i>Bible: 241-303</i></p> <p>Presentations: 15-16</p> <p>Workshop drafts: 1-3</p>	<p><i>Do the Right Thing</i></p>	<p>Workshop first drafts</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Thurs. Nov. 10</p>	<p><i>Bible: 241-303</i></p> <p>Presentations: 17-18</p> <p>Workshop drafts: 4-6</p>	<p><i>Laredo, Texas</i></p> <p><i>Meshes of the Afternoon</i></p>	<p>Workshop first drafts</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Thurs. Nov. 17</p>	<p>Presentations: 19-20</p> <p>Workshop drafts: 7-9</p>	<p><i>Points of Origin</i></p> <p><i>James</i></p>	<p>Workshop first drafts</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p>Thurs. Nov. 24</p>	<p>Workshop drafts: 10-13</p>	<p><i>Frozen River</i></p>	<p>Workshop first drafts</p>

Week 12 Thurs. Dec. 1	Workshop drafts: 14-17	<i>City of God</i>	Workshop first drafts
Week 13 Thurs. Dec. 8	Workshop drafts: 18-20	<i>TBA</i>	Workshop first drafts

Note on the workshop dynamic:

Over the course of the term, students will work towards writing a self-contained screenplay of about 10 pages (10 minutes). While the first half of the term is devoted to getting familiar with the conventions of screenplay writing, the second half is all about workshopping our first drafts as a group.

Here is how it works: on the first day of class we will all sign up for a workshop dates (one date for an assignment, described below, and one date for your screenplay). One week before their appointed dates, students will post their work on CU Learn for the group to read. The rest of the class then has one week to read the posted pieces and comment upon them. On the day of the workshop, we will read through and discuss the comments together as a group.

Assignments:

1. Final, revised draft of a self-contained 10-13 page short-film screenplay: 40%

Logline = 5%

Step out line = 5%

Treatment = 5%

Reflection statement = 5%

Actual revised draft = 20%

The final, revised draft of your screenplay is due two weeks after it is workshopped in class. Please hand in the screenplay to me (properly formatted) the day it is due.

As revision is the foundation of all writing, the final draft must be accompanied by a 2-page “Reflection Statement,” wherein you describe the process and experience of revising your screenplay in accordance with (or in opposition to) the feedback you received during your workshop. This statement will be written in full sentences (not point form), formatted in Times New Roman 12-point font, and double-spaced.

In your Reflection Statement you might discuss such issues as: your personal reaction to being critiqued by your peers; what you decided to change in your draft and why; what you decided to preserve in your draft and why; what important lessons you learned about your screenwriting skills and what you might change about them moving forward.

2. Writing Assignments: 5 x 6% each = 30%

For the first six weeks, students will complete a weekly 2-page writing assignment. These are intended to get you warmed up, familiarizing you with screenwriting formatting and software, while also stimulating your creativity. You may develop one of these assignments into your final screenplay project.

As this is a workshop, we will take turns sharing the assignments with our peers. Because the class is so large, we will only have time to workshop one assignment per student.

During the first session, students will choose their workshop dates for this assignment.

The week before your assignment is due, you will send it to Nadia (as a properly formatted pdf) to post on CU Learn.

Your peers and I will then read your assignment for the following week. When we meet, we will discuss assignments as a group in the form of a workshop.

3. Presentation: 10%

Each student will sign up for a brief, ten-minute presentation on an assigned topic from the weekly viewing/reading. The presentation will respond directly to the presentation topic and also generate class discuss.

For the sake of time, please be brief and succinct. You do not need a PowerPoint presentation. If you wish to show a clip from a film to illustrate your point, that is fine.

Please hand in your speaking notes, written in clear, grammatically correct prose (point-form is not acceptable).

Please have two questions ready for the class. These questions should be included in the hardcopy of the presentation you turn in.

3. Participation (editorial feedback given to peers, comments and discussion in class): 20%

As this is a workshop, its success depends largely on students actively participating in group discussions, reading and commenting upon the work of your peers, and offering constructive feedback during workshop critiques. I will evaluate the effort and thought you put into all of these aspects.

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Note on attendance: any student who misses more than three workshops without a documented reason (medical, extenuating family situation) will lose 10% of the final grade

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Note on late assignments: I deduct 2% per day (including weekends) for late assignments.

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A final note: You can expect to devote 7-8 hours a week to this workshop.

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Required textbook:

David Trottier, *The Screenwriter's Bible: A Complete Guide to Writing, Formatting, and Selling Your Script, Sixth Edition*. Los Angeles: Silman-James, 2014.

This textbook is available at Octopus Books, 116 Third Ave, Ottawa, ON K1S 2K1 (at Bank, in the Glebe).

Required Software:

Celtx is a screenwriting program for Mac and PC that can be downloaded for free: Celtx.com

Required Viewing and Reading:

Features – all available on short term loan at the Audiovisual Resource Centre (AVRC), room 460, St. Patrick's Building

12 Monkeys. Screenplay David Peoples and Janet Peoples. Dir. Terry Gilliam. Universal, 1995. Film.

Screenplay available at: <http://scifiscripts.com/scripts/twelvemonkeys.txt>

City of God (Cidade de Deus). Screenplay by Bráulio Mantovani. Dir. Fernandes Meirelles. Miramax. 2003. Film.

Screenplay available at: <http://www.roteirodecinema.com.br/banco/cidadededeus12.pdf>
(English screenplay unavailable.)

Do the Right Thing. Screenplay by Spike Lee. Dir. Spike Lee. Universal Pictures. 1989. Film.

The Fly. Screenplay by Charles Edward Pogue and David Cronenberg. Dir. David Cronenbug. 20th Century Fox, 1986. Film

Screenplay available at: <http://goldmember.deep-ice.com/thefly1986.txt>

Frozen River. Screenplay by Courtney Hunt. Dir. Courtney Hunt. Sony Picture Classics, 2008. Film.

Screenplay will be made available in the AVRC on short-term loan.

Juno. Screenplay by Diablo Cody. Dir. Jason Reitman. Fox Searchlight Pictures. 2007. Film.

Screenplay available at: <http://screenplayexplorer.com/wp-content/scripts/juno.pdf>

Smoke Signals. Screenplay by Sherman Alexis. Dir. Chris Eyre. Miramax Films. 1998. Film.

Screenplay will be made available in the AVRC on short-term loan.

Whiplash. Screenplay by Damien Chazelle. Dir. Damien Chazelle. Sony Picture Classics. 2014. Video.

http://www.sonyclassics.com/awards-information/whiplash_screenplay.pdf

Witness. Screenplay by Earl W. Wallace and William Kelley. Dir. Peter Weir. Paramount Pictures. 1985. Film

Screenplay available at: <http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~ina22/splaylib/Screenplay-Witness.pdf>

Shorts:

Actor Seeks Roll. Screenplay by Ben Nabors. Dir. Michael Tyburski. 2015. Video.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efUgTm-bRh4>

James. Screenplay by Connor Clements. Dir. Connor Clements. 2008. Video.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnXvYJwC3vU>

The Karman Line. Screenplay by Dawn King. Dir Oscar Sharpe. 2013. Medium unknown.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yrdtv8QpTkY>

La Jetée. Screenplay by Chris Marker. Dir Chris Marker. 1962. Film.
<https://vimeo.com/46620661>

Laredo, Texas. Screenplay by Topaz Adizes. Dir. Topaz Adizes. 2010. Video
<http://topazadizes.com/films/laredo-texas/>

Meshes in the Afternoon. Screenplay by Maya Deren. Dir. Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid. 1943. Film.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSY0TA-ttMA>

Points of Origin. Screenplay by Anya Leta. Dir. Anya Leta. 2014. Medium?
<https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2016/08/22/points-of-origin/>

Russian Roulette. Screenplay by Ben Aston. Dir. Ben Aston. 2014. Video.
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-screening-room-russian-roulette>

Whiplash. Screenplay by Damien Chazelle. Dir. Damien Chazell. 2013. Video.
<https://vimeo.com/123482554>

Sites of interest:

New Yorker Screening Room
<http://video.newyorker.com/series/the-new-yorker-shorts>

Film School Shorts
<http://www.pbs.org/show/film-school-shorts-program/>

Short of the Week
<https://www.shortoftheweek.com/channels/canada/>

<https://vucavu.com/en/home>

Short Film Faceoff

<http://www.cbc.ca/shortfilmfaceoff/>

Digi60 Competition

<http://www.digi60.org/>

Journal of Short Film

<http://thejsf.org/>

REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your ***Letter of Accommodation*** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website (www.carleton.ca/pmc) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;

- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence, which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.