MART 521B Online Course synchronous delivery: Feature Writing Spring 2025 January 14 – April 24, Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30 AM to 9:45 AM; Spring break March 9-16 (Sunday to Sunday); 3 Credit Hours

Professor Northrop Davis E-mail: DavisNF@mailbox.sc.edu or Northrop@NorthropDavisProductions.com

Bio-sketch link:
https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/visual_art_and_design/our_people/directory/davis_northrop.php **additional info., including about my students, is found HERE and HERE and my CV is found HERE.**

Office: At the same online Blackboard Ultra Collaborate link as the class (go into Blackboard, select the class, and select Ultra Collaborate). There is also a guest link, but that will not count you as present for attendance's sake.

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 A.M. to 1:15 PM by appointment (this is so that two students do not arrive to meet with me at the same time. Please book office hours appointments with me 24 hours ahead if possible because otherwise I might not get the message in time.)

 Academic Bulletin Description: Advanced study of feature film writing.

 Full Course Description

        Creating a great screenplay is a rare feat if the creator has not mastered the techniques I am going to teach you in this course. Using these techniques and your own instincts, inspiration and insights, you will create the foundation of a story that will be YOUR story, filtered through your unique sensibilities.

        American screenwriting has often suffered from too much emphasis on plot structure and not enough on character. That is not to say that you will not begin to master and employ structure and plot techniques that will help move the action of your story along in a meaningful, exciting way. But the course will begin with "how to create wonderful characters" then "brainstorming to develop a great premise". Many scripts are purchased for their premises alone. Then you will learn how to find the "spine of your story" and develop the all-important "pitch" aimed at selling it.

        Sketching the story out comes next (you will create a plot outline according to industry standards). You will begin to understand and recognize how scenes develop. Later during the class you will apply these techniques when writing scenes, after formulating and assembling your plot and characters. We will watch clips from great films as examples. In your writing and pitching in class, you will demonstrate that you have mastered the powerful techniques you have learned to increase drama and suspense. For example, did you know that by merely supplying your protagonist with a goal, creating a powerful antagonist and putting conflict in every scene, you will already be ahead of 95% of the other screenwriters? My aim is to get you into that top 5%.

Prerequisites

MART 321 (unless you are a grad student)

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course students will also:

- create an original story idea/premise after brainstorming it in class, in their individual groups and out of class as well as on Blackboard's discussion board

- create and refine an effective log-line for their story

- pitch their premise and logline to the class
- create multi-dimensional characters (with an emphasis on audience identification) by using the "I am" list technique and character relationship charts which they will post on Blackboard

- create an action goal for the protagonist and antagonist characters

- create a compelling weakness/foible for each of the main characters which may, where appropriate, be the starting point for a character arc
- write a full outline for the entire screenplay
- write an outline of a classic film, thus identifying and being able to employ key writing techniques found within that film, in your own work

- deliver a professionally formatted screenplay, minimum 20 pages, including opening, through the "inciting incident and well into the second act.

- learn to work independently, seeking feedback from colleagues, and showing initiative to solicit critiques, including async on various platforms such as

- learn to actively critique other projects

- demonstrate that they can effectively and diplomatically critique and receive input in class (students are also required to make 8 substantial comments and /or suggestions per. week on other students' projects on Blackboard as well as meet outside the class with their group on Discord, in Blackboard Collaborate and on other platforms)

After successful completion of this course, graduate students will also be able to:

- create an full screenplay

All learning outcomes in this course are equivalent to the face-to-face (F2F) version of this course.

Course Materials (online versions of any of these is fine)

REQUIRED

 1. Root, Wells. *Writing the Script: a Practical Guide for Films and Television*. Henry Holt, 1987. ISBN: 978-0805002379

One of the most valuable texts that you will ever read about storytelling, Root's book is a classic, designed for the feature film and television writer, but everything in it can be used for any narrative form, including short stories, novels, plays, and narrative nonfiction. The extremely useful basics are here. Above all, his book emphasizes how to create great characters, and how the characters drive the structure and not vice versa.

2. Cowden, Tami D., et al. *The Complete Writer's Guide to Heroes & Heroines: Sixteen Master Archetypes*. Archetype Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0615908113

The Complete Writer's Guide to Heroes and Heroines will show you the classic character archetypes, both male and female. No one wants you to copy them exactly- that would create flat cardboard cutouts. But studying these attractive, popular character archetypes which modern audiences love, allows you another brush in your palette, which, if you want, you can use to customize and personalize your heroes and heroines as your own artistic vision dictates. Also it is required if you plan to take TV Writing (MART 521D) and/or the Art and Business of Manga and Anime (MART 521C) later.

3. Trottier, David. *The Screenwriter's Bible: a Complete Guide to Writing, Formatting, and Selling Your Script*. Silman-James Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781935247210

The Screenwriter's Bible covers structure, professional formatting and has many valuable pieces of advice. Once you understand it well, it will serve you whenever you want to tell a story. An incredible book, it is really four or five great books bound into one. To name just a few other subjects that this best-selling book covers, *The Screenwriter's*

Bible emphasizes plot twists, setting, professional formatting in almost all its detail, and touches on character and has much other valuable advice.

OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED:

4. Davis, Northrop. *Manga and Anime Go to Hollywood:* Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. ISBN: 9781623561444 Carolina system students, faculty and staff may also borrow the Ebook or hard back oversized book by going to: https://pascal-usc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01PASCAL_USCCOL:USC&tab=Everything&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&mode=basic&displayMode=full&bulkSize=10&highlight=true&dum=true&query=any,contains,Manga%20and%20Anime%20Go%20to%20Hollywood&displayField=all&pcAvailabiltyMode=true

Here is the American Library Association "Choice" review magazine's review of it:

https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/visual_art_and_design/our_people/directory/mangaandanimehollywoodtag.pdf   They recommend it for all ages.

Or you can buy it, either at Amazon.com http://www.amazon.com/Manga-Anime- Hollywood-Northrop-Davis/dp/1623561442 as an eBook (physical copies are sold out, and ebooks may be sold out soon), or Bloomsbury Academic directly. Of course, if you take The Art and Business of Manga and Anime, MART 521C in fall or in 2024, you will also definitely want to either buy this book, or to access it for free through TCL. This book is in large sections, applicable to my TV Writing (MART 521D) and my Advanced Screenwriting (MART 521A, Fall semester) classes as well. Because the manga/anime industries/art forms and Hollywood storytelling, manga and American graphic novels really converging now, including through PEAK TV-- even if you are not interested in manga/anime, you need to know about it. Regarding American Peak TV's now driving the anime market, read "Peak TV and Anime: Why It Matters" that I wrote which was published in the *International Journal of Comic Art.*(ask me and I will email it to you).

  RECOMMENDED

1. Ayers, Jordan*. AHA: 10 Ways to Free Your Creative Spirit and Find Your Great Ideas.*

This book is optional if you're interested in getting some additional "creativity inspiration" to help you hopefully knock that screenplay, TV script, anime or manga or comic script or any other form like computer game out of the park.

GRADUATE STUDENTS are also required to read:

3 classic screenplays of existing movies from a list that I will provide in class. I will ask you questions about the screenplays that you read.

Course Requirements

Course Format

Students are required to meet each scheduled class day for sync class with the professor over Blackboard Ultra Collaborate. Those students will interact directly with each other and the professor. These sync students will watch clips of movies and some tv shows provided by the professor, which have been cleared through Thomas Cooper Educational Film Library (Swank, Kanopy) or on youtube. Or streamed by Professor, under fair use restrictions.

Lectures and interactions between professor and students, and guest speakers may be recorded, and sent as a video or audio recording to students.

Students also meet on Blackboard in Discussion Board to critique each others' projects and post updates/rewrites/revisions of their own projects, as well as read documents and do exercises on Blackboard.

All students also do readings from books that are required for the class.

Course Communication

Students will be contacted through email. Please check your email address on Blackboard and ensure that it is correct. All emails answered within 12 hours (overnight maximum), and usually much sooner.

Below is how you check your email address in Blackboard:

- Access blackboard.sc.edu
- Click your name on the main Blackboard navigation panel on the left
- Review your email address. By default, Blackboard uses your university-issued email address

Your email address in Blackboard coincides with your preferred university email. If you are unsure of your preferred email, check your account (myaccount.sc.edu). For more information on setting your preferred university email, please see the How To Change Your Primary University Email Address (https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464) Knowledge Base article.

Schedule Information

All course deadlines are listed in Eastern Time Zone. Blackboard will record all deadlines in this timezone. If you are in a different timezone, plan accordingly.

Each week will begin on a Tuesday and will end on Thursday.

In order to complete all of the required material for this course, you will spend about 9 hours per week on the course material for a total of approximately 145 hours of course-related activities using Blackboard, discussion boards, writing/editing projects, and reading and reflecting on the texts. See the schedule below for detailed expectations and deadlines for every class.

Technology Requirements

You are expected to professionally format your scripts.

A free demo Final Draft can also be downloaded at Trial.finaldraft.com/edutrial

This is the full non-watermarked version. And lasts for 18 weeks! If you have already used the Final Draft free trial, then there are other free programs that we can discuss.

You must have access to the Internet to be enrolled in this class. No special software is required.

To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations (transcripts provided);
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact

the Service Desk
(https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php).

Minimum Technical Skills Needed

Minimum technical skills are needed in this course. All work in this course must be completed and submitted online through Blackboard. Therefore, you must have consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet. The minimum technical skills you have include the ability to:

- Organize and save electronic files;
- Use USC email and attached files;
- Check email and Blackboard daily;
- Download and upload documents;
- Locate information with a browser; and
- Use Blackboard.

Technical Support

If you have problems with your computer, technology, IT-related questions, support, including Blackboard, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) Service Desk at (803) 777-1800 or submit an online request through the Self-Service Portal (https://scprod.service-now.com/sp) or visit the Carolina Tech Zone (https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php). The Service Desk is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM (Eastern Time). If you are located in the Columbia, SC area, the Thomas Cooper Library at UofSC has computers for you to use in case you encounter computer issues/problems. If you are not located in the Columbia, SC area, most regional campuses and public libraries have computers for public use.

Course Assignments and Grading

Your grade will be based on class participation (discussion boards), your project development, outlining the classic movie you stream, and answering any questions about it that I ask you, and a final project.

Extra credit (2 percentage points on final project) will be given for submitting questions for our guest speakers.

In addition to the workload required for undergrad students, graduate students will expand their final project to a 30 page project.

General Assignment Information

- All coursework is secured in Blackboard with a username and password.
- All assignments are due by 11:59pm on the day indicated on the course schedule.
- Complete rubrics will be provided in Blackboard

Discussion Boards- Class Participation

Peer review is an essential part of the class and is reflected in the grade for Blackboard/classroom discussion. Please read your peers' work and comment significantly. Three comments should be made on one or two students' work per class week, to fulfill that part of the grade requirement. Feedback should be complete prior to the sync class time. Feedback should be positive, constructive and students who give meaningful critiques tend to get the same effort made back at their own work.

The first discussion board posts will be due TBA.

Final Project and Project Development

Undergraduates Students

For undergrads, your final project will be at least 20 pages total, but up to 85 to 110 pages for extra credit (up to 2 percentage points). These scenes will include the introduction of your main character(s) and antagonist(s) and their external (action) and internal (personal) goals. The latter is often based on foibles/weaknesses to be overcome, that then may lead into a character arc. Also included in the final project is your character relationship chart, logline, and title page with your name/email address. You will also be required to submit your acts 2 and 3 in paragraph story form. Your final project will demonstrate that you have mastered the easy-to-grasp but invaluable concepts and techniques you have learned. Extra credit (up to 1%) will be awarded for a sample scene from a key moment later on in the script if you did not write a whole script.

 Graduate Students

Graduate students class will expand their final project to a 30 page project consisting of the full first act and an additional scene from later on in the screenplay plus do all required for the undergrads.

The final project will be due to BlackBoard at 11:59pm on the final day of class.

Outlining Classic Movies

Three movies will be assigned that you will be required to watch. Create an outline answering the following questions:

1. What was the "problem" of the movie that the protagonists have to grapple with.
2. What were the main characters GOALS
3. How did the main character clash?
4. What purpose in the story did any or a couple of side characters serve? [foils often talk a lot and speak about the lead character].
5. What was the protagonist's arc in the story?
6. How did events help them achieve that character change?
7. How did the great endings make these movies really memorable? ENDINGS ARE SO IMPORTANT!
8. What were some of his "setbacks"
9. What about B-Plot (emotional growth) ... how did it intertwine with the A (action story) to give we viewers the all important EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION.

Guest Speaker Question Submission

There may be a special guest speaker this semester. More details on who they are and their careers will be provided in class. Each student can submit questions for each guest speaker to receive 2% extra credit on their final project.

 All of these questions will be due at a time and date TBA on Black Board.

Evaluation and Grading Scale

All grades will be posted on Blackboard. You are strongly encouraged to check you scores in Blackboard regularly. A final letter grade will be assigned based on percentages.

Evaluation for undergraduate students

Assignment Weights	Percent
BB Discussion Board Posts (3 per. week)	20%
Development of your project (Character development, premise, pitch, plot and scene development as described above)	20%

Assignment Weights	Percent
Outlining one classic movie	20%
Final Project	40%
Total	100%

Discussion Board Posts (2 per day) (20 @ ~10 points each) - 200 points

Project Development (1 @ 200 points) -200 points

Movie Outline (1 @ 200 points) - 200 points

Final Project (1 @ 400 points) - 400 points

Total Points - 1000 points

 90-100% = 900 – 1000 points = A

80-89% = 800 – 899 points = B

70-79% = 700 – 799 points = C

60-69% = 600 – 699 points = D

Below 60% = 0 – 599 points = F

Evaluation Information for Graduate Students:

The grading scale for graduate level students differs from the undergraduate grading scale and is as follows:

Assignment Weights	Percent
BB Discussion Board Posts (3 per. week)	20%
Development of your project (Character development, premise, pitch, plot and scene development as described above)	20%
Outlining classic movies	20%
Final Project (1st and 2nd acts of script with full outline)	40%
Total	100%

Discussion Board Posts (2 per day) (20 @ ~10 points each) - 200 points

Project Development (1 @ 200 points) -200 points

Movie Outline (1 @ 200 points) - 200 points

Final Project (1 @ 400 points) - 400 points

Total Points - 1000 points

91-100% = 900 – 1000 points = A

80-90.9% = 800 – 899 points = B

70-79.9% = 700 – 799 points = C

60-69.9% = 600 – 699 points = D

Below 60% = 0 – 599 points = F

Academic Success

Successful online learners:

1. Do not procrastinate;
2. Are open to sharing professional experiences online;
3. Enhance online discussions;
4. Have good written communication skills;
5. Use proactive communication;
6. Are self-motivated and self-disciplined;
7. Have a commitment to learning;
8. Have critical thinking and decision-making skills;
9. Believe quality learning can take place in an online environment; and
10. Have good time management skills.

Disability Services

Student Disability Resource Center (http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/): The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) empowers students to manage challenges and limitations imposed by disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me to discuss the logistics of any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements (within the first week of the semester). In order to receive reasonable accommodations from me, you must be registered with the Student Disability Resource Center (1705 College Street, Close-Hipp Suite 102, Columbia, SC 29208, 803-777-6142). Any student with a documented disability should contact the SDRC to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations.

Student Success Center

In partnership with UofSC faculty, the Student Success Center (SSC) offers a number of programs to assist you in better understanding your course material and to aid you on your path to success. SSC programs are facilitated by professional staff, graduate students, and trained undergraduate peer leaders who have previously excelled in their courses. Resources available to you in this course may include:

- **Peer Tutoring:** You can make a one-on-one appointment with a Peer Tutor (www.sc.edu/success). Drop-in Tutoring and Online Tutoring may also be available for this course. Visit their website for a full schedule of times, locations, and courses.
- **Supplemental Instruction (SI):** SI Leaders are assigned to specific sections of courses and hold three weekly study sessions. Sessions focus on the most difficult content being covered in class. The SI Session schedule is posted through the SSC website each week and will also be communicated in class by the SI Leader.
- **Peer Writing:** Improve your college-level writing skills by bringing writing assignments from any of your classes to a Peer Writing Tutor. Similar to Tutoring, you can visit the website to make an appointment, and to view the full schedule of available drop-in hours and locations.
- **Success Consultations:** In Success Consultations, SSC staff assist you in developing study skills, setting goals, and connecting to a variety of campus resources. Throughout the semester, I may communicate with the Student Success Center regarding your progress throughout the semester, which indicates your instructor is concerned about your progress in this course. If contacted by the Student Success Center, please schedule a Success Consultation right away. Referrals are not punitive, and any information shared by your professor is confidential and subject to FERPA. Student Success Center services are offered to all UofSC undergraduates at no additional cost. Please call 803-777-1000, visit www.sc.edu/success, or come

to the Student Success Center in the Thomas Cooper Library (Mezzanine Level) to check schedules and make appointments.

SSC services are offered to all UofSC undergraduates at no additional cost. You are invited to call the Student Success Hotline at (803) 777-1000, visit the SSC website (www.sc.edu/success), or stop by the SSC in the Thomas Cooper Library on the Mezzanine Level to check schedules and make appointments.

Writing Center

I have found some students to really benefit from utilizing this resource.

Writing Center (http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/write/university-writing-center)

This course has many of writing assignments. The University Writing Center is an important resource you should use! It's open to help any UofSC student needing assistance with a writing project at any stage of development. The main Writing Center is in Byrnes 703.

University Library Resources

University Libraries Resources (sc.edu/libraries)

- University Libraries has access to books, articles, subject specific resources, citation help, and more. If you are not sure where to start, please Ask a Librarian! Assistance is available at sc.edu/libraries/ask.
- Remember that if you use anything that is not your own writing or media (quotes from books, articles, interviews, websites, movies – everything) you must cite the source in MLA (or other appropriate and approved) format.

Blackboard and Technology

Blackboard and Technology (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/end_user_services/available_technology_resources/)

As a student in this course, you have access to support from the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) for Blackboard and computer issues. The service desk can be reached at 803-777-1800.

Counseling Services

Counseling Services (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_health_services/medical-services/counseling-and-psychiatry/index.php): The University offers counseling and crisis services as well as outreach services, self-help, and frequently asked questions.

Mental Health

If stress is impacting you or getting in the way of your ability to do your schoolwork, maintain relationships, eat, sleep, or enjoy yourself, please reach out to any of our mental health resources. Counseling & Psychiatry offers individual and group counseling and psychiatric services. You can schedule an appointment at (803) 777-5223 or on MyHealthSpace. You can also call after-hours for crisis counseling. Wellness Coaching can help you improve in areas related to emotional and physical wellbeing, such as sleep, resiliency, balanced eating and more. Wellness Coaching appointments can be made by calling 803-777-6518. or on MyHealthSpace. Most of these services are offered at no cost as they are covered by the Student Health Services tuition fee. For all available mental health resources, check out sc.edu/mentalhealth.

Course Policies and Procedures

The Undergraduate Studies Bulletin (https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text) is the official document of record concerning undergraduate academic programs and regulations.

All graduate students are subject to the academic policies, regulations, and academic standards of both The Graduate School and the department, school and/or college in which enrolled.

UofSC graduate bulletin (https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/graduate/policies-regulations/graduate-academic-regulations/#text)

Attendance Policy

This is an synchronous class. Therefore regular attendance is mandatory.

Success in this course is dependent on your active participation throughout the course. You are expected to log into Blackboard several times a week and complete course assignments. Even if your work is completed, you still need to login to ensure that you have seen all announcements, etc. It is your responsibility to check updates related to the course.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum academic penalty of your failing the assignment, and will result in additional disciplinary measures. This includes improper citation of sources, using another student's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation.

The first tenet of the Carolinian Creed is, "I will practice personal and academic integrity."

Below are some websites for you to visit to learn more about University policies:

Carolinian Creed (http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed)

Academic Responsibility (http://www.sc.edu/policies/staf625.pdf)

Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/)

Information Security Policy and Standards (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/security/policy/universitypolicy/)

Plagiarism

Using the words or ideas of another as if they were one's own is a serious form of academic dishonesty. If another person's complete sentence, syntax, key words, or the specific or unique ideas and information are used, one must give that person credit through proper citation.

Class Conduct/Netiquette

Professionalism will be expected at all times, but most especially with your interactions online. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. We will show respect for one another by exhibiting patience and courtesy in our exchanges. Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a minimum requirement. Courtesy and kindness is the norm for those who participate in my class.

Our discussion board is a way for you to share your ideas and learning with your colleagues in this class. We do this as colleagues in learning, and the Discussion Board is meant to be a safe and respectful environment for us to conduct these discussions.

Some Netiquette Rules:

- Treat one another with respect. It will be expected that we will not attack one another personally for holding different opinions.
- Do not use all CAPITAL LETTERS in emails or discussion board postings. This is considered "shouting" and is seen as impolite or aggressive.
- Begin emails with a proper salutation (Examples: Dr. Name; Ms. Name; Hello Professor Name; Good afternoon Mr. Name). Starting an email without a salutation or a simple "Hey" is not appropriate.
- When sending an email, please include a detailed subject line. Additionally, make sure you reference the course number (Ex. ENGL 287) in the message and sign the mail with your name.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Text messaging language is not acceptable.
- Use good taste when communicating. Profanity should be avoided.
- Re-Read, think, and edit your message before you click "Send/Submit/Post."

Please remember when posting to be respectful and courteous to your colleagues, and limit your posts to discussions of this course and its assignments.

Late Work/Make-up Policy

All assignments and projects are due by the deadline as posted on the course schedule or as adjusted by me. I may also add additional assignments and projects.

Please plan accordingly and complete these assignments in advance of their deadlines to ensure any unanticipated circumstances do not result in a missed assignment. User error does not qualify you for any kind of makeup or retake opportunity.

Completing and submitting the assignments or discussion board posts by the due date is the sole responsibility of you. If you receive an incomplete score because of failure to submit the assignment or test by the due date, then your score for that assignment will be recorded as "zero."

Incomplete Grades

You may be assigned an 'I' (Incomplete) grade if you are unable to complete some portion of the assigned course work because of an unanticipated illness, accident, work-related responsibility, family hardship, or verified learning disability. An Incomplete grade is not intended to give you additional time to complete course assignments or extra credit unless there is indication that the specified circumstances prevented you from completing course assignments on time.

Instructional Methods

Students are required, to meet each day for sync class with the professor over Blackboard Ultra Collaborate. Those students will interact directly with each other and the professor in real. students will watch clips of movies and tv shows provided by the professor, which have been cleared through Thomas Cooper Educational Film Library (Swank, Kanopy) or on youtube and other free legal aps/sites. Or streamed by Professor, under fair use restrictions. Students also meet on Blackboard in Discussion Board to critique each other's projects and post updates/rewrites/revisions of their own projects, as well as read documents and do exercises on Blackboard.

All students also do readings from books that are required for the class.

Diversity and Inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Accessibility, Disability, and Triggers [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz]

I am committed to ensuring course **accessibility** for all students. If you have a documented **disability** and expect reasonable accommodation to complete course requirements, *please notify me at least one week before accommodation is needed*. More information is here: SDRC (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_disability_resource_center/) documentation to me before requesting accommodation. Likewise, if you are aware of cognitive or emotional **triggers** that could disrupt your intellectual or mental health, please let me know so that I can be aware in terms of course content.

CONTENT WARNING:

In this course, we will be discussing and evaluating fictional concepts, stories, scripts and videos that might contain material that some students find disturbing or even traumatizing. Examples include films that feature violent scenes, characters that spout offensive language or dogma, and mature content that some deem too graphic. If you suspect that upcoming material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I will be happy to discuss any concerns you have before the subject is addressed in class. If you ever feel the need to turn off the Blackboard during a class examination of such material, you may do so without penalty. And, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material or class discussions, tell me and we will find a time to do so during office hours or at a time more convenient to you.

Media Arts Safety Statement (we do not use equipment in this class, but am required to list this anyway):

Follow the procedures below to ensure safe and successful operation of all analog, electronic production equipment. Working with electricity can be dangerous. Use common sense and follow the procedures below.

1. When checking out equipment from Media Services, first inspect equipment to ensure it is in good working condition. If equipment or electrical cords are damaged, notify Media Services staff immediately.
2. Operate equipment only according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Consult the operating manual for the equipment (provided by your professor upon request, or you can find it online).
3. All electrician connections for the equipment must be suitable for the type of equipment and the working conditions (wet, dusty, flammable vapors). A ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) should be used if equipment is used outdoors or in wet/damp conditions.
4. Use proper lifting techniques (power lift with your legs, avoid using your back) when uploading/offloading equipment.
5. Users can request hands-on training on equipment use/set up either from the Media Services staff of faculty member.
6. If you have any additional questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Media Services in McMaster 301.

Ethics, and the Carolinian Creed [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz]

This course works to foster a climate free of harassment and discrimination.
The decision to enter university and pursue advanced study is a choice that entails commitment to personal **ethics** expressed in the Carolinian Creed (www.sa.sc.edu/creed): "I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions." Likewise, the Student Code of Conduct (STAF 6.26 (http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf626.pdf) stresses, "The University of South Carolina strives to maintain an educational community that fosters the development of students who are ethical, civil and responsible persons."

Title IX and Gendered Pronouns [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz***]***

This course affirms equality and respect for all gendered identities and expressions. Please don't hesitate to correct me regarding your preferred gender pronoun and/or name if different from what is indicated on the official class roster. Likewise, I am committed to nurturing an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Consistent with Title IX policy, please be aware that I as a responsible employee am obligated to report information that you provide to me about a situation involving sexual harassment or assault.

Values [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz***]***

Two core values, inquiry and civility, govern our class. **Inquiry** demands that we all cultivate an open forum for exchange and substantiation of ideas. Strive to be creative, to take risks, and to challenge our conventional wisdom when you see the opportunity. **Civility** supports our inquiry by demanding ultimate respect for the voice, rights, and safety of others. Threatening or disruptive conduct may result in course and/or university dismissal. Civility also presumes basic *courtesy*: please be well rested, on time, and prepared for class, which includes time for a restroom stop *before* (not during) class and silencing all personal devices.

My perspective is that we never cease being students of this world, so I believe that attentive, reflective people always have something to learn from others. Good discussions can be energetic and passionate but are neither abusive nor offensive. Vibrant, vigorous inquiry derives from discussions that:

- challenge, defend, and apply different ideas, theories, perspectives, and skills,
- extend a body of knowledge into different arenas and applications, and

result in a synergy that compels us to seek resolution to these discussions.

Expectations of the Instructor

I am expected to facilitate learning, answer questions appropriately, be fair and objective in grading, provide timely and useful feedback on assignments and treat you as I would like to be treated.

Copyright/Fair Use Statement

I will cite and/or reference any materials that I use in this course that I do not create. You, as students, are expected to not distribute any of these materials, resources, quizzes, tests, homework assignments, etc. (whether graded or ungraded). This includes any recordings of lectures, and the q and a's and presentations by guest speakers.

Remember: I am here to serve your educational and career needs

Please let me know if anything that you wanted to be covered has not been covered. I am here to educate you and try to help you become a successful professional creative artist to the very best of my ability. Always bring up anything that is concerning you so that I can make this educational experience the most useful to you so that you can leave MART and USC with a top portfolio that leads to commercial and artistic success.

I look forward to service you and fasten your seatbelt. Here we go…!

Important Quotes

"Get to know the characters before they get involved with the plot." --Walt Disney

"The protagonist does what he/she does throughout the story because of what he/she is. Your plot is his/her character in action... Do you really know this motley family you are rearing? Do you think their jokes are funny? Do you know their inner fears, their dreams, and their fighting weight? Because if you don't, the audience never will. And there is a practical way to find out..." --Wells Root

"The whole thing is—you've got to make them care about somebody."
--Frank Capra

Course Schedule Please note--

To improve the class, I may adjust the lecture, and presentation schedule due to more guests slotting in, or for example, as I adjust to the willingness of people to do live reads ahead of schedule—and as student projects develop, I can, where requested, tailor lectures for illustrating their project's genre characteristics, and for other reasons we cannot anticipate until the various stages of already in production projects are apparent. However, you will never be required to do anything before the date that is currently now on the below syllabus.) Thanks for your flexibility. It is all in the interest of providing you with the best educational and creative experience.

Your patience is much appreciated, especially as I have taken an overload of students (turned many more away as I said) to try to help those students graduating in Spring and MART. I also do not have a T.A. This is a challange for me (at the top screenwriting program UCLA, I know from when they tried to hire me, that we would be at eight students in this class --about 1/3ʳᵈ size-- so you can see what I am dealing with here, and I love teaching, so am trying to meet that demand as I very much want you to all succeed; and knowing screenwriting will help you in whatever field you go into and for your joy! Remember to contact me about anything confusing and I will fix it. Thank you!

Day	Class Topic	Additional pertinent information	
Tuesday Jan 14 Thurs Jan 16 Weekend Reading Assignment: Tuesday Jan 21	• Intro/syllabus Lecture on the basic flow of three act plots. • About genres, about story types, about to how to create characters and using the "I am" lists and character relationship charts. Discuss what makes a good character. Including character foibles and strengths. Character attitudes towards each other. I will illustrate character goals, act breaks, abc stories, etc. The 4 things that need to happen in your first act • Read Wells Root's "Writing the Script" • I will familiarize you with the sequence of project steps to be posted by you in various threads, in Discussion Board. • Story: The importance of a great premise/idea.	• Read as much as you can in other sections of Blackboard throughout the course. • Students who have previously taken my class and thus done many of the readings, need to spend that time both developing their project and critiquing others. • Exploring your genre at TV Tropes.comis a good thing to do throughout the development process • Readings show the "start of the readings". Read the rest of the books as quickly as you can. • Be active on other forums than Blackboard as well, including any set up for the class. • first discussion board responses(3 posts/ week will begin when I say, based on class project, and you will receive GENEROUS EXTRA CREDIT FOR DOING MORE) • I will raise your final grade 3 percent for every additional 30 comments you make above the minimum required • Projects must be regularly updated in posting, or otherwise people cannot give you feedback. Please do this.	

Tuesday night Homework **Thurs Jan 23**	• How to design a logline and why it is necessary to do so • Most great movies are about a great individual • PIXAR CHART! • Let's talk about SUSPENSE (Wells Root, etc) • Start watching "Dead Calm" This may go over several days and be mixed with lecture and discussion. Have a note pad and take notes carefully. Actively think where things are taking place to engage you with the characters and story. (quick table read if we have time from advanced project) • By now you should have posted on discussion board thread introducing yourself • Begin to cover the business structure of the movie industry in America and use some global examples. • Introduction to the Writers Guild of America, residuals, minimum basic agreement • The role of agents and managers • Lecture on business of movies—agents, managers, distribution, stars • This weekend: Read *The Complete Writer's Guide* sections 1 & 2 • Continue brainstorming to create a logline for which script story premise that you will spec. Remember, you may go through a few ideas. • A few people practice a brief pitch first volunteers if they already have ideas. Even a thinly developed premise is fine, and in fact it often starts that way.	• Take down your old version when you rewrite, to keep your thread clean. • Establish your threads under the appropriate thread, when the date comes (when I tell you) • Post in PDF, because both Apple and IBM machines can read them • You can edit pdfs. Use the Adobe reader (free program) to do so, by putting on sticky notes and using strike through. • Begin each post with a positive statement, and then follow with the feedback • If you are not getting posts, chances are your story is not working? What to do to improve it. • Feel comfortable THROWING OUT the whole project, early on, to get a better one. Happens all the time. • Feel free to spin off into groups on whatever form of communication you are most comfortable with. • There will be more movie examples screened as I find out the interest of the class, so what is on syllabus is just a beginning/example of where we can go. • I will do my best to not repeat clips from previous classes. This is a very challenging situation due to the cost of licensing films for USC/Swank, etc but the educational film librarian and I have worked hard, but there will be SOME overlap, but not much. • READ THE BOOKS! Obviously some of Well's Root's examples are out of date, but he is a treasure trove.	

	end of class about the optional script table reads for this class in the theater school. • Remember, for the rest of the semester, read the entire books on your time, asap! • **Submit Brook Driver two questions to Blackboard q and a thread for him by midnight Saturday Jan 21st**		
	• As you think about your initial premise/story over the weekend, ask yourself if you can make it achieve these basic benchmarks Answer the following about your project 1. What is the "problem" of the screenplay? 2. How do some of the characters clash 3. What the goals are of each main character? 4. And how do ANY OF the main characters arc? 5. What is your INCITING incident, ie. shakes up the protagonists' ordinary world, and their "initial plan" and what is their "setbacks" and how their "final plan" ends up working. 6. As well as how the A- Plot (action story growth) and B-Plot (emotional story growth) intertwine to give we viewers EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION. 7. How are your characters lining up with the Pixar Character chart? 8. What are your character's weaknesses? 9. What are they good at? 10. Have you done your "I am lists" and "character relationship charts"?		

	11. Have you humanized your villain?
	12. Are your characters active vs passive?
	13. What is their "big lie"?
	14. What is your inciting incident
	15. What is your "or else" or "dreadful alternative"?
	16. Is your first act introducing your protagonist, villain, crisis and dreadful alternative?
	17. What seeds are you planting to pay off later?
	18. How are you making your audience applaud, cry, laugh, dance, hide: what emotion?
Tues Jan 28 Thurs Jan 30	• Brook Driver, q and a • More students pitch ideas/log lines for feedbacks, again, fit around the movie screening. Including CIRCLE PITCHING
WEEKEND	Read Screenwriter's Bible sections 1 and 2. Remember, for the rest of the semester, read the entire books on your time, asap! • Read documents in Module 1 folder and apply the information to your projects • Develop your "I AM LISTS" for three main characters (two protagonists and one antagonist, if your movie has an antagonist, and three protagonists if your show has no antagonist) and your CHARACTER RELATIONSHIP CHART. Also, for weekend: read The Complete Writer's Guide sections 3 and 4 and start thinking about the villain's point of view. Write some ideas down and for feedback, post them up in the form of 1-3 sentences on Discussion Board!

Tuesday Feb 4 Thursday Feb 6 WEEKEND	• "News of the World" (Tom Hanks, we watch it in class) • continue watching "News of the World" (2020) in class • Your revised logline for your story is due posted up **SUNDAY at noon**, on that identified thread on Discussion Board. All I am lists and character relationship chart should be up on the appropriate Blackboard Discussion threads • Rember to keep up with your weekly posts on other people's projects, and extra credit will be awarded for extra posts.		
Tuesday February 11th HOMEWORK: Tues Feb 11th	• Other Aspects of feature writing career/life/biz • Breakout rooms to share premise ideas where Cliff can join in if he wishes to. I want you to focus here on how your developing characters are slotting into the Pixar chart. • Read documents in Module 2 folder and apply the information to your projects. • Complete planning your script's ending (as if you were writing the whole thing). • Find time to connect with classmates and share ideas out of class • discussion board post #2 • **FINAL logline (2-3 sentence description of your premise) due at Weds Feb 10th at noon.**		
Thursday February 13th Homework Feb 13th	LAB DAY: WRITE OUTLINE IN CLASS Pick three movies that you will watch in your own time. One must be one I have seen. Selecting that one from the movies we looked at in class or have cleared for class, makes that easy. *By the end of the semester*, you need to answer the following questions regarding each of them: • What was the "problem" of the movie that the		

	protagonists have to grapple with.	
	• What were the main characters GOALS	
	• How did the main character clash?	
	• What purpose in the story did any or a couple of side characters serve? [foils often talk a lot and speak about the lead character].	
	• What was the protagonist's arc in the story?	
	• How did events help them achieve that character change?	
	• How did the great endings make these movies memorable? ENDINGS ARE SO IMPORTANT!	
	• What were some of his "setbacks"	
	• What about B-Plot (emotional growth) ... how did it intertwine with the A (action story) to give we viewers the all-important EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION.	
	• What 3-5 characteristics that you learned in class lectures, discussions or readings did each movie exhibit	
Tuesday Feb18th	• Breakout rooms to share ideas for improving each other's CHARACTERS	
	• Write villain's and supporting characters' "I AM" lists in class if you hae not	
	• Work on character relationship charts in class	
	• Read documents in Module 3 folder and apply the information to your projects	
	• Specifically, refine characters (combine, delete, etc.)	
Thurs Feb 20th	• **POST your I am lists nd character relationship charts by Saturday at midnight on the appropriate thread on blackboard**	
	• Write and revise plots	
	• Try to find time to connect with classmates out of class and share ideas/critique	
	• Think "what does this story emotionally mean to me?"	

	• HAVE fun! IMPORTANT!		
Tuesday, Feb 25th	• ½ CLASS LAB. Finish outlining the plot, paying attention to cliffhangers and act breaks, plot reversals, "the pinch", suspense		
	• Breakout rooms to share ideas, critique each other		
HW Mid-week Thursday, Feb 27	• Read documents in Module 4 folder and apply the information to your projects		
	• try to find time to connect with classmates and share ideas		
	• Start to watch 3 feature films (Swank has several licensed that you can choose from, or choose your own after checking with me to make sure I know the film).		
	• WRITE INITIAL SCENES FOCUS on your supporting characters. What can you do to make them more interesting. Do you truly know them well? Are they entertaining and interesting? Dote on them just like your main characters.		
	• At this point, your "I am" lists, character relationship charts and outlines need to have been posted		
Tuesday March 4	• Environment as a character (hero myth Fury Road + Gravity)		
	• Lecture on science fiction genre as requested by the class.		
	• More on how to write a scene		
Mid Week(Weds)	• **First five pages due posted at noon.** Continue to watch the three films actively. Why are they working? What things described in this class are exhibited by them.		
Thursday March 6	• Ask yourself: are you getting more ideas for future scenes as you write pages? And come up with new ideas to fold into the narrative? What characters are flat? Throw them out! Or develop them more. Do your characters really have attitude, feelings about the other characters, goals, foibles, strengths and are they entertaining?		
MARCH 9-16 SPRING BREAK			

	• Revise using feedback from live reads/ discussion boards • Marylyn Monroe, early feminist icon (if you did not in previous class with me, watch "Some Like It Hot" clips (buddy comedy, with gender bending style, unheard of in the day--a masterpiece)		
Tuesday, March 18 **You should be** **to PAGE 15 and have posted it up**	• Live table reads • Lecture on: second acts • Revise using feedback from live reads/ discussion boards • More lecture on "Some Like It Hot" • I will cover any requested genres this day as well, what makes them "tick" (what their tropes are, character archetypes, plot style/tone.		
Thurs March 20	• Live table reads • Keep writing • Revise using feedback from live reads/ discussion boards • Go through what you have written so far (you are at page 15 AT THIS POINT) AND ADD CONFLICT I EVERY SCENE!		
Tuesday, March 25	• FIRST DRAFT UP TO PAGE 20 IS DUE • Possible guest Speaker(TBA) • Ask Professor Davis industry questions like: -The value of directing or making your own project at USC -Success of home- grown projects	•	

	-Getting your work out – including agents, managers, lawyers, direct submissions -Contracts -The screenwriter's life -Contests -Internships. How to behave as an intern or as an assistant		

THE REST OF THE SEMESTER UNTIL APRIL 24th (THAT LAST DAY OF CLASS, REMEMBER: NO FINAL EXAM) WILL BE HELD OPEN ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF YOU STUDENTS/WRITERS AS THINGS DEVELOP .

With 28 of us, which is a huge number of students for this class (a record!) we must allot enough time to do table reads and lab time as we learn more and revise scripts. Remember when presenting for reads, do not make minor changes and then have a table read for us on the same material. It will exhaust us, and take time away from others.

So, from March 25th to the last day of class we will be working on the scripts trying to improve them every way that we can, showing appropriate genre examples that dovetail with genres of students projects where they want to know that from me. And also any additional guests. As I said, I'm still waiting for which day Ash Brannon commits to, but we do know that Brook Driver will speak in Early April. Therefore, we will need two questions for him before that time also. You also need to have finished all the books and the watching the three movies and writing the reports on them. You will also finalize drafts of course, and there is the opportunity to do the table reads through Prof. Tobolski's class.

On the last day of class, you need to

- Check you have submitted all required discussion boards
- Check all work has been submitted throughout the course
- Submit the final projecton final project Blackboard discussion thread.
- Turn in script pages digitally only, with cover page and cover page must have your name, the work's title and your email address
- Make sure, if you want extra credit, that you submit pages over the 20 minimum or that you exceeded the comments on Blackboard by the amount stipulated in the schedule or both!
- You also on the last day need to have posted your reports on the three movies you watched, one of which I need to have watched What 3-5 characteristics that you learned in class lectures, discussions or readings did each movie exhibit and answer the questions listed above in the table

Submit Final Project by 11:59pm Thursday, April 24th.