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## **The BIG SCREEN Theory: Screenwriting for Beginners**

**Teaching technique:** the first hour of the class will be spent teaching new material interspersed with relevant movie clips, the last half-hour will be used for writing exercises and work-shopping homework assignments.

**Course goals:** gain general knowledge of screenwriting as well as learn techniques for writing a concise and compelling script. At the end of the course students will have executed a variety of writing exercises, outlined, and begun writing a 10-20 page short script.

**Homework:** optional, but essential if you'd like to participate in the last half hour of class. All assignments can be e-mailed in Final Draft or Pdf format by Sunday evening to [contact@naominoir.com](mailto:contact@naominoir.com) for feedback by Tuesday's class.

### **Week 1: The Basics**

General overview of the course, formatting (headings/ descriptions/ action/ dialogue), screenwriting software, coming up with a screenplay idea that will sustain momentum through the Second Act, Theme, genre

**Writing Exercise:** "Write what you love, not what you know"

**Handouts:** Formatting, Theme

**Homework:** Paragraph summary of two script ideas

### **Week 2: Character**

Character vs. Plot as ways to approach writing a script, Character tree (traits/ history), character arcs, wants vs. needs, Enneagram, how to get audience to identify with character

**Writing Exercise:** "Identify your approach" + "Obstacles"

**Handouts:** Character Tree, Enneagram, Synthesizer Clock

**Homework:** Character Tree of main character in your script

### **Week 3: Plot + Structure**

Short vs. feature-length scripts, Three Act Structure (plot points), non-traditional structures, central conflict

**Writing Exercise:** “Create your conflict”

**Handouts:** three-act structure

**Homework:** Three-act structure for your film idea

#### Week 4: **Outlines**

Beat-sheet, Sequences (Frank Daniel), Treatment, avoiding episodic writing

**Writing Exercise:** “Consequences”

**Handouts:** Beat-sheet, Sequences, Treatment

**Homework:** Write beat sheet or sequences (you choose!) for your script idea

#### Week 5: **Dialogue + Visual Story-telling**

Finding your character’s voice, how to avoid on-the-nose dialogue, words vs. action (or how to let your character lie), visual descriptions (as if/ like...), Scene of Introduction

**Writing Exercise:** “Show, don’t tell” + “Write like your character, not like you”

**Handouts:** Scene of Introduction

**Homework:** Write a ‘Scene of Introduction’ for a secondary character in your script without using dialogue

#### Week 6: **Scene Writing**

Brief overview of the different types of scenes, Power Struggle Scenes vs. Scenes of Negotiation, Scenes of Decision, tips for editing, overcoming writer’s block

**Handouts:** Kinds of scenes, Power Struggle Scene, Scene of Negotiation, Scene of Decision, Techniques for overcoming writer’s block

**Writing Exercise:** “Logline” + “Impossible choices”

**Homework:** Write!

**Extra Credit** (I’ll buy you a cup of coffee): come to the Screenwriter’s Guild of Ithaca meeting and share your writing