Creative Writing:

Writing for Stage &/or Screen

Spring 2018

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| **Instructor** | Dr. JC Reilly | **Class** | LMC 3236-X |
| **E-mail** | jc.reilly@lmc.gatech.edu | **Pre-Req** | ENGL 1102 |
| **Phone** | 404-385-7546 (e-mail is better, though) |  |  |
| **Office** | Skiles 332 |  |  |
| **Office Hours** | M: 11:00-12:00 | **Class Time** | 9:30-10:45 MW |
|  | Or by appt./ e-mail me | **Location** | Skiles 343 |

**Description:**

This course will help students develop creative writing techniques in short, narrative scriptwriting (though there is one fiction assignment to get your feet wet). The course will discuss elements of form, craft, language, style, theme, character, plot, story, genre conventions, etc., etc., both as they pertain to creative writing more generally and to writing for films and for the stage specifically. We will use scriptwriting software to write our scripts, and examine and analyze screenplays and films for inspiration as well as direction. Students will develop several scripts, from ideas to drafts…to drafts…to drafts…to polished, producible plays and films, through invention exercises, revision exercises, small group feedback, large group workshops, etc. Additionally students will be expected to attend a current in-the-theater play to develop critical eyes towards drama, analyze examples of play scripts and screenplays, and write reflexively about the work they and others have produced in order to contextualize, understand, and appreciate craft.

This course has a second function, and that is to provide workable, shootable screenplays for Professor John Thornton’s LMC 3406 Video Production class to produce. All students who remain in this section of creative writing should be prepared to allow free access to their screenplays, with writer credit on any final film, so that students in later sections LMC 3406 will be able to bring your screenplays to life. More information about how this process works will be forthcoming.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this class, students will be able to:

* Advance their understanding of what constitutes readable, interesting, and dynamic creative writing;
* Develop, revise, and polish several short scripts (plus one short fiction story) in preparation for them to be staged or filmed in a later semester, outside the scope of this class;
* Read, analyze, and communicate more contextually and skillfully;
* Engage in critical discussion of creative works by fellow students as well as published playwrights and screenwriters;
* Assess their own writing for strengths and areas for improvement, and be able to articulate this information; and
* Co-create knowledge in a collaborative learning environment.

**Additional Learning Outcomes Per LMC & BOR:**

Students will also be able to:

* Cultivate awareness of the traditions and conventions of literature, film, and other forms of narrative art, analyze those traditions and conventions in specific cultural contexts; and
* Describe relationships among languages, philosophies, cultures, literature, ethics, or the arts.

**Required Materials:**

* Garrison, Gary. *A More Perfect 10: Writing and Producing the Ten Minute Play.* Focus Publishing, 2009.
* Gurskis, Dan. *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production.* Course Technology, Cengage Learning, 2007.

**Assignment Calendar Overview, Evaluation, & Assessment:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project** | **Point Value** | **%age** | **Due** |
| Attendance and active, engaged participation in all discussions and activities, with devices TURNED OFF (unless we *need* to work on the computer). | 50 pts. | 10% | Daily |
| Out-of-class, *unintentional* timed writings | 30 @ 1 pt. each | 6% | Periodically |
| An approved writing prompt that you prepare for your assigned day | 5 pts. | 1% | Specified dates |
| Drafts turned in for comments on their due-date. | 5 @ 5 pts. each | 5% | Specified dates on  detailed course calendar |
| List of Twenty Workable Loglines | 25 pts. | 5% | W January 31 |
| Play Analysis: a play of your choice (you can find one at the library or borrow one of mine). | 40 pts. | 8 | W February 7 |
| Peer Critique #1: Written critique to another student’s play | 35 pts. | 7% | M February 21 |
| Live Theatre Critique: Written response to a live play of your choice currently in the theaters, like DramaTech. You must attach the ticket stub (or online payment printed receipt) to the assignment (stub is worth 4 points by itself). | 30 pts. | 6% | W February 28 |
| Midterm Portfolio | 85 pts. | 17% | M March 5 |
| Screenplay Analysis: a screenplay of your choice available online at any number of websites, like [www.imsdb.com](http://www.imsdb.com) or [www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html](http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts.html) | 40 pts. | 8% | W March 28 |
| Peer Critique #2: Written critique to another student’s screenplay | 35 pts. | 7% | W April 18 |
| Final Portfolio | 100 pts. | 20% | M April 23 |

There are 500 points available to earn in this class.

A=500 to 460 B=459.999 to 415 C=414.999 to 370 D=369.999 to 325 F= <324.999

**Attendance Policy (& Active Participation)**

**You may miss 4 classes for ANY reason before your overall course grade will be decreased by 25 points (5%) for each additional absence**. “Any reason” includes illness, personal days, or transportation issues. Please note that Institute-approved absences are exceptions to this policy, as long as official documentation is provided.

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities should contact Disability Services to discuss reasonable accommodations. [You can apply for services here](https://gatech-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/) or visit Suite 221 in the Smithgall Student Services (Flag) Building. For more information, please [visit the Disability Services website](http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/).

**Academic Honesty and Integrity:**

All work you turn in for this class must be your own work, completed for this semester in this semester (i.e., not work you did in another class) with all outside reference sources properly cited and acknowledged, if necessary. Please review Section 3 of the [Academic Honor Code](http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code).

**A Note about Plagiarism:**

According to Dictionary.com, [plagiarism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plagiarism?s=t) is defined as:

1. an act or instance of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author’s work as one’s own, as by not crediting the original author;
2. a piece of writing or other work reflection such unauthorized use or imitation.

In short, using someone else’s words and ideas without attribution or misappropriating them in some way is STEALING. This is a creative writing class—where you have free reign to make things up. You have an imagination, or you wouldn’t be here. You don’t need to use someone else’s work at all. But if you do use outside sources for your work for any reason (such as the “Screenplay Re-creation” assignment), please use that intellectual property responsibly.

Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive a zero on the assignment or fail the course. In addition, the instance will be reported to the Dean of Students who may take further action. If you have any questions involving these or any other issues regarding plagiarism, the Academic Honor Code, or what constitutes appropriate academic integrity, please talk to me or visit the [Academic Honor Code website](http://www.honor.gatech.edu/).

**Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, you are encouraged to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

**Last But Not Least:**

By remaining in this class, you agree to take responsibility for your own learning. Should you have any questions, or if you are unclear on any aspect of the syllabus, assignments, the class itself, or any information discussed in the class, it is your responsibility to get answers by raising the issue in a timely manner during class, during office hours, or via e-mail. Not knowing does not excuse you. And, by “timely,” I mean **as soon as possible**. If something is going on that I’m unaware of, something that affects your performance and success in class, for instance, and you don’t tell me until the day before class ends, it will be considerably difficult to help you. I need to know sooner rather than later.

**And Finally:**

Congratulations if you’ve gotten this far. A list of assignment guidelines will be available to you in Canvas. The calendar and this syllabus will also be emailed to you so you can’t miss it. (Assignment details will generally appear with the Assignment listing in Canvas.)

**Course Calendar**

Please note, I reserve the right to make alterations to the schedule in order to better meet the needs of the class, and may periodically add additional resources to enrich our understanding of the craft of writing, as necessary. Also, just because we may not get to discuss everything in class does not mean you aren’t responsible for the material.

We will do some in-class writing nearly every class period, so please bring writing implements every day.

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Week 1

M 1/8 Syllabus/ course discussion; invention exercises and

“unintentional” writing; getting over nerves

W 1/10 Narrative, character, story invention exercises; some thoughts on dialogue

Using Celtx scriptwriting software (bring your computers!)

*Fri. 1/12 Last day to add classes by 4 p.m.*

Week 2

M 1/15 MLK Holiday—NO CLASS

W 1/17 Images & sensory language invention exercises; Conflict and Connection

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Week 3

M 1/22 Discuss Garrison, Intro-Chap 2; invention exercises; Where’s the trouble?:

Making life difficult for your characters

**Short Story Due for Feedback**

W 1/24 Discuss Garrison, Chap 3-4; invention exercises

Loglines for films…and plays? How using loglines for screenplays

can also help keep your drama on track; Character exercises

Week 4

M 1/29 Discuss Garrison, Chap 5; Skim play examples in Chap 7; Review play

format; invention exercises; the importance of theme!

W 1/31 Discuss Garrison, Chap 8; invention exercises; “Making Your Characters

Speak Well”: More thoughts on dialogue; modeling the workshop format

**List of Twenty Workable Loglines Due**

Week 5

M 2/5 Small Group Share:bring first 3 pages of your 10 minute play to share

**Play Intros Due for Feedback**

W 2/7 Developing complications for your characters; the dramatic arc in a 10

minute play; Plot mapping

Week 6

M 2/10 Developing satisfying resolutions; Revision work (bring what you’ve

written so far on your play for in-class revising)

W 2/12 Small Group Share: bring complete play (approx. 10-11 pages, no more)

**Full Play Due for Feedback**

Week 7

M 2/19 Full Class Workshop (3 plays)

W 2/21 Full Class Workshop (3 plays)

**Peer Critique #1 Due**

Week 8

M 2/26 Full Class Workshop (3 plays)

W 2/28 Full Class Workshop (3 plays)

**Live Theatre Critique Due**

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Week 9

M 3/5 Discuss Gurskis Intro-Chap 3; invention exercises; the dramatic arc

in a 5 minute screenplay; view examples of student films

**Midterm Portfolios Due**

M 3/5 Discuss Gurskis Chap 4-6; invention exercises; Where’s the trouble, Part

2: Making life difficult for your characters in half the space

W 3/7 Mining your loglines for screenplay ideas; invention exercises

Week 10

M 3/12 The importance of visual storytelling; scene, setting, screenplay format;

invention exercises

W 3/14 Making Your Characters Shut Up: Thoughts on screenplay dialogue;

invention exercises

**Screenplay #1 Due for Feedback**

Week 11

M 3/19 Spring Break—NO CLASS

W 3/21 Spring Break—NO CLASS

Week 12

M 3/26 Film Adaptation

W 3/28 Adapting your Short Story for the Screen: Benefits and Pitfalls

Week 13

M 4/2 Adapting your Short Story, con’t; making the internal, external

W 4/4 Small Group Share (Screenplay 1 or 2, approx. 5-6 pages, no more)

**Screenplay #2 Due for Feedback**

Week 14

M 4/9 Revision work (bring either Screenplay 1 or 2 for in-class revising);

Final Portfolio discussion

W 4/11 Full Class Workshop (4 screenplays)

Week 15

M 4/16 Full Class Workshop (4 screenplays)

W 4/18 Full Class Workshop (4 screenplays)

**Peer Critique #2 Due**

Week 16

M 4/23 Course Wrap-up; last thoughts?

**Final Portfolio Due**

**There is no final exam in this class.**