Eric J. Adams
Adjunct Professor
eadams@santarosa.edu

Virtual Office Hours: 10am to 12pm, Thursdays. Email for appointment.

Media 22: Screenwriting
Section 1605e
Tuesdays 6-9pm (virtual)

Course Syllabus, Fall 2020

SCREENWRITING is a foundational course for beginning and intermediate writers interested in crafting an original feature screenplay, television series or streamed program. We'll begin the class with the fundamentals of storytelling, story structure, and screenplay formatting. We'll practice developing and pitching stories ideas. We'll continue by exploring the essential elements of story, including theme, plot, character, and conflict. We'll learn the dramatic units of a script, such as beat, scene, sequence and act, and polish the fine art of writing dialogue. And we'll put all these together by end of term in a full story "treatment" and a completed Act 1 (of 3) of a screenplay. You have the option to complete a full script.

Throughout the semester, we will read scripts, watch films, and practice how to analyze scripts and films like professional readers in the industry.

Just as in a Hollywood writers' room, everyone will share their work (both written and verbally) with other writers and be expected to provide feedback. You'll pitch your ideas and listen as we "table read" your pages. This is a non-judgmental, collaborative class. The more you participate the more you will learn.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Compose a well-developed and properly formatted screenplay.
2. Evaluate a theatrically produced film script.

OTHER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

If you participate fully, you will:

1. Understand the fundamentals and building blocks of story
2. Learn to develop and improve commercial story ideas
3. Write log lines and treatments
4. Create, revise and complete a properly formatted screenplay
5. Understand the elements of commercial screenplays
6. Learn how to market yourself as writers and your scripts to Hollywood producers and studios.

Please budget to rent or download several films throughout the semester (some of which may be viewed at the library).

REQUIRED TEXTS

 "My Story Can Beat Up Your Story," Jeffrey Alan Schecter

SCREENPLAY SOFTWARE

Pre prepared to deliver scenes and scripts typed and proofread in proper screenplay format. Suggested programs:

Celtx (least expensive)
MovieMagic Screenwriter (best user interface)
Final Draft (industry standard)
WriterDuet (great for online collaboration)

ASSIGNMENTS PERCENTAGE OF GRADE

Writing Assignments (script analysis/coverage) 15%
Quizzes 10%
Collaboration and group participation 15%
Writing Assessment (final treatment and Act 1) 60%

THE FILM LIST

All films either read or screened in class have been carefully selected for their artistic value and because they provide fitting examples of form, style, and narrative. As every student, with no exception, will be required to watch or read every movie, it is important that you understand that some of the movies in class may be rated R or unrated.

Students who cannot tolerate scenes involving adult content, such as nudity, sexuality, violence, or coarse language are strongly advised to enroll in a different class.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is required for the course. You will be allowed to miss one class period without penalty. For each class additional period missed without professor consent, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. You are responsible for all lecture material presented in class regardless of attendance.

A NOTE ON DISTANCE LEARNING

PLEASE BE READY TO APPEAR ON ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE DURING THE COURSE OF EVERY CLASS. And please anticipate changes in curriculum and process as we learn together the dynamics of distance learning.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic dishonesty is regarded as any act of deception, benign or malicious, in the completion of any academic exercise. Examples of academic dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, impersonation, misrepresentation of idea or fact for the purpose of defrauding, use of unauthorized aids or devices, falsifying attendance records, violation of testing protocol, inappropriate course assignment collaboration, and any other acts that are prohibited by the instructor of record.

A student who plagiarizes an assignment, in part or in full, will receive no credit for the assignment. A second offense will result in failure of the course. Plagiarism – from the Latin word for "kidnap" – involves using another's work without giving proper credit, whether done accidentally or on purpose. This includes not only words and ideas, but also graphs, artwork, music, maps, statistics, diagrams, scientific data, software, films, videos, and the like. Plagiarism is plagiarism whether the material is from published or unpublished sources. It does not matter whether ideas are stolen, bought, downloaded from the Internet, or written for the student by someone else – it is still plagiarism. Even if only bits and pieces of other sources are used, or outside sources reworded, they must still be cited. To avoid problems, students should cite all sources and check with the instructor before submitting an assignment or project. Students are always responsible for any plagiarism in their work.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT

If you need disability related accommodation for this class, such as a note taker, test taking services, digital equipment etc., please provide the Authorization for Academic Accommodations (AAA letter) from the Disability Resources Department (DRD) to the instructor as soon as possible.

You may also speak with the instructor privately about your accommodations. If you have not received authorization from DRD, it is recommended that you contact them directly.

Except under unusual circumstances, the guidelines and requirements in the syllabus will not change. If any changes are necessary, all changes will be communicated in writing as an addendum to the syllabus.

Class Schedule
(tentative and subject to change)

August 18: The Story of Story. What's Your Story?
August 24: The Story Triangle: Theme, Plot, Character
September 1: The Language and Mechanics of the Screenplay
September 8: No Class
September 15: Character Arcs & Character Archetypes
September 22: Plotting Like a Pro
September 29: Online Pitching Party
October 6: Creating Great Beats, Scenes, Sequences, and Acts
October 12: Mid-Session Individual Conferences
October 20: Writing Treatment and Outlines
October 27: Writing the First 10 Pages
November 3 (ELECTION DAY) Understanding Genre
November 10: The Art of Rewriting
November 17: Table Readings
November 24: The Business of Hollywood
December 1: End of Term Individual Conferences
December 8: Awards Night and Wrap Party