

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
THEA 3322 – SCREENWRITING II
SPRING 2023**

Tues/Thurs 12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. BAB 317 Office hours: MWF 1:00 – 2:00 pm and T/TH 2:00 - 3:00 pm All other times by appointment	Marjorie Scott Chair, Dept of Visual and Performing Arts Asst. Prof. of Communication and Theatre e-mail: mscott3@sulross.edu p 432-837-8039 Office: FAB 106
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will study the principles of dramatic structure and practice the craft of writing for the screen. Screenwriting is visual. What does the audience see? What does the audience hear? Students will develop complete outlines and write the first act of an original, feature-length screenplay.

To you, the students:

This class is an opportunity to tell the stories you want to tell. Last semester, you had the opportunity to write five short screenplays and now you have the chance to write a feature-length one. You have a chance to develop a longer character arc and broaden the scope of your story. I look forward to a fun and productive semester!

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

-James Baldwin

“Talent is God’s gift; either you’ve got it, or you don’t. But writing is a personal responsibility; either you do it, or you don’t.”

-Syd Field

PREREQUISITES

Completed THEA 3321: Screenwriting I with a grade of “C” or better, or instructor’s permission.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES *The graduating student will demonstrate:*

- 1) Knowledge of eras and contributions made throughout Theatre History and Musical Theatre History.

Additionally, the graduating student with a concentration in Acting/Directing will demonstrate:

- 2) The ability to express themselves creatively through appropriate theatrical performance the ability to analyze a script.
- 3) The ability to work creatively with actors and technicians in mounting a laboratory theatrical production.
- 4) The ability to apply standard requirements to all aspects of technical production.

Additionally, the graduating student with a concentration in technical/design will demonstrate:

- 5) The ability to apply all approaches to the theatrical design and rendering of the design.
- 6) The ability to address all technical aspects of a theatrical production.

MARKETABLE SKILLS

Strong oral and written communication skills.

Strong analytical skills.

Strong teamwork and collaboration skills

Through a combination of coursework and laboratory work, i.e., theatrical productions, our students will gain the opportunity to explore and develop all three program marketable skills. Specifically, students will learn how to analyze scripts, and communicate their findings via written assignments. They will also be encouraged to support their analysis orally through classroom discussion and their Comprehensive Oral Exam at the end of the senior year. Theatrical productions will provide the opportunity for actors and technicians to problem solve and work collaboratively developing strong teamwork skills.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Articulate a working vocabulary of screenwriting terminology.
- Demonstrate proficiency with Final Draft or Movie Magic software.
- Demonstrate beginner-level craft in writing a feature film outline with a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Demonstrate intermediate-level craft in writing believable dialogue and developing clear character and character arc in a feature film.
- Effectively analyze the story structure and character development of a screenplay.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) Writing exercises in and out of class

- 2) A complete and polished feature film outline
- 3) A complete and polished draft of the first act of a feature screenplay
- 4) Read and analyze at least one feature-length script
- 5) Assigned chapters from the textbook by Syd Field and additional readings
- 6) Full participation in class discussions. All students must participate in providing feedback to their peers.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- 1) A working Sul Ross e-mail account;
- 2) A working blackboard account;
- 3) A working Zoom account;
- 4) Reliable access to Final Draft 12, or Movie Magic Screenwriter;
- 5) Access to a reliable computer

REQUIRED READING:

- 1) Field, Syd. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. 2005, Bantam Dell.

RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

1. Assignments are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Meet your deadlines.
2. Attendance is mandatory.
3. You must do the reading. If you want to get better at this craft, do the reading.
4. You must WRITE. If you want to get better at this craft, you must write.
5. You must read scripts. It will help you become a better writer.
6. Even if you think your work sucks you have to hand it in. Most of writing is re-writing.
7. We treat each other like princes/princesses and poets. When someone reads his/her/their work in class, we support it. We start with positive feedback and then discuss ways to improve or clarify it.
8. Please refrain from using “you should” statements in your feedback to one another. Each writer is developing his/her/their unique voice and must find the most effective way to tell his/her/their stories. Instead, make a suggestion, such as “you might consider.”
9. All work must be typed and in proper format. Final Draft 9 is available on the computers in BAB 303. As soon as you start writing scenes, you must use Final Draft or Movie Magic. You may purchase Final Draft software for the student rate of \$99.99 at www.finaldraft.com. Movie Magic is on sale for \$49 for students.
10. Submit all pages and drafts in pdf when emailed to professor.
11. All work must be original and must not be adapted from any other published or unpublished written material.
12. Plagiarizing, cheating, or any other dishonest behavior in the classroom will not be tolerated. Rules and regulations regarding plagiarism, dishonesty, and other issues concerning classroom participation can be found in University Rules and

Regulations and Student Handbook. This course will abide by these established policies. A student found to be engaging in these activities, will be penalized to the full extent of Sul Ross State University policy.

13. Turn off your cell phones, laptops, and other electronic device (unless you're using them for class) s upon entering class. Be here.

COURSE EVALUATION

Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Attendance/Participation	15%
2) Writing Exercises (in and out of class)	20%
3) Feature screenplay outline	20%
4) Polished first act of feature	30%
5) Analysis of feature screenplay	15%

Grading Criteria:

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship. What color has your pee been lately?

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is **mandatory**. If you must miss class for a university-related activity, you must inform the instructor and arrangements regarding coursework must be made **prior to your absence**. If you miss class due to illness, you must contact the instructor **before** class. The instructor will mark the absence as excused if you provide written documentation from a doctor or other health professional. Six unexcused absences will result in you being dropped from the course with a grade of “F” as per Sul Ross State University policy.

Arriving to class **on time** is essential – **arriving late more than two times will be counted as one absence. Leaving before class ends will result in you being marked absent, unless you have made prior arrangements with me.**

Alpine Disability statement:

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to

provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartz@sulross.edu Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

Additional information for students at Rio Grande College:

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may additionally use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for InterLibrary Loan (ILL) from the Alpine campus.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose, and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Diversity Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race,

gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). I also understand that economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

CLASS CALENDAR: Assignments and Deadlines

Note that these dates and the details of each class are subject to change at the instructor's discretion

Day	Date	Topics and Assignments
Thurs	Jan 19	No class meeting. Purchase/order a copy of the required textbook and Final Draft 12.
Tues	Jan 24	Review scriptwriting format with Bret!
Thurs	Jan 26	Discuss three ideas for screenplay in class and discuss the art and craft of the screenplay.
Tues	Jan 31	Writing exercise on “subject” in class and discuss reading Reading due: Introduction and Chapter 1 and 2 of <i>Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting</i>
Thurs	Feb 2	The Paradigm Reading due: <i>Thelma & Louise</i> full script Assignment due: Breakdown of script into beginning/middle/end
Tues	Feb 7	Review and discuss writing assignment on “subject.” In 3-4 sentences, clearly describe the subject of your story. Make sure you’ve read chapters 1 and 2 of the book.
Thurs	Feb 9	Review and discuss writing assignment on “subject” (continued).
Tues	Feb 14	Creation of Character/Writing exercise in class (main character and dramatic need) Reading Due: Chapter 3 of <i>Screenplay</i>
Thurs	Feb 16	Creation of Character (continued) Assignment due: Description of main character and dramatic need started on Feb 14.
Tues	Feb 21	Building a Character and Story and Character Reading due: Chapters 4 & 5 of <i>Screenplay</i>
Thurs	Feb 23	Building a Character and Story and Character (continued). Writing exercise in class (Character biographies)
Tues	Feb 28	Review and discuss character biographies Assignment due: Character biography for main character

Thurs Mar 2	Review and discuss character biographies (continued)
Tues Mar 7	Conflict – Writing exercise in class (Circle of Beginning)
Thurs Mar 9	Conflict - Circle of Beginning (continued) Assignment due: Bring Circle of Beginning writing exercise to class to discuss
Tues Mar 14	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Thurs Mar 16	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Tues Mar 21	Endings and Beginnings Reading due: Chapter 6 of <i>Screenplay</i>
Thurs Mar 23	Endings and Beginnings (continued)
Tues Mar 28	Setting Up the Story Reading due: Chapter 7 of <i>Screenplay</i>
Thurs Mar 30	Structuring Act I – Writing exercise in class Reading due: Chapter 8 of <i>Screenplay</i>
Tues Apr 4	Structuring Act I (continued) Assignment due: Index Card Structure Exercise
Thurs Apr 6	Read and discuss first 10 pages of screenplays Assignment due: First 10 pages of your screenplay (correct format!)
Tues Apr 11	Continue reviewing first 10 pages in class
Thurs Apr 13	Read and discuss rewrites of first 10 pages Assignment due: Rewrites of first 10 pages
Tues Apr 18	Continue reviewing rewrites of first 10 pages
Thurs Apr 20	Read and discuss first 20 pages Assignment due: First 20 pages
Tues Apr 25	Continue reviewing first 20 pages
Thurs Apr 27	Read and discuss rewrites of first 20 pages Assignment due: Rewrites of first 20 pages
Tues May 2	Continue reviewing rewrites of first 20 pages

- Thurs May 4 Read and discuss first 30 pages of screenplays
Assignment due: First 30 pages due
- Tues May 9 Continue reviewing first 30 pages of screenplays
- Thurs May 11 DEAD DAY – NO CLASS MEETING
- Wed May 17 **FINAL at 10:15 am – 12:15 pm** Bring third rewrite of first act of screenplay (approximately 30 correctly formatted pages) and completed, polished outline of entire feature. Printed copies of first 30 pages for entire class, including instructor. One copy of outline of remainder of script for instructor.