

# Advanced Screenplay Writing Syllabus Proposal

## **Course Description:**

This advanced graduate-level course in Screenplay Writing focuses on developing and completing a feature-length screenplay. Emphasizing narrative structure, character development, dialogue, and visual storytelling, students will refine their craft through writing, peer critiques, and analysis of contemporary screenplays. By the end of the course, students will have a polished first draft ready for submission to agents, producers, or screenwriting competitions.

## **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, writers will:

1. Develop and complete a feature-length screenplay (90-120 pages).
2. Analyze and apply principles of narrative structure, including the three-act structure, inciting incident, midpoint, climax, and resolution.
3. Create complex, multi-dimensional characters with distinct voices and motivations.
4. Write authentic, engaging dialogue that enhances character and story.
5. Explore and utilize various screenwriting techniques, including subtext, pacing, and visual storytelling.
6. Provide and receive constructive feedback through peer reviews and workshops.
7. Understand the industry standards for screenplay format and presentation.

## **Required Texts:**

- The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri
- Wired for Story: The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence by Lisa Cron
- Selected contemporary screenplays (provided by the instructor)

## **Course Requirements:**

1. Feature-Length Screenplay: Students will write and submit a complete feature-length screenplay. The screenplay should adhere to industry formatting standards and reflect the techniques and principles discussed in class.
2. Outline & Treatment: Before beginning the screenplay, students will submit an outline.
3. Scene Assignments: Throughout the semester, students will write and workshop individual scenes that will contribute to their final screenplay.
4. Peer Reviews & Workshops: Students are required to participate in peer reviews, providing and receiving detailed feedback on screenplay drafts.

5. Final Presentation/Pitch: At the end of the semester, students will pitch their screenplay to the class.

**Pass/Fail Criteria:**

To pass this course, students must:

- Submit all required assignments (outline, treatment, scene assignments, full screenplay).
- Participate actively in peer reviews and workshops.
- Complete a feature-length screenplay that demonstrates an understanding of the concepts and techniques covered in the course.
- Present their screenplay in the final presentation, showing thoughtful engagement with their work and the feedback received.

**Course Schedule:**

Week 1: Introduction to Screenwriting

- Course Overview & Expectations
- Read: Egri, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Chapters 1-2
- Assignment: Brainstorming and Idea Development

Week 2: Story Structure & The Three-Act Paradigm (and Beyond!)

- Read: Egri, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Chapters 3-4
- In-Class Exercise: Developing the Inciting Incident
- Assignment: Outline Due

Week 3: Character Development

- Read: *There Will Be Blood* & *The Royal Tenenbaums*
- Workshop: Creating Memorable Characters
- Assignment: Character Profiles Due

Week 4: Writing the First Act

- Read: Cron, *Wired for Story*, Chapters 1-2
- In-Class Writing: Inciting Incidents
- Assignment: First Act Draft Due

Week 5: Scene Structure & Pacing

- Read: *Inside Out*, & *The Piano*
- Workshop: Relationship Shift Scene Structure

Week 6: Dialogue: Writing Realistic and Impactful Conversations

- Read: Egri, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Chapters 7-8

- In-Class Exercise: Structure Inherent Dialogue

Week 7: The Second Act: Conflict & Subtext

- Read: Cron, *Wired for Story*, Chapters 3-4
- Workshop: Developing the Midpoint (want/needs)
- Assignment: Second Act Draft Due

Week 8: Visual Storytelling & Show, Don't Tell

- Read: *Midsommer & Pi*
- In-Class Exercise: Neuroscience of visual storytelling

Week 9: The Third Act: Climax & Resolution

- Read: Cron, *Wired for Story*, Chapters 5-6
- Workshop: Climax and Resolution
- Assignment: Third Act Draft Due

Week 10: Rewriting & Refining

- Peer Review: Full Screenplay Drafts
- Workshop: Rewriting
- Assignment: Full Draft Due

Week 11: Advanced Techniques: Subtext & Symbolism

- Read: *Breaking the Waves & The Tree of Life*
- In-Class Analysis: Symbolism on the Page vs the Screen
- Assignment: Final Revisions

Week 12: Preparing for the Industry

- Discussion: Navigating the Screenwriting Industry
- Workshop: Query Letters and Pitching
- Assignment: Final Pitch Preparation

Week 13: Final Pitch

- In-class pitching

Week 14: Course Wrap-Up & Final Submission

- One-on-One Meetings with Instructor
- Final Screenplay Due