

HZ9205 Creative Writing: Screenwriting

Division of English, Nanyang Technological University

Semester 2, AY 2018/2019

Day: Thursday, 2:30 – 5:30pm

Location: TR+???

Seminar Leader: Senior Lecturer Ben Slater

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Office: ADM 02-9

Pre-requisite: HZ9101

Course Synopsis:

A screenplay is a written document that attempts to convey the narrative and cinematic experience of a film before it is produced. It is both a creative and 'technical' form of writing, which makes it unique as a type of Creative Writing. This course will introduce you to the processes involved in the development of stories and scripts for the screen. Over the course of the semester, you will complete two short professionally formatted screenplays, while developing critical skills around script writing and reading, developing story, structure and cinematic story-telling. The course is taught through a combination of lectures, seminar-style discussion sessions, workshops and peer-review of works-in-progress.

Course Outline:

S/N	Topic	Seminar Hours
1	<u>Introduction</u> The role of a screenwriter. Cinematic Storytelling & Story Structure	3
2	Screenplay formatting Examining professional screenplay layouts and conventions. In-class writing exercises – 'First Pages'	3
3	Character Introductions Exercise Presentation and discussion of student selected clips	3
4	Developing Character/Story/Pitches Workshopping story ideas and presenting to class.	3
5	Breaking the Story – Outlining Presenting short outline of story ideas for first script.	3

6	First Drafts Reading/Discussion of first drafts	3
7	Second Drafts Reading/Discussion of second drafts	3
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8	Short Film Screenings Screening and discussion of 10-15 minute short films. Briefing for second Script Project	3
9	Initial Story ideas Student pitches for outlines for second script project. Briefing for writing Treatments	3
10	Breaking the Story – Treatments Reading/ Discussing Treatments	3
11	First Five Pages Reading/Discussing first Five Pages of second script	3
12	First Drafts Reading/Discussion of first drafts	3
13	Second Drafts Reading/Discussion of second drafts	3

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course you will know how to create a professional screenplay, develop a screenplay from initial ideation to final draft, understand the role of the screenwriter in film/TV industries, and have developed your ability to analyse story structure and give feedback to peers as well as critically reflect upon your own work.

Course Assessment:

Class Participation: 20%
(Attendance, attentiveness, discussions, peer feedback, tasks, exercises)

First Screenplay (Weeks 1-7) 30%
(Story development, writing craft, process, finished screenplay)

Final Screenplay (Weeks 8-13) 50%
(*Story development, writing craft, process, treatment/first draft*)

Details on coursework (brief, criteria, submission) will be announced and discussed in class and via NTULearn and email.

Suggested Reading:

John Yorke, *Into the Woods: A Five Act Journey into Story* (2013: Penguin)

Dan O Bannon, *Guide To Screenplay Structure* (2013: Michael Weise Productions)

Ben Slater (Ed), *NANG: Screenwriting, Issue One* (2016: Cinemasias Editions)

As many screenplays as possible.

Suggested Listening:

Scriptnotes Podcast, John August & Craig Mazin (iTunes)

Grading Criteria for Script Projects:

In assessing scripts I will be looking for the following qualities:

Technical Proficiency: The script is correctly formatted with the aid of professional screenwriting software (writerduet.com – which is free to use). It should follow the rules and conventions of the form as described in class. It's written clearly and effectively in a style that is appropriate to the material and may even make creative/dynamic use of the limitations of the format.

Engagement in Process: The writer needs to be willing to be flexible and explore alternatives, to be self-reflective and critical, to listen to and adapt to feedback through rigorous rewriting rather than settle on initial ideas/drafts. The writer should be open to creatively solve problems within the script in order to further develop their ideas and the quality of the work.

Storytelling Skills: The work tells a compelling story about its characters in a clear and effectively structured manner. The script uses the capabilities of the filmic medium (image, sound, time, space) to convey narrative in an original way. Imaginative and intriguing development of story, scenes and character. Ability to create and structure a story/character arc and create dramatically interesting and well-paced scenes within that structure.