

California Lutheran University

Bachelor's Degree for Professionals

SYLLABUS

COMMUNICATIONS 307, SCREEN AND TV WRITING (3 UNITS)

Summer 2016 (5/23/16-8/4/16)

Drop Dates - June 3: Last day to add; last day to drop (without a “W” or financial penalty); July 13: Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

Tuesdays 6:00 – 9:30 PM

Woodland Hills Center - Room 117

Professor: Bob Shayne

eshayne@callutheran.edu

Department phone: 805.493.3543

Office Hours: By appointment Tuesdays before class

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introductory course on the craft of writing for feature film and television. Emphasis is on narrative storytelling for the screen, understanding film grammar and the tools of the screenwriter from basic three-act structure to characterization. In a workshop approach, students will develop their own story premise, treatment, outline and the first draft of their first act screenplay. Orientation is on the commercial film markets as we will be screening many classic and contemporary films as well as reading several screenplays for analysis.

TEXTBOOKS/REQUIRED READING

Save the Cat! by Blake Snyder

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard & Edward Mabley.

Plus required documents on Blackboard each week.

Please take notes on three items or more you consider most important in each chapter, and document, be prepared to discuss them in class, and save your notes to turn in when we finish with the books.

REQUIRED LISTENING:

Subscribe to the weekly podcast of **Scriptnotes** hosted by John August and Craig Mazin. You can subscribe for free at iTunes. Please listen to the latest show prior to each week’s class, take notes on three items or points you consider most important, be prepared to discuss them in class, and save your notes to turn in at the end of the semester.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students will gain competence in the following areas:

Foundational skills and storytelling tools: visual writing, screenplay format, dramatic scenes, exposition, time management, motifs (planting and payoff), dramatic Irony, telegraphing, dangling causes.

Character issues: characters drawn from life, fully-dimensional characters, character arc, economical, fresh, character-specific dialogue, effective character entrances

Personal vision: development of a personal vision/distinctive voice, how this is expressed through theme.

Feature screenplay issues: three act and eight sequence structures, notions of main tension, culmination and resolution

CLASS FORMAT

We'll meet once a week and discuss the reading assignments of that week, do table readings of the creative work the students have done that week, review materials having to do with screen and TV writing, do in-class writing exercises, see video clips or film and TV shows illustrating points we're learning. Creative and academic work will be due every week to be posted on Blackboard by Sunday Midnight. Students are required to read each other's creative work prior to each class. We'll also have online Discussions on topics related to our work on Blackboard, and some assignments viewing of films and reading of scripts.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/REQUIREMENTS/COURSE SCHEDULE

All assignments and reading requirements are listed below for each week of the course.

STUDENT WORKLOAD/CARNEGIE HOURS:

Our weekly meetings will account for 35.75 actual hours for the semester. We will have a requirement to meet virtually for an additional 1.75 hours for the semester, which we'll achieve with DVD lectures and essay responses. Homework will include both creative work (character, story, screenplay) and some academic writing (screenplay structure analysis, a research paper), in addition to reading assignments. Homework will average 7 hours per week.

GRADING

CRITERION	PORTION	GRADING SCALE GRADE PERCENTAGE
1 .Writing assignments	50%	A 95-100 A- 90-94.9
Participation in class and online	25%	B+ 86-89.9 B 83-85.9
3. Final character sketches, pitch, treatment, outline, first draft and second draft	25%	B- 80-82.9 C+ 76-79.9 C 73-75.9 C- 70-72.9

<p style="text-align: center;">GRADING RUBRIC</p> <p>If you come to class on time, try, participate in discussions, and turn everything in written in reasonable English, you'll get at least a "C", more likely a "B". <u>To get an "A," you need to do all that plus: your script should be exciting, suspenseful, touching and/or funny; it must evoke emotion in the reader/viewer. That's the point of screenwriting.</u></p> <p>What I look for when I grade stories and scripts: Is it properly formatted and typo-free? Does it have a story with a beginning, middle and end? Does it have plot points and turning points? Does it have a protagonist? Does the protagonist drive the story? Does the protagonist change? Do different characters have different "voices"? Does each scene move the story forward and/or reveal character? Is it visual rather than just people talking? Is it written in grammatical English (although certain characters' dialog need not be grammatical) with correct spelling and reasonable punctuation? <u>And most important: does it touch the emotions of the reader/viewer -- make him laugh, cry, scream, worry, get angry, or anything else other than be bored?</u></p>	<p>D+ 67-69.9 D 55-66.9 F 0-54.9</p>
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ATTENDANCE POLICY

Lateness and absences will lower grades as follows:

One absence: no effect.

Each absence thereafter: minus 1 grade level (e.g., final grade of B lowered to B-).

Each instance of lateness counts as 1/2 an unexcused absence.

Leaving class early will count as lateness.

REQUIRED NOTING AND SPYING

I suggest you carry a notepad, computer or recorder with you 24 hours a day in order to record dreams, random thoughts, story ideas, and bits of dialog you think of or overhear before you

forget them! (And if you want to be a writer, I'd suggest you continue this practice the rest of your life.) Each week, we'll do a round of "Overheard or Thought Of This Week" in which everybody must offer something.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

Each student needs access to a computer or tablet which can interact with Cal. Lutheran's Blackboard. You need Microsoft Word, PDF, and screenwriting software for this class. If you want to spend money and get the industry standard screenwriting software, that is Final Draft. You can get a discount on it through the book store. If you can't afford that, you can use CeltX online software for free. Only the online version is free. To get it installed to your hard drive, you would need to buy a subscription. Also, there are other brands of free software offered online.

PROFESSIONAL WORK HABITS

Your book and podcast notes may be typed or written by hand. ALL OTHER HOMEWORK MUST BE TYPED. Screenplays are typed (automatically by screenplay software) in 12 point Courier. All your other work must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman.

All students who can are encouraged to bring their laptops or tablets to class, so that we can read your assignments aloud. Down the line, we'll have students read different roles in your script, in order for the author to hear how it's playing and for the class and instructor to give feedback. Students who don't have laptops or can't bring them to class for any reason can share others' screens.

NOTE: You may use your laptop, iPad, smartphone, etc., etc., in class only for class business! If I find you using your electronic whatever for any non-class business, you'll be marked absent for that day. No texting! No checking email! No baseball scores! No tweeting! Nothing but class business! (You may do these other things during our fifteen minute break.) The watchword for this class is: "Mono-tasking!"

POSTING YOUR WORK

Scripts and other writing will normally be read aloud in class in the order in which they are posted on Blackboard! **Please post your work on the Blackboard Discussion Board each week BY SUNDAY MIDNIGHT** so that both your fellow students and I can read it in advance and give you notes on it during the class! If you post before deadline, you do not need to bring a hard copy to class. If you miss the deadline, post your work late and also bring one copy of it to turn in to me typed, on paper, full size, one-sided, stapled. You'll get points subtracted for late posting.

Professional Presentation is important in the real world and in this class. You are expected to **proofread** your assignments before you turn them in. Typos, spelling and grammar errors, punctuation mistakes, formatting mistakes, etc., will lower your grade on the assignment by a full grade (i.e.: B to C). If you are not great at grammar or punctuation or spelling, sentence structure, etc., you will need to run your work through **The Writing Center** before submitting it to me. They'll help you make it as smooth as possible.

PARTICIPATION

You will be required to participate actively in discussions of session topics and your fellow students' work. A large part of your grade will be based on your class participation. If it's hard for you to speak up, make yourself do it anyway. Not only is that important in school, but even more-so in a professional workplace.

Your work will be read and discussed in class, and your story problems will be addressed by example and discussion. You will receive on-going feedback and evaluation of your work, from your instructor and from fellow students.

NOTE ON CRITICISM

It can be uncomfortable to hear your work criticized, even when the criticism is meant to be constructive. Learning to listen to feedback is an important skill for any writer, as well as learning how to incorporate what you hear. When giving feedback, find something positive to say first. And never criticize just to criticize. If you have a problem you want to discuss in someone's work, also be prepared to offer suggestions and solutions on how to fix that problem.

When hearing notes on your work, don't take time defending it. If the person giving you the note doesn't understand something you wrote, it does no good to explain it in class. **You have to make it understandable in the script!**

FINAL EXAM

Your final script characters, outline, first draft and rewrite will serve as the "final exam" for the course and demonstrate what you have learned throughout the semester.

(THE REST OF THE REQUIRED MATERIAL FOLLOWS THE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:)

ASSIGNMENTS

PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS:

1. **Read** pages 1-18 of The Tools of Screenwriting (hereafter referred to as Tools), take notes, and be prepared to discuss in the first class.
2. **Also Read** Chapter 1 of Save the Cat! (hereafter referred to as Cat!) , take notes, and be prepared to discuss in the first class.
(Note: Keep all your book and podcast and course document notes to turn in for participation credit at the end of the semester!)
3. **Then Write** a title and logline for a story/script you might want to write later in the semester. Use both the first chapter of Cat! and the Logline/Story Premise documents posted on Blackboard Course Documents to guide you in what you choose to write and how you write it. (Don't worry, they won't be graded.) Make it as exciting, enticing as you can. **Then write** two other loglines for the same story. Make each one different from the others, and still as exciting and enticing as possible. **Then write** three alternate titles for that same story. Bring all the titles and longlines to class to read and turn in.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE FOR SEMESTER

Class Week 1 – May 24 - IN CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Most Traumatic Experience, Dramatic Confrontation or Shocking Revelation

To post by Sunday Midnight – May 29

1. **Read** pages 19-40 of Tools.
2. **Read** Cat! Chapter 3.
3. **Read** handouts about character on blackboard! **Write** down briefly what you see as the most important concept of each chapter and document. **Bring** to class. Save your notes to turn in for credit at end of semester. (I'll stop putting this in from now on, but it pertains to all your reading!)
4. **Read** the items on the Blackboard syllabus page over and come prepared to the next session with any questions about them and the course.
5. **Write:** THREE MEMORABLE CHARACTERS assignment. (Guidelines for all the writing assignments are posted on the Blackboard Course documents page.)

To post Sunday Midnight – June 5

1. **Read:** Cat! Chapter 4 ,plus Tools (pages 41-51).
2. **Read** Character Questions to Ask Yourself handout on Blackboard.
3. Also consult sample screenplay format handout on blackboard.

(MORE)

4. **Read** one of the screenplays posted on Blackboard. Write up a page or more on what you notice in the way of structure and character arcs. Turn in on paper in class. (Don't post your paper. So that each one is completely separate and original.)
5. **Write:** PROTAGONIST, ANTAGONIST, OBJECTIVE, CONFLICT assignment

To post Sunday Midnight – June 12

1. **Read** Tools, pages 52 thru 65.
2. Read Cat! Chapter 4.
3. **Write** ENVIRONMENT, APPEARANCE, WARDROBE, INTRODUCTION assignment
4. Write a **new** PROTAGONIST ANTAGONIST scene using the same or a different two characters. At least 1-2 pages, with some sort of surprise climax and resolution. This time, the object is to use subtext in your script, so that you convey information to the reader/audience that the characters are not coming out and saying to each other. See how much subtext you can pack into your script. It must have a beginning, middle and some kind of surprise twist near the end.

To post Sunday Midnight – June 19

1. **Read** Tools, pages 66 thru 77
2. **Read** Cat! Chapter 5
3. **Write** THREE-SCENE EXERCISE: THREAT to AMBITION, SELF IMAGE – first draft

To post Sunday Midnight – June 26

1. **Read** Tools, pages 78 thru 87
2. **Read** Cat! Chapter 6
3. **Write:** THREE SCENE EXERCISE second draft

To post Sunday Midnight – July 3

1. **Read** Tools, pages 88 thru 98
2. **Read** Cat! Chapter 7
3. **READ ALL HANDOUTS ON BLACKBOARD ABOUT PITCHING**
4. **Prepare a VERBAL PITCH** of the story you want to do as your final script. A verbal pitch is a sales tool to convince the “studio” to hire you to write it. (See Verbal Pitch documents on Blackboard.) To be pitched in class without notes!
5. **Write** TWO PEOPLE WAKE UP IN BED TOGETHER assignment
6. **IN CLASS: Deliver an Informal Pitch your final story, with no notes or only structural notes. (This one won't be graded. Next week's will be graded.)**

To post Sunday Midnight – July 10

1. **Read** Cat! **Chapter 2** – on genres (note: We're going back and reading the chapter we skipped earlier in the semester.)
2. Figure out what genre (using Blake Snyder's definitions of genres) your final script tends to be.
3. **Read** a screenplay that most resembles the genre of your final script. Choose one from Course Documents if there's one there that fits, or else see what you can come up with online. Write a 1-2 page paper on how the final story you're working on reflects that script, and/or what you learned about your story from reading that script.
4. **Write** a 3-4 page pitch of your final story, and prepare to do a formal verbal pitch in class (which will be graded) without notes. Post your written pitch along with your script assignment.
5. **Write** THREE WOMEN-THREE MEN assignment

To post Sunday Midnight – July 17

1. **Read** Cat! Chapter 8
2. **Write** THREE-SCENE exercise: Threat to Ambition, Self-image
3. **Write** Character sketches and an outline for your Final Script. Post along with your script assignment.

To post Sunday Midnight – July 24

Write the first draft of your Final Screenplay. Post by July 24.

To post Sunday Midnight – July 31

Write the final draft of your final screenplay, using the notes given you by the instructor and other students.

Course Evaluations Statement

All course evaluations are conducted online. Your feedback is important to us. You will receive an email message reminding you when the website is open for your feedback. The link is: <http://courseval.callutheran.edu>

Disability Statement

California Lutheran University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations in compliance with ADA of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to students with documented disabilities. If you are a student requesting accommodations for this course, please contact your professor at the beginning of the semester and register with the Disability Support Services Coordinator, Wendy Jimenez, for the facilitation and verification of need. The Disability Support Services Coordinator is located in the Center for Student Success Office at 3259 Pioneer Street, and can be contacted by calling 805.493.3878 or emailing wjimene@callutheran.edu

Statement on Academic Honesty

The educational programs of California Lutheran University are designed and dedicated to achieve academic excellence, honesty and integrity at every level of student life. Part of Cal Lutheran's dedication to academic excellence is our commitment to academic honesty. Students, faculty, staff and administration share the responsibility for maintaining high levels of scholarship on campus. Any behavior or act which might be defined as "deceitful" or "dishonest" will meet with appropriate disciplinary sanctions, including dismissal from the University, suspension, grade F in a course or various forms of academic probation. Policies and procedures regarding academic honesty are contained in the faculty and student handbooks.

Plagiarism, cheating, unethical computer use and facilitation of academic dishonesty are examples of behavior which will result in disciplinary sanctions. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- word for word copying without using quotation marks or presenting the work as yours
- using the ideas or work of others without acknowledgement
- not citing quoted material. Students must cite sources for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge.

Standards of Student Conduct Statements:

- [Student Life Handbook](#)
- [Academic Honesty Statement](#)

University Harassment Policy

Be civil to each other, both on- and offline. For information on the University's **student harassment policy and rights, please go to the following link:** [Student Life Handbook](#)

Sexual Misconduct

California Lutheran University does not tolerate any degree of sexual misconduct on or off-campus. We encourage you to report if you know of, or have been the victim of, sexual harassment, misconduct, and/or assault. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must

notify Cal Lutheran's Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. More information about your options for reporting can be found at: <http://www.callutheran.edu/title-ix/>

Pearson Library

Pearson Library provides access to scholarly books, journals, ebooks, and databases of full text articles from scholarly journals. To begin using these materials, visit the library web page <http://www.callutheran.edu/library>

There are many ways to contact Pearson Library for research assistance, no matter where you are!

- Email Yvonne Wilber (Professionals liaison) at ywilber@callutheran.edu
- General Library email: CLUlibrary@callutheran.edu
- Library main phone: 805.493.3250
- Text us your question: 805.493.3867
- Get more help at: <http://www.callutheran.edu/library/help/>

Cal Lutheran Writing Center

The Writing Center provides 1:1 writing consultations, in-person and online, with trained undergraduate and graduate writing consultants. We welcome all writing-related projects at any stage of the writing process across the diverse disciplines of study at Cal Lutheran. The Writing Center also hosts writing workshops, provides in-class visits, facilitates writing groups, and offers a writer's studio option for longer, sustained projects. Services suit writers of all levels, including traditional undergraduates, graduate students from all fields, all English language learners, and accomplished scholars alike. All members of the Cal Lutheran community with an @callutheran.edu email address are welcome to make use of our services. For more information, please visit at www.callutheran.edu/writing_center or call 805.493.3257. Please schedule appointments online through MyCLU Blackboard with the yellow "The Writing Center" icon in "Tools," or stop by The Writing Center itself, located in the Darling Collaboration Suite of Pearson Library.

Veterans Resources

If you are a veteran, military member, or a family member of a veteran or military member, please refer to Cal Lutheran's Veterans Resources webpage for important information: <http://www.callutheran.edu/veterans/>. Also, if you are a veteran receiving benefits and you are struggling in a class, you most likely qualify for free tutoring. Please contact the Veterans Coordinator, Jenn Zimmerman, veterans@callutheran.edu or 805.493.3648, for more information.

Help Desk

Students may contact the Help Desk about telephone, network, wireless network, software questions password problems, hardware problems, and general consultation (i.e. you cannot log into your MyCLU portal, or you are having problems with Blackboard). Please email specific details about your problems to helpdesk@callutheran.edu, click on the following link for more information http://www.callutheran.edu/iss/technology_services/helpdesk.php or call: 805.493.3698

Final Note

This syllabus is subject to change. Every effort will be made to alert students to changes that occur in a timely manner.

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