CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Script Analysis
Course code: SCRW 3001 PRFS
Programs offering course: Film Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 4
Contact hours: 60
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- To gain an awareness of how screenplays eventually interact with other modes of language specific to filmmaking.
- To become familiar with specific vocabulary in film language used by the actor, cinematographer and editor.
- To become familiar with specific tools for story-telling used by the actor, cinematographer and editor.
- To increase awareness of tools available in spheres beyond the written word that will eventually shape the work of the writer.
- To increase awareness of how story is shaped by many collaborative systems within filmmaking.
- To gain practical experience in the collaborative work of the screenwriter with other film artists.

In Script Analysis 1 class, through the intensive analysis of films, the following principles are examined and explained: three act story structure, plot points, turning points, the function of exposition, the catalyst, rising action, crisis, climax, culmination, resolution, main tension, theme, as well as scenes and sequences, sub-plots, double-plots, multi-plots, and internal scene structure. Analysis will also cover the role of the protagonist, the creation of empathy, the journey of protagonist, active and passive characters, supporting characters, character arcs and character motivation, the concept of want and need, the role of the antagonist, as well as the use of conflict and obstacles, and a comparison of objective vs. subjective conflict, and action vs. activity.

The narrative tools of mystery, suspense, surprise, dramatic irony, twists, revelations and reversals will be explored and analyzed as will be the dramatic strategies of planting and pay-off, gags, marbling, foxing the audience, and devices such as the obligatory scene, scenes of revelation, scenes of preparation and aftermath, and the advertising of future events.

The course will also explore interpretations of film as a temporal-spatial art by examining pacing, rhythm, accelerating action, and the handling of time and space, montage, transitions, sound, and music.

The craft of creating dialogue, the dramatic use of props and costumes, staging and the creation of atmosphere as employed in the screenplay will also be covered.

Course Prerequisites

The course is part of the core curriculum of the Film Studies program, Screenwriting track.
Methods of Instruction

The course is team taught and each professors’ methods vary. Classes in film language include lecture supported by powerpoint plus segments of films screened. Classes on editing involve lecture and screening of short films which are then discussed and analyzed in class, Classes in acting are largely devoted to in-class exercises revolving around a principle of acting, plus scene work in pairs.

N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Acting, Camera and Film Languages, Editing units: 50%
2. Script Analysis 1 unit: 50%
   TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Acting, Camera and Film Languages, Editing units:

Active participation in classes - 40%
Final Exam on course material - 20%
Participation and reflection on pitch - 10%
Participation as crew member on shoot - 20%
Participation in Final Presentation - 10%

Script Analysis 1 unit:

Students will be expected to recognize the dramatic and narrative elements explained in class, and to present a cogent analysis of a film selected for a mid-term exam and for a final paper.

Active participation in classes - 20%
Mid-term examination - 20%
Take-home final - 60%

Attendance and participation are mandatory, and lack thereof can negatively affect final grade.

The student needs to regularly attend classes and prove their understanding of the material covered on a final exam. The attendance at the pitch with a written reflection on one of the stories pitched is another assignment considered important because it furthers the student's awareness that the writer writes for an audience beyond herself. Participating as a crew member in production is important for the student to realize that the screenplay is a blueprint for a collaborative event. The final presentation of work on her own feature screenplay, which is work for another core class – Feature screenwriting - is also counted in the assessment of this class because the student will use her screenplay in further collaboration to make a presentation with and for others of its contents.
(In the event that in the feature screenwriting class the student realizes a work that does not lend itself to a staged reading, perhaps because of a lack of dialogue or perhaps because of a personal or delicate nature to the material, this final presentation could be waived for the student. The student is encouraged however to find an alternative form of presentation, perhaps through images evoking locations or themes from the work. It is not advisable that the student will be writing in the feature screenwriting class with a view toward the product presented during the last week. A few weeks before the end of the semester, choices concerning the presentation will be discussed among the students and professor.)

**Attendance**

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**
- **Class** Acting, Editing and Film Language Classes meet.
  - Acting – focus on basic acting principles; short scene to be memorized assigned as homework
  - Editing – focus on basic editing principles
  - Film language – focus on expressive tool of movement

**Week 2**
- **Class** Acting, Editing, Film Language Classes meet
  - Acting – focus on good acting choices; short text on choices distributed in class to be read as homework
  - Editing – focus on basic editing principles
  - Film language – focus on expressive tool of frame.
  - Attendance at Production track pitch.
  - Script Analysis meets – focus on three act structure and sequence structure
  - Reading due for Script Analysis 1: Aristotle *Poetics* in course reader, pp. 4-21

**Week 3**
- **Class** Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet
  - Acting – focus on scenework
  - Editing – focus on editing principles
  - Film Language – focus on expressive tool of POV
  - Script Analysis 1 meets : Screening of *Kolya*
Reading due for Script Analysis 1: Course reader selection from Story by Robert McGEE, pp. 28-31

**Week 4**
Class
Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet;
Acting – Focus on improvisation technique
Editing – Focus on editing principles
Film Language – Focus on Expressive Tool of Composition
Script Analysis 1 – lecture topics: character and conflict
Reading due for Script Analysis 1: Course reader selection from Story by Robert McGEE, pp. 43-49

**Week 5**
Class
Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet;
Acting – Focus on improvisation technique
Editing – Focus on editing principles
Film Language – Focus on Expressive Tool of Shot Sizes
Script Analysis 1 – Screening of *Harold and Maude*
**Reading due for Script Analysis 1:** Course reader selection from Story pp. 32-33, 63-65

**Week 6**
Class
Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet
Acting – Focus on inner monologue
Editing – Focus on editing principles
Film Language – Focus on expressive tool of angles and axis
Script Analysis 1 - lecture on scene by scene construction within the dramatic curve.
**Reading due for Script Analysis 1:** Course reader selection, pp. 60-62, 66-70

**Week 7**
Class
Acting, Film Language and Editing Classes meet
Acting – Focus on Characterization
Editing – Focus on Editing principles

Film Language – Focus on Color as Expressive Tool

Script Analysis 1 - Screening of *The Commitments*

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1:** Course reader selection, pp. 81-90

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**Week 8**

Class  
Final Exam from Topics classes.

Script Analysis 1 – lecture topics: internal scene construction; advancing the plot

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1:** Course reader selection, pp.91-94

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**Week 9**

Class  
Script Analysis 1 class – Screening of *Toy Story*

**Reading due for Script Analysis 1:** Course reader selection, pp.95-97

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**Week 10**

Class  
Script Analysis 1 class meets - lecture topics: genre

Assignment – preparation of film analysis paper due in week 14

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**Week 11**

Class  
Acting class resumes – focus on dialogue

Script Analysis 1 class meets – Screening of *Titanic*

**Assignment:** – preparation of film analysis paper due in week 14

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**Week 12**

Class  
Acting class meets – focus on preparing scene for final presentation

Script Analysis 1 class meets – lecture topic: screenplay format, trimming; dialogue;

Instructions for Final Paper

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**Week 13**

Class  
Acting class meets, work on preparation for final presentation

Last Script Analysis 1 class – Review of topics and films

**Assignment due for Script Analysis 1:** Final Film Analysis paper

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**Week 14**

Class  
Acting class meets, work on preparation for final presentation
Presentation from feature screenplay

**Course Materials**

**Readings**


