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ENG 4764Z-600: Advanced Dramatic Writing

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ENGL 4764: Advanced Dramatic Writing—Writing the Screenplay
Eastern Illinois University – Spring 2020 – Online

Instructor
Dr. Bess Winter
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Office: Coleman Hall 3576
In-Person Office Hours: M 12pm-1pm and 2pm-3pm, W 2pm-3pm, F 12pm-1pm
Digital Office Hours: M 12pm-1pm and 2pm-3pm, W 2pm-3pm, F 12pm-1pm (please email beforehand)

Required Texts and Materials
Cowgill, Linda J. *Writing Short Films, 2nd ed.* New York: Watson-Guptil, 2005.
Howard, David, and Edward Mabley. *The Tools of Screenwriting.* New York: St. Martin's, 1993.
Seger, Linda. *Making a Good Script Great, 2nd ed.* Los Angeles: Silman James Press, 2010.
Additional materials (written and video), assigned online or available on d2l

Course Description
This course focuses on the basics of writing the short, and feature, screenplay. The heart of the screenplay is, of course, the compelling story, built from compelling scenes, characters, images, and situations—and we'll discuss that—but becoming a screenwriter also involves becoming an inquisitive reader of both scripts and films, developing an understanding of the key players in the filmmaking process, and understanding the language and conventions of the film script, as well as basic concepts in film studies and production. Over the course of the semester, you will begin to develop all of these skills.

You may come to this course having written, previously, for the stage in Intro to Creative Writing or Intermediate Dramatic Writing (in which case, writing for a screen-based medium will both make you a better playwright and a better writer, in general). You may have never written a script, before, or never written creatively before, at all (in which case, please consult with me about looking at introductory texts that will help you in this course). Or, you may already have a short (or feature!) screenplay under your belt (in which case, this is a forum where you can further hone your craft).

Be prepared to write a lot, read a lot, and watch a lot of films. I look forward to taking part in this class with you.

Objectives
By the end of the course, you will:
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the conventions, components, and formatting of a screenplay;
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of story structure, characterization, theme, dialogue, scene, and other elements of the screenwriter's craft;

- Watch, and read the scripts for, short and feature films with a view to analyzing their craft and construction;
- Have written one short screenplay and planned and developed the beginnings of a feature-length screenplay;
- Have learned how to write script coverage and demonstrated this skill in workshop responses;
- Have learned to develop your work using the workshop/dramatic reading model—both through synchronous video chat and written asynchronous responses;
- Have engaged in script revision using the feedback from workshop.

If you are experiencing trauma or distress

Please note that, while writing can be a very personal act, this class is not a therapeutic environment and should not be taken in place of therapy. If you are experiencing personal issues, depression, anxiety, trauma, etc, your best resource is always the EIU Counseling Clinic, 1st floor of the Human Services Building, which takes walk-in appointment requests and can also be reached at 217-581-3413 during the day, and 1-866-567-2400 in case of after-hours emergency. Do not hesitate to take advantage of this resource—it's yours. As a State of Illinois employee, I'm a Mandated Reporter and must also report incidents of sexual assault or violence to our Title IX Coordinator.

Assignments & Grading (out of 1000 points)

Creative and Analysis-based Discussion Board Posts and Replies – 300 (25 points x 6 for creative exercises; 30 points x 5 for analyses)
Workshop participation --200
Script coverage/workshop leadership—100
D2L activity/course completion/meetings – 100
Revised Final Script – 150
Artist's Statement – 150

I reserve the right to hold pop quizzes and minor writing assignments as the class's needs arise, as well as make minor changes to the syllabus in accordance with the class's needs. If any changes are made, you will be notified by email.

Course Policies

Technical Requirements
To take this course, you must be able to do the following:

- Regularly access the Internet, using a laptop or desktop computer
- Download and upload email attachments
- Use Microsoft Word
- Use Collaborate Ultra and Kaltura for audio/video communications
- Use Adobe Reader (free download) or Preview (for Mac) to read PDF files
- Use Celtx (free online software)
- Install software

- Stream online video
- Use a webcam and microphone

Digital Decorum, or 'Netiquette'
Constructive university learning environments require professors and students to respect differences—of background, thought, opinion, and belief. This notion holds special significance in our online literature course, where you will be asked to routinely engage with your classmates' perspectives, experiences, and ideas. Therefore, respect will serve as the guiding principle and bedrock expectation of our work together this semester.

Here are some best practices for communicating in our online classroom:

- Healthy discourse provides room for differences of opinion; however, disagreements should, without exception, be respectfully expressed.
- Keep in mind that sarcasm is more difficult to understand without tonal cues and body language.
- When you're replying to a discussion board post, please summarize the portion of the original post that has inspired your response.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition. Privilege concision and rely on the substance of your ideas to meet suggested word counts.
- Since our discussions will draw extensively from scripts and films, be sure to clearly indicate direct quotes and, when possible, provide page numbers.

The following content will not be permitted and will, furthermore, be referred for disciplinary action:

- Illegal materials
- Harassing or threatening comments
- Harmful, abusive, or sexually explicit statements

Submitting Assignments
Script assignments will be uploaded to discussion boards or d2l dropboxes as PDFs or MS Word files (please do not link to MS Word online documents—export the document as .docx and attach the file to your submission). You will receive instructions for file type and format of individual submissions as they are assigned. Screenplay assignments (short and feature) should be submitted in standard screenplay format. Use Celtx to write these assignments.

Instructor Response Time
I will check the course daily Monday through Friday and periodically during weekends. You can expect an email response from me within 48 hours (please use panthermail, not d2l email—I can't guarantee I will see an email sent through d2l). You can expect to receive grades on assignments within 2 weeks of submitting them.

Learner Interaction and Participation

Your engagement in this course will be measured, more than any other way, by the quality and quantity of your discussion board posts, which account for **30 percent of your final grade**. Discussion board prompts and expectations will vary throughout the term; however, each discussion module will require you to post original threads and provide thorough, thoughtful responses to your classmates.

In addition to the discussion board, your participation will be evaluated based on the regularity and depth of your engagement with course materials, your participation in digital conferences/meetings, your engagement with workshop (either on discussion boards or face-to-face) and your D2L activity. These behaviors account for **10 percent of your final grade.**

Late Work and Make-Up Work
All work should be turned in on the designated dates, at the specified times. I do not accept late work unless qualifying circumstances are discussed with me beforehand; I will grant extensions only when provided with at least 48-hours notice. I do not allow make-up work for previously missed assignments.

Plagiarism
EIU English Department's Statement on Plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Please note that submitting work you have completed/are completing for another class counts as self-plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and will be treated as such unless you get permission from me first. Permission is granted on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Integrity
Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

The Student Success Center
Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Accommodation for Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and are in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Stop by Ninth Street Hall, room 2022, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Once you have received your accommodations letter, please meet with me immediately, during office hours, in order for us to plan on arrangements specific to your needs and this course's assignments.

Technical Support
If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L Resources, including a D2L Orientation course for students, are available on the "My Home" page. If you are experiencing less than optimal D2L Brightspace performance, review the D2L Brightspace Performance Checklist to assess the issue.

For technical questions related to other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours, or submit a help ticket at https://techsupport.eiu.edu/. If you have a question related to course content, please contact your instructor.

Schedule
The dates below are tentative; I reserve the right to make adjustments for the benefit of the class.

Module	Assignments
Module 1, Introduction to the Screenplay and Shorts: **Jan 13-26**	--Creative exercises --Readings/Viewings --Discussion posts
Module 2, Short Film Development and Adaptation: **Jan 27-Feb 9**	--Discussion posts --Readings/Viewings --Creative exercises --Select a work to adapt
Module 3, Beginnings, Middles, and Endings: **Feb 10-23**	--Discussion posts --Readings/Viewings --Creative exercises --Complete short screenplay due
Module 4, Short Film Workshop: **Feb 24-Mar 8**	--Workshop responses (discussion posts) --Script coverage (discussion leadership)
Module 5, The Feature and the Three-Act Structure: **Mar 9-22**	--Discussion posts --Readings/Viewings --Creative exercises
Module 6, POV & Character, Loglines, Treatments, Planning: **Mar 23-Apr 5**	--Discussion posts --Readings/Viewings

	--Logline exercise
	--Additional creative exercise
Module 7, Planning cont: **Apr 6-19**	--Treatment and outline due
	--Discussion posts
	--First act of screenplay due
Module 8: **Apr 20-May 3**	--Workshop responses (discussion posts)
	--Script coverage (discussion leadership)
Exam Week: **May 4-8**	--Final revised portfolio (revised screenplay and artist's statement)