

*Hampshire College Summer Academic Programs*  
**Summer 2018**  
***HACU 279 Screenwriting for Film and Video***

**SYLLABUS**

Instructor: Patricia Montoya

E- Mail: [pmHA@hampshire.edu](mailto:pmHA@hampshire.edu)

Room: FPH 106 -- 6/22: FPH 105

Screenings: ASH 111 / FPH East or West Lecture Hall (?)

TA(s):

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This program is an immersion into the script writing process with a focus on different scripting techniques in traditional and experimental, and non-fiction film and video. This course emphasizes the script writing process. We will analyze different scripting techniques in traditional and experimental, and non-fiction film and video to help develop the professional writing skills necessary to create a **short** film. Students will become familiar with narrative writing styles, genres, and formats used for short films/videos (which also apply to feature-length films and documentaries).

Students will be introduced to the stages of story development for non-fiction and fiction film production. In workshop style, the class will serve as practice audience for readings of drafts, treatments and pitch presentations that will culminate in option 1) a completed first act and step outline for the intended final script for short (12-20 min) documentary/non-fiction, experimental or narrative script. Option 2) complete script (12-20min) Students will also explore the power of story and storytelling, develop ideas for fiction and non-fiction projects, and focus on the social impact (who cares? why care?) of the piece. Special attention is given to story structure, character development, world of story and format.

## **STRUCTURE:**

*This is an immersive screenwriting program mirroring a writer's room where students are involved in writing, screenings, lessons, readings and social activities. The program also includes a trip to iconic film presentation centers in the area such as the Anthology Film Archives in NYC and Harvard Film Archives in Boston. Talks by invited guests, a syllabus rooted in the writing process, script formatting and story development, and an intellectually engaging, community-based, learning environment, are summoned to support the author's voice and style in this four-week writing program. It will only work if the entire group fully participates and engages in all the activities and writes, writes, writes.*

## **COURSE CONTENT AND SCOPE**

- Developing creative, workable ideas for both fiction and non-fiction media
- Cinematic story-telling techniques: The creative use of images and sound
- Filmic dialogue vs. theatrical or novelistic dialogue
- Screenplay structure and formats
- Characterization, conflict and resolution: Projecting believable characters into believable situations
- Genres of storytelling in film
- Research for film & media productions
- Pitching and selling your ideas, concepts, treatments, and short scripts
- Writing short fiction and non-fiction films
- Analyzing short and long scripts
- Analyzing short and long videos and films

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- *Power Screenwriting, 12 Stages of Story Development* by Michael Chase Walker (available **on reserves** at Harold F. Johnson Library, the excerpts used in class will be available on Moodle)

## **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

- *The Screenwriter's Bible*, by David Trotter
- *Directing the Documentary*, by Michael Rabiger
- *The Artist's Way*, by Julia Cameron
- *Writing the Short Film* by Pat Cooper and Ken Dancyger
- *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* by Annie Lemott
- *Finding Your Writer's Voice: A Guide to Creative Fiction* by Thaisa Frank

## **CLASS REQUIREMENTS**

Completion of all assignments is required **ON TIME**.

Show an ability to give and receive constructive criticism; be willing to exchange input during discussions and chats, both in the on-campus classroom and in the online forum. The final grade and evaluation in this class will be affected by active participation.

Students are expected to attend all classes, trips and activities. Un-excused absences will not be tolerated. I will not grant evaluation to students with more than 2 absences. In order for the workshop to succeed students must participate, show up and write.

**THERE ARE NO INCOMPLETES IN THIS CLASS FOR ANY REASON EXCEPT DOCUMENTED ILLNESS.**

All scripts must be presented in professional screenplay format, saved and submitted as a PDF, to preserve page format. All script submissions must have a Title Page with Title, Author's Name, Contact Information, Date and Numbered Revised Version. *Upload onto Moodle and print to read in class.*

All research sources for your documentary, including Internet sources, must be cited and quoted in a bibliography turned in with your screenplay.

Student/Teacher correspondence should be e-mailed via Moodle.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY** and integrity are integral components of the academic process. Students are expected to be honest and ethical at all times in their pursuit of academic and creative goals in accordance with policies established by Hampshire College. For policies regarding plagiarism see here:  
<https://handbook.hampshire.edu/node/88>

## **ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students are responsible for providing written verification of their disability to the instructor upon request. For support and resources please refer to the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS)

<https://www.hampshire.edu/oars/office-of-accessibility-resources-and-services>

**CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:** Required for full and satisfactory evaluation

- Analyze fictional feature film script (chosen from presentation)
- Film Outline: *Fargo* (Cohen Brothers, 1996)
- Pitch concept, and write treatment and script for a short (12-20 minute) film
- Script: Step Outline
- Script: Act1/Complete Script (12-20min)
- Read and analyze classmates' scripts. Be a contributing part of the class: Share your ideas.

Optional: Non-fiction project: Research, pitch idea, write treatment and script for short (7-15 minute) documentary.

ASSIGNMENTS

DUE DATE

1. Analysis of feature film (3-5 pages)	06/08
2. Pitch for short (fiction or non-fiction) film	06/09
3. Step Outline: <i>Fargo</i> (Cohen Brothers, 1995)	06/12
4. Treatment for short fiction film	06/14
5. Script Outline	06/19
6. Act 1 (draft 1)	06/21
7. Complete script (draft 1)	06/23
8. Reading	06/26
9. Complete script/Act 1	06/28
10. Reading (Final)	06/30

TRIPS

HARVARD FILM ARCHIVES	SUNDAY	6/10
NYC	FRIDAY	6/15
MONTEGUE BOOK MILL	WEDNESDAY	6/20

**PRESENTERS (dates and names TBA)**

\*Changes on the syllabus may be updated on Moodle and discussed in class

\*\*Some screenings will be made public

\*\*\*Schedule of films to be provided as program progresses (the films will be selected by presenters and readings)