

## Term Information

Effective Term Autumn 2015

## General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area English  
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org English - D0537  
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences  
Level/Career Graduate  
Course Number/Catalog 6764  
Course Title Graduate Workshop in Screenwriting  
Transcript Abbreviation Wkshp Scrnwritng  
Course Description Students with expertise in fiction- or creative nonfiction-writing or poetry will learn the art and craft of screenwriting and complete their first full-length screenplays.  
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

## Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week, 7 Week, 4 Week (May Session), 12 Week (May + Summer)  
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never  
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No  
Grading Basis Letter Grade  
Repeatable Yes  
Allow Multiple Enrollments in Term No  
Max Credit Hours/Units Allowed 6  
Max Completions Allowed 2  
Course Components Workshop  
Grade Roster Component Workshop  
Credit Available by Exam No  
Admission Condition Course No  
Off Campus Never  
Campus of Offering Columbus

## Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites English MFA standing, or permission of instructor. Repeatable to a maximum of 6cr hrs.  
Exclusions

## Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

## Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 23.0101  
Subsidy Level Masters Course  
Intended Rank Masters

## Requirement/Elective Designation

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

## Course Details

### Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- Students with expertise in fiction- or creative nonfiction-writing or poetry will learn the art and craft of screenwriting and complete their first full-length screenplays.

### Content Topic List

- Screenwriting techniques for film and television.
- Developing a screen-storytelling “voice” and a critical aesthetic.
- Learning to write story treatments, story outlines, and other core elements of screenplay development.
- The writing of a full-length teleplay or screenplay suitable for submission.

## Attachments

- English 6764, Rationale.docx: Rationale  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Lowry,Debra Susan)*
- English 6764, Syllabus.docx: English 6764, Syllabus  
*(Syllabus. Owner: Lowry,Debra Susan)*

## Comments

## Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Lowry,Debra Susan	12/04/2014 03:50 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Lowry,Debra Susan	12/04/2014 03:50 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Heysel,Garett Robert	12/06/2014 06:57 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Nolen,Dawn Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Hanlin,Deborah Kay Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Hogle,Danielle Nicole	12/06/2014 06:57 PM	ASCCAO Approval

## Sample Syllabus: English 6764: Graduate Workshop in Film and Television Screenwriting

Seminar, T 5:20 - 8:20

Denney Hall 0368

Professor Angus Fletcher, [fletcher.300@osu.edu](mailto:fletcher.300@osu.edu)

### Course Description:

The purpose of this class is to teach you to apply the skills you have developed in your fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction courses to write your first television pilot or feature-length screenplay. To do so, we will follow the method developed at Pixar for engineering innovative scripts. What makes the Pixar method different from traditional screenwriting methods is that it does not begin with a set script-formula (e.g., the three-act screenplay, the fish-out-of-water, the eight movements). Instead, to avoid predictability, it derives the formula for each screenplay from an outside inspiration. To learn this method, you will bring in three of your favorite artworks from any medium—dramatic or non-dramatic, narrative or non-narrative, visual or non-visual—and you will analyze them to determine their core aesthetic logic: what formal structures and effects do they have in common? Once you have determined this logic, you will then apply it to your own original story-material. First, in keeping with the Pixar method, you will derive the conclusion to your script. Next, you will derive the opening scene and major turning points. Finally, you will fill in the interstitial sections, completing the script. After a round of peer-review, you will then submit your finished piece to Sundance Lab, the Nicholl, the Fox Writers Intensive, or another major screenwriting fellowship.

### Texts:

To open our eyes to all of the things that screenplays can do, we will read (at least) one genre-pushing screenplay a week. These screenplays will be available on a digital library that Ohio State has established in collaboration with The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Sundance Lab, and the Blacklist. Each week, you will be directed toward one full-length feature screenplay or teleplay, but you are encouraged to read further at your own discretion. *You may not at any time print or circulate the screenplays available on the digital library.* These scripts are copyright and are provided by generous consent of the authors, without permission to reproduce.

### Tools:

**Software:** Any functional screenwriting program, including Trelby, Celtx, or Final Draft (available in professional versions in an academic edition at a cost of roughly \$100 or in somewhat more limited free versions). Screenplays/teleplays are written in a highly structured format; this software is essential for creating professional-quality scripts.

### Requirements:

- \* Weekly, one-page formal analysis of recommended screenplay.
- \* Three-page formal analysis of individually selected artworks.
- \* Screenplay concept-pitch and one-pager.
- \* Finished feature-length screenplay or teleplay.
- \* Group feedback notes.
- \* Formal screenwriting grant submission.

### Goals:

- \* To learn the core techniques of screenwriting.
- \* To define your own critical aesthetic and develop your own distinct screenwriting voice.
- \* To improve your storytelling skills.
- \* To learn to write story treatments, story outlines, and other core elements of screenplay development.
- \* To produce a full-length teleplay or screenplay suitable for submission.

### Course Policies:

- \* Attendance is required. More than one unexcused absence will result in a failing grade.
- \* Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.
- \* Deadlines are to be observed. Hollywood is a business and other people's livelihoods depend upon your reliability.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Final:

For the final, you will submit a final draft of your screenplay, including an annotated response to your group feedback, and a receipt of submission to a screenwriting fellowship or apprenticeship program.

## Class Schedule

### Week 1 (Jan. 7): Core Screenwriting Concepts

- \* The Logic of Screenwriting. Screenplays are a lot like sonnets. They have an intricate technical form, but if you focus on the form, you will write a husk. To avoid this, you need to learn the logic behind the form. This will allow you to naturally write the form if you want, or vary or abandon it for new forms.
- \* The Core Logic is Threefold: Economy, Visuals, Action. Economy and Visuals are qualities of poetry. Action of drama. Economy of short stories. The key to a good screenplay is to combine these three elements with your own voice, your own aesthetic, your own story.
- \* The Scene as the Building-Block of a Screenplay. Every screenplay is built out of scenes, and every scene in some way reflects the formula of the whole. Some key scenes—e.g. the opening, the conclusion, and the turning-point—typically embody the whole formula, while other, more interstitial scenes are simply consistent with it.

### Part One: Core Screenwriting Techniques

### Week 2 (Jan. 14): Visual Scene-work

- \* Craft a scene entirely out of visuals. Over the scene, reveal a secret. Practice the three-core logics of screenwriting: Economy, Visuals, Action.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *I Love Lucy*.

### Week 3 (Jan. 21): Dialogue Scene-work

- \* Craft a scene entirely out of dialogue. Have one character seduce another (this seduction can be between any two people and can take any form). Practice making Dialogue an expression of Action, not a source of Action.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *12 Years a Slave*.

### Part Two: Personal Voice

### Week 4 (Jan. 28): Personal Screenwriting Model

- \* Bring in three of your favorite art-objects from any medium. Type up a one-page explanation of how these objects move you—do they touch particular emotions, prompt particular experiences, have other kinds of psychological or aesthetic effects? Then make a list of the formal features of each object, looking for overlap and possible connections to effect.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *The Piano*.

Week 5 (Feb. 4): Personal Critical Aesthetic

- \* Identify and articulate the core elements of your own screenwriting style. Are you more focused on plot, character, situation, tone, or some other story component? Do you like happy endings or tragic ones? Do your characters succeed alone or together?
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *\*M\*A\*S\*H*.

Week 6 (Feb. 11): Personal Concept

- \* Pitch one or two story-concepts for your own film or tv show. Be prepared to explain how they satisfy your own personal aesthetic.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *Zero Dark Thirty*.

### Part Three: Story Development

Week 7 (Feb. 18): Short Outline

- \* Bring in a one-to-two page outline, establishing major plot-points and characters.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*.

Week 8 (Feb. 25): Full Treatment

- \* Expand your outline into a three-to-four page treatment, fleshing out scenes.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *All in the Family*.

### Part Four: The Screenplay

Week 9 (Mar. 4): Final Scene

- \* Bring in a draft of your final scene or scenes. Identify the plot points and details you will need to establish over the preceding portions of the screenplay.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *The Social Network*.

Week 10 (Mar. 11): Spring Break

- \* Catch up on work and wrestle with self-doubt while other people are celebrating in the sun.

Week 11 (Mar. 18): First Scene

- \* Bring in a draft of your first scene (or your teaser). Identify the conflicts, world-details, and characters that will hook the viewer and carry the story ahead.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *The Class*.

Week 12 (Mar. 25): First Third

- \* Draft the first third of your screenplay (roughly thirty pages for a feature, twenty pages for a one-hour teleplay). Bring in a scene that is causing you problems.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *American Beauty*.

Week 13 (Apr. 1): Second Third

- \* Draft the second third of your screenplay. Bring in a scene that is causing you problems.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *Breaking Bad*.

Week 14 (Apr. 8): Race to the Finish

- \* Finish your draft. Congratulate yourself on officially being a screenwriter, the lowest form of artist. Bring in your new final scene.
- \* Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

Week 15 (Apr. 15): Revision

- \* Give the screenplay a once-over. Bring in a scene that reflects your best work. Identify the deadline for the fellowship you have targeted for submission.
- Weekly Screenplay Reading Assignment: *Blue is the Warmest Color*.

April 22: **Course Final Due**

*You should be aware that the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 292-3307.*



## **English 6764**

### **Rationale:**

High-quality writing for film and television has become an important part of the literary landscape and there are no graduate courses in writing for the screen currently offered at OSU. MFA students in creative writing have the opportunity to take playwriting (in the Department of Theatre) and soon will be able to study adaptation for the stage as well (also in Theatre) but the skill set required for writing for the screen is entirely different than that for the stage. This new course will train our students to translate the creative and critical skills they have developed in their major areas (poetry, fiction, narrative nonfiction) into the basis for professional work in screenwriting. Students will learn a variant of the Pixar method of screenwriting, which rejects the notion that there is a fixed formula for film or television shows, but instead encourages writers to draw inspiration from more personal, idiosyncratic, and marginal perspectives. This method will allow students to develop a screenwriting style that reflects the creative and theoretical stance of their other work, so that instead of subordinating their voice to the expectations of the medium, they are empowered to express themselves through it. To further encourage an ethic of progressive storytelling, students will pair their writing exercises with a critical study of innovative scripts, and at the end of the semester, they will take the first steps toward a professional career, applying for development internships and major screenwriting fellowships.