I. Catalog Description

An introduction to the principles of cinematic storytelling, with emphasis on the creation of motion picture screenplays. (3 credit hours)

II. Prerequisite(s)

45 hours + EN 140

III. Objectives

A. To introduce students to the proper format used for writing feature-length motion pictures.

B. To acquaint students with the differences between traditional storytelling and film storytelling.

C. To encourage the creativity of students in their efforts to write compelling stories for the screen.

D. To inform students about the business of screenwriting and the various methods of entering the trade.

E. To help students develop the skills necessary to analyze and critique their own work and the work of others.

IV. Expectations of Students

A. To attend classes regularly

B. To read all text and supplemental assignments

C. To write a properly formatted 30-page script or first act of a feature length screenplay

D. To participate in the discussion and critique of their own script and the scripts of other students

E. To complete all other class assignments

F. To demonstrate their knowledge of the craft of screenwriting in at least one examination
V. Course Content

A. Screenwriting formats 2 weeks

1. Screenplays
   a. Differences between film stories and traditional stories
   b. Master scene format
      (1) Scene headings
      (2) Action
      (3) Dialogue
      (4) Parenthetical information
      (5) Shot information
      (6) Transitions

2. Treatments
   a. Purpose of film treatments
   b. Language of the treatment
   c. Treatment format

B. Principles of visual storytelling 6 weeks

1. Story
   a. Dramatic structure
      (1) Exposition
      (2) Complication
      (3) Climax
      (4) Denouement
   b. Theme
   c. Conflict

2. Characterization
   a. Character types
      (1) Functions of the protagonist
      (2) Functions of the antagonist
      (3) Uses and misuses of stereotypes
   b. Development
      (1) Static and developing characters
      (2) Flat and round characters
      (3) Character arc

3. Dialogue
   a. The unreality of screen dialogue
   b. Subtext
   c. Revealing character through speech

4. Action and setting
   a. Stasis
   b. Revealing character through action
   c. Revealing theme through setting
C. The business of screenwriting  
1. Film art vs. commercialism  
2. Career strategies  
   a. Script marketing  
   b. Agents  
   c. Festivals  
   d. Protecting your ideas  

D. The creative process  
1. The writing habit  
   a. Collaboration  
   b. Rewrites  
   c. Schedules  
   d. Ideas  
2. Adaptations  
3. Screenwriting analysis

VI. Textbook


VII. Auxiliary Materials

A. Various feature length screenplays to be provided to students

VIII. Basis for Student Evaluation

A. Fifty percent of the final grade will be based on the quality of a 30-page screenplay. Quality is determined by the following factors:
   1. Proper master scene format  
   2. Story follows model of dramatic structure and has an identifiable theme  
   3. Creation of unique, believable characters  
   4. Crafting of engaging screen dialogue  

B. Twenty percent will be determined by an objective final exam

C. Twenty percent will be based on various screenwriting exercises

D. Ten percent will be based on class participation and script critiques