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MAR 210.02: Creation of Media Story

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MAR 210 Section 02, Creation of Media Story

3 credits

School of Media Arts, Fall 2014

Media Arts Majors only

Mondays & Wednesdays 10:40AM – 12:00PM MCG 228

Professor Talena Sanders

Email: talena.sanders@umontana.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:00 – 2:00, Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:30, McGill 223

TEXTS

A variety of readings will be provided via PDF uploaded to Moodle. You may wish to buy a physical copy of the following texts:

The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay, David Howard and Edward Mabley

Now Write! Screenwriting, edited by Sherry Ellis and Laurie Lamson

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting, Syd Field

REQUIRED MATERIALS

-2 Binders (one for all class materials, and one for your final project)

-Tabs

-Jump drive or external hard drive

COURSE DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES

Films originate from written words. Whether narrative or documentary, every film relies upon some form of text at its genesis and throughout the production process. In this course, you will learn fundamental and critical skills to develop your original written words toward short film production. You will hone your writing and communication skills through workshops with your fellow screenwriters and potential crewmates. In addition to shaping your story concept, you will learn to prepare to shoot a film through the pre-production process.

WHAT WE WILL COVER:

- Idea and concept development
- Basic Screenwriting techniques and formatting for short film using Final Draft and Celtx
- Rudiments of Dramatic Action
- Blocking – where to put the actors
- The Shot – where to put the camera
- The Pitch – getting people to read your story and want to make it
- Basic Film Vocabulary
- Working with Shot Plots and Storyboards
- Working effectively as a member of a production team
- Basic organizational preparations for the shoot:
 - Scene Breakdown

Shot List
Preparing for Camera Set-ups
Selecting Locations

GRADING

Grading for the course will be based on the instructor's assessment of students' growth and understanding of the previously listed concepts demonstrated through assignments, projects, and participation. Each assignment will be graded on a 100 point scale. The assessment of each project will be detailed in the assignment sheets you receive in class.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed two (2) absences. Any further absence will impact your final grade for the course. Four or more absences will result in withdrawal from the course.

PARTICIPATION

You are expected to come to class prepared to fully engage with the films, assigned texts, and your fellow students in discussion. Your participation grade will be determined by your attendance, punctuality, and participation in in-class discussions and activities. You will be working collaboratively on projects, and are expected to live up to commitments to your team. Students are expected to read fellow students' work outside of class, and to then provide constructive and critical feedback on that work in workshops.

WRITERS' WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

You will be grouped in a small group with 3 -4 group members, to form a writers' workshop. These groups will rotate with each script assignment, but will stay the same for each draft/rewriting assignment for the same script. You can either post your script to a Moodle forum, or email each other your scripts by deadline. You will print out and read all 3 or 4 scripts you receive and make notes on that copy. You'll bring your feedback copies to class and use that material during the in-class writing workshop. I will collect your feedback copies of scripts, so be sure to write your own name on the scripts you're reviewing. You are responsible to put these returned materials in your class binder for later reference. At the end of each script review group, you will be asked to evaluate your group members' contributions to your workshop group through their level of participation, ability to meet deadlines and commitments, and thoughtful feedback. These evaluations will only be seen by the professor, and will not be returned to you.

COMMUNICATION

Please communicate via email, and include MAR210 in the subject line of your email.

ELECTRONICS POLICY

Do not use your cell phone during this course, and do not have it visible during

the course meetings. Turn all sounds OFF during course meetings (not on vibrate, but fully silent). During course meetings, do not use your laptop or lab computers for non-course related emailing, social networking, or any other non-course related activities. **Violation of this policy will result in an unexcused absence for the course meeting.**

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

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DEADLINES

Each day an assignment is turned in past deadline results in the loss of one letter grade for that assignment. (1 day late = B grade, 2 days late = C grade, etc.)

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Will be shared with you throughout the course for each project.

COURSE BINDER

Keep all materials related to this course in a binder – you will want to keep your feedback from Writers' Workshops and all drafts to refer to throughout your creative process.

FINAL PROJECT

Each student will write, compile, workshop, and create a production binder, as you would create prior to shooting any narrative film, drawing from one of the script assignments you've completed in the course. You will pitch your script and present your production binder in a one-on-one pitch meeting with the professor acting as a producer. We will go over the requirements of this project in greater detail as the semester progresses.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK ONE

Monday, August 25, 2014

- Course intro, go over syllabus, Moodle, narrative form in cinema, script format
- Read *Five Feet High and Rising* script, written by Peter Sollett (first 3 pages) in class and discuss screenplay form
- In-class viewing: *Five Feet High and Rising*, written and directed by Peter Sollett

Assignment: Read through the rest of the *Five Feet High and Rising* script (<http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/fivefeetandrising.html>); finish watching the film at home (available on YouTube or on shortoftheweek.com)

Wednesday, August 27, 2014

- Intro to narrative form and 3 act structure, story basics, character, theme, inciting incident, canonical state (world of the story), protagonist and antagonist
- In-class viewing: *La-Gar-To*, directed by Miguel Jiron, *Wind*, directed by Robert Loebel
- Postcard writing exercise – exploring canonical state

Assignment: What You Don't Know Exercise, due 9/3 in class, see project description at end of syllabus for details

Reading: from *Story*, by Robert McKee, Chapter 2 "The Structure Spectrum" pages 31 – 42, from *Screenplay*, by Syd Field, Chapter 1 "What is a Screenplay?", from *The Tools of Screenwriting* by David Howard & Edward Mabley, pg. 28 – 29 "Protagonist, Antagonist, and Conflict"

WEEK TWO

Monday, September 1, 2014

LABOR DAY, NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

- Course calendar
- Discuss What You Don't Know exercise outcomes
- Discuss reading – story structures, beats, scenes, sequences, protagonist, antagonist, and conflict
- In-class viewing: *Prospect*, directed by Zeek Earl and Chris Caldwell, 2014, 13:43

Assignment: Bullet story idea derived from the What You Don't Know observations for a short script with no dialogue or narration; fill out a character biography for the protagonist - upload to Moodle before midnight on 9/7

Reading: Reading: from *Tools of Screenwriting*, Howard/Mabley pg. 30 – 62

WEEK THREE

Monday, September 8, 2014

- Discuss readings –Externalizing the Internal, Objective and Subjective Drama, Time and the Storyteller, The Power of Uncertainty, Protagonist and Objective, Conflict, Obstacles, Premise and Opening, Main Tension, Culmination, and Resolution, Theme, Unity, Exposition
- Workshop bullet ideas in small groups
- Conflict exercise

Reading: from *Story* by McKee, Chapter 5 “Character and Structure”

Wednesday September 10, 2014

Discuss reading - Characters

- Character biography
- In-class viewing: *Francis*, directed by Richard Hickey, 2014, 7:12, *Skin*, directed by Jordana Spiro

Assignment: Character journal

Reading: *Story*, by Robert McKee, Chapter 4 “Structure and Genre”, from Tools of Screenwriting by Howard/Mabley, pg. 66 – 76

WEEK FOUR

Monday, September 15, 2014

- Discuss readings – Genre, development of the story, dramatic irony, preparation and aftermath, planting and payoff, elements of the future and advertising
- review screenplay form – read one page script in class
- In-class viewing: *Tuurngait*, created by students at Supinfocom, Arles, France
- Demo: Final Draft and Celtx

Assignment: Script 1, Draft 1 (No Dialogue, 4 pages), due 9/24 in class, emailed or posted to Moodle for your group by **5PM on 9/22**

Reading: from *Screenplay* by Syd Field Ch. 13 “Screenplay Form”, from Tools of Screenwriting by Howard/Mabley pg. 76 - 78

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

- Discuss reading – screenplay form, writing processes and outlines
- Newspaper exercise
- 21 Questions exercise

Assignment: Location Soundscapes, due before class on 9/29 uploaded to Moodle

Reading: from *The Tools of Screenwriting* by Howard/Mabley, pg. 95 – 97, a short script TBA, annotated in Screen Genius

WEEK FIVE

Monday, September 22, 2014

- Discuss reading – the dramatic scene
- Workshop and feedback best practices discussion
- Finish your scary story
- Storyboard a memory activity
- In-class viewing: *To the Bone*, directed by Erin Li, 8:28

Wednesday, September 24, 2014

- Writers' Workshop for Script 1, Draft 1

Assignment: Script 1, Draft 2, due 10/1 in class, uploaded/emailed to group by **5PM on 9/29**

Reading: Short script TBA, annotated in Screen Genius

WEEK SIX**Monday, September 29, 2014**

- Writers' Workshop for Script 1 Draft 1 wrap up
- Soundscapes in-class writing exercise
- Francis Ford Coppola's Toolkit exercise

Read: Short script, TBA, annotated in Screen Genius

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

- Writers' Workshop for Script 1 Draft 2, group evaluations, post-workshop revisions due before midnight on 10/12 (upload to Moodle)

Assignment: Script 2 Draft 1 (Character Inspired, 5 - 6 pages), due 10/13 in class, by 5PM on 10/11 emailed/uploaded to group

Reading: from *Tools of Screenwriting* by Howard/Mabley pg. 78 – 90

Watch: *Big Man*, directed by Julius Onah

WEEK SEVEN**Monday, October 6, 2014**

- Discuss reading – plausibility, activity & action, dialogue, visuals
- in-class screening: *Walkabout*, Nicolas Roeg, 1971, 100 mins
- discuss visuals in *Walkabout*

Wednesday, October 8, 2014

- In-class viewing: finish *Walkabout*, Nicolas Roeg, 1971, 100 mins
- scene breakdown from *Walkabout*
- script progress check in – help for writer's block
- in-class work time

Assignment: Film analysis outline for *Walkabout*, due 10/15

Reading: "Walkabout: Landscapes of Memory" by Paul Ryan

(<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1466-walkabout-landscapes-of-memory>),

short script TBA annotated in Screen Genius

WEEK EIGHT

Monday, October 13, 2014

-Script 2 Draft 1 due – Writers' Workshop + One-on-one meetings throughout

Assignment: Script 2 Draft 2, due 10/22 in class, *don't pre-read your group's drafts*, as you'll be preparing for the midterm exam.

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

-Script 2 Draft 1 wrap up, collaborative note-taking for midterm review

-in-class viewing: short film TBA

Assignment: Flipping the midterm – student-generated midterm exam questions (each student contributes 4 questions) uploaded to Moodle before midnight on 10/18

Script 3 Draft 1 (Location Inspired, 6 – 9 pages) due 11/3 in class, emailed/uploaded to group by **5PM on 11/1**

WEEK NINE

Monday, October 20, 2014

In-class midterm exam and midterm course feedback (from students to professor)

Wednesday, October 22, 2014

-Script 2 Draft 2 due – Writers' Workshop, post-workshop revisions due on Moodle before midnight on 10/28

-in-class work time or short film screening TBA

Reading: short script TBA, annotated in Screen Genius

WEEK TEN

Monday, October 27, 2014

-Script 2 Draft 2 wrap up, group evaluations

-Discussion: Pitching

-Elevator pitching exercise

-In-class work time on your script, one-on-one meetings available

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

- Intro to pre-production, working with crew, and the production binder
- The Big Eavesdrop activity – **bring laptops!**

Reading: from *Film Production Theory* by Jean-Pierre Geuens, Chapter 5

“Staging” – read by November 5

Assignment: Halloween from the field assignment TBA

WEEK ELEVEN

Monday, November 3, 2014

- Script 3 Draft 1 due, Writers' Workshop, one-on-one meetings throughout

Assignment: Script 3 Draft 2 due 11/10, emailed/uploaded to group by 5PM on 11/8

Final draft of chosen script for final project due 11/17, uploaded to Moodle

Reading: Experimental form scripts TBA

Wednesday, November 5, 2014

- Script 3 Draft 1 wrap up
- Discussion – *Film Production Theory* reading, non-traditional film writing, experimental forms
- Character poetry exercise
- Non-traditional format script exercise
- In-class viewing: experimental narrative films, TBA

Reading: *Devotional Cinema* by Nathaniel Dorsky, finish by 11/12

WEEK TWELVE

Monday, November 10, 2014

Script 3 Draft 2 Writers' Workshop, group evaluations

- In-class viewing: short films TBA

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

- Discuss *Devotional Cinema*
- Pre-production discussion: casting, crewing, budgets
- Mood boards
- In-class production binder work time
- Schedule Final Pitch Meetings (December 3), sign up for individual meetings on 11/17

WEEK THIRTEEN

Monday, November 17, 2014

In-class work day/one-on-one meetings – bring final draft of your chosen script, production binders in-progress. Email final draft to Talena before 5 PM on 11/15 if you'd like feedback on your script final draft.

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

-Individual Meetings continue

-In-class production binder workshop day with small groups (required)

Watch: Short films TBA

Read: from *Sculpting in Time*, by Andrey Tarkovsky "Scenario and the Shooting Script" and "The Film's Graphic Realisation" pages 125 - 138

WEEK FOURTEEN

Happy Thanksgiving

WEEK FIFTEEN

Monday, December 1, 2014

In-class work day/one-on-one meetings



Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Individually Scheduled Final Project Presentations 9:30AM – 6:30PM McGill Hall Room 228: Pitch meetings + turn in your Production Binder

Optional: share your project pieces on Moodle with classmates, email Talena when you post.

RESOURCES

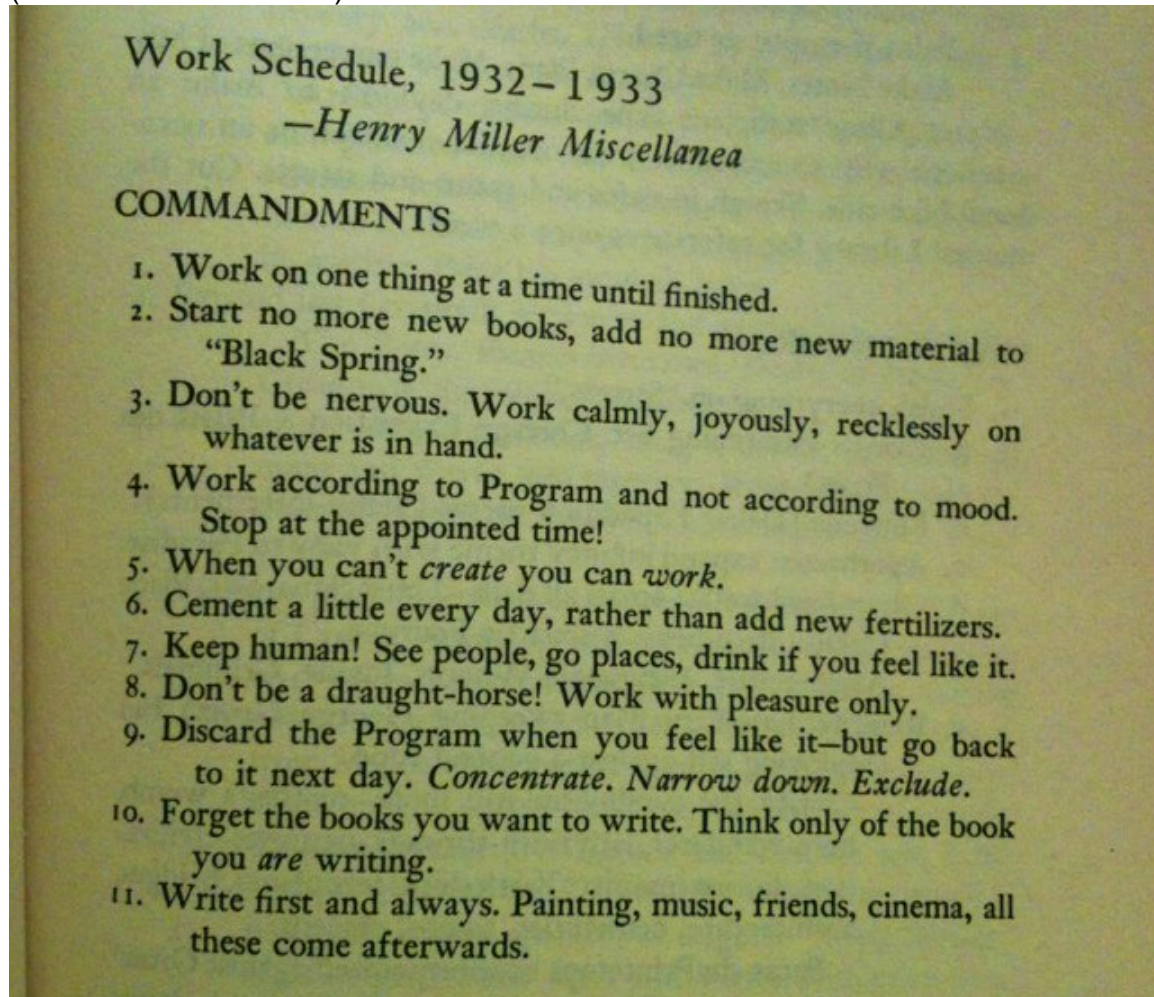
Shortoftheweek.com

Dailyscript.com

Simplyscripts.com

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkGyhCwp93E4KItUIGQWzUj-AzBBSjFds>

(Sundance Short Films)



Assignment 1: What You Don't Know – due September 3 in class

We've all heard the cliché "Write what you know" advice. For this activity, you're seeking to do the opposite. Find a topic, place, or person that interests you that is based here in Missoula or the surrounding area. It could be a place you've been meaning to go, but haven't found an excuse for visiting. Your interest could stem from anything, for example "What's it like to fight a forest fire?" or "What's it like to work in a casino?" or "What's it like to work at Shakespeare & Co.?"

Research your interest – track down contacts, send emails, make phone calls, read online articles. Learn the subject. Arrange for a day, or even just an hour to watch someone in action or observe the happenings at a place.

Observe every detail, and jot down every observation you can – what they're wearing, sounds, sights, smells, mannerisms, how they interact with customers/patrons, any lingo they might use, bits of dialogue and conversations you overhear.

Some Rules for Students and Teachers

By John Cage

RULE ONE: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student - pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher - pull everything out of your students.

RULE FOUR: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE FIVE: be self-disciplined - this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE SIX: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE SEVEN: The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE EIGHT: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE NINE: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE TEN: "We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities." (John Cage)

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes.

Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often.

Save everything - it might come in handy later.
