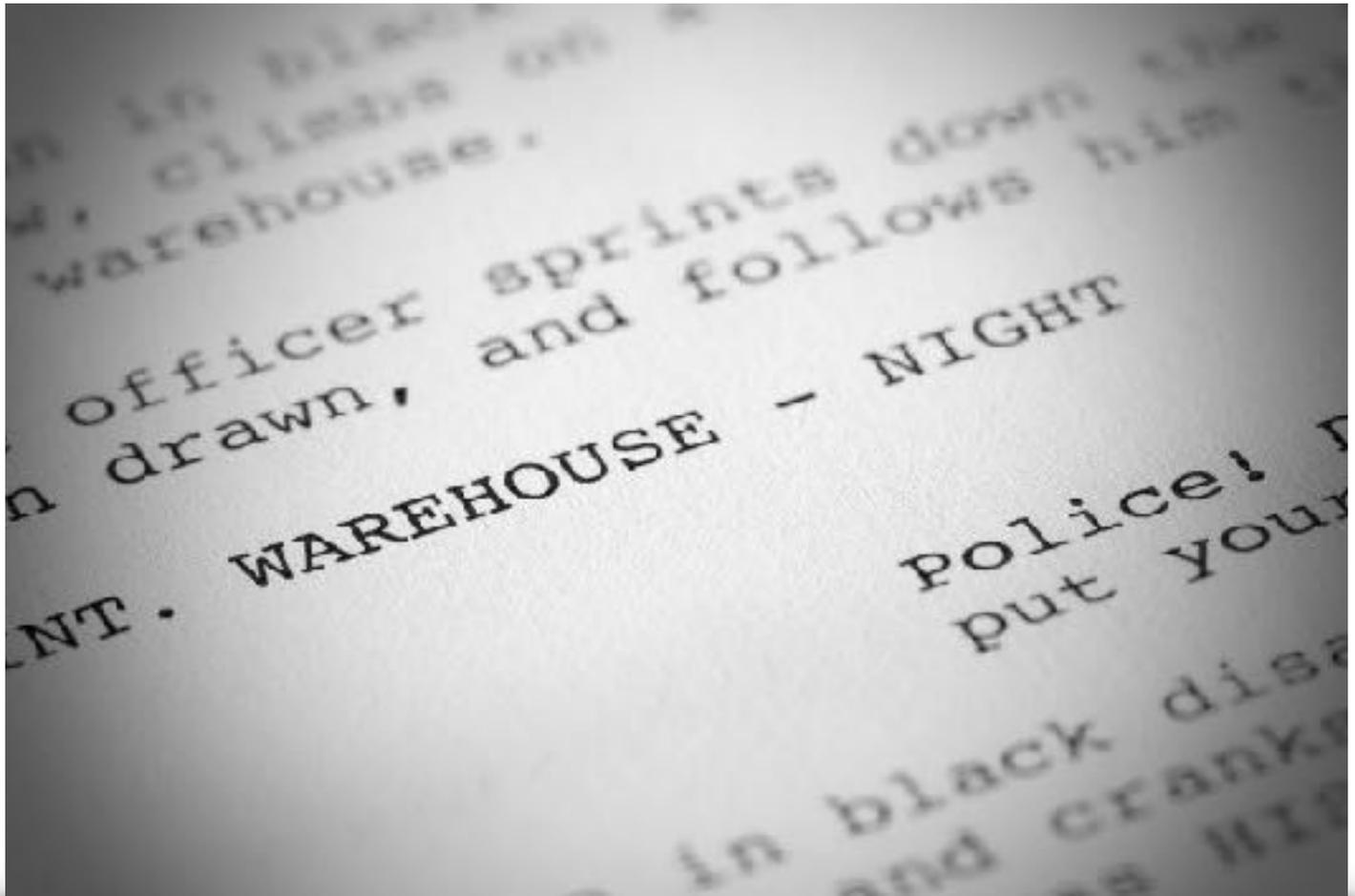# SCREENWRITING

Screenwriting | FILM 3315 | CRN: 22258 | Spring 2020

Tuesday, 2:30-5:20pm, UGLC 340

Instructor: Greg Beam

Email: gbeam@utep.edu

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 10:30-11:30am & 1:30-3:00pm | Worrell Hall, room 114

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the practice of writing dramatic narratives for the screen. The emphasis will be practical rather than theoretical, focusing on the elements and principles of sound cinematic writing and geared toward establishing a solid technique. The bulk of the coursework will be generating original material, in the form of weekly exercises and a couple of longer creative assignments, and responding to classmates' work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

• To learn how the basic elements of a screenplay are used.
• To build a strong understanding of the core principles of dramatic storytelling, specifically as they apply to writing for the screen.
• To develop optimal methods of communication with peers and collaborators.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

• The ability to format a script according to current industry standards.
• Facility with the craft of screenwriting sufficient to compose a script that is technically profi-cient and has considerable artistic merit.
• The confidence to deliver verbal feedback on the work of colleagues in a way that is mean-ingful, constructive, and conducive to further collaboration.

MATERIALS

Reading:

Story, Robert McKee (ISBN: 978-0060391683)

The Screenwriter's Bible, David Trottier (ISBN: 978-1935247210)

Poetics, Aristotle (ISBN: 978-0140446364)

*I have posted a number of screenplays on Blackboard; in addition, many screenplays are available for free on-line. Making a regular habit of reading scripts will help you become famil-iar with the form.

Software: You should have access to software that is designed specifically for script format-ting. There are a number of good screenwriting programs out there, each with its own bells and whistles. While Final Draft is the industry standard, there are numerous less expensive options, the most popular being Celtx. Celtx has a free version available on-line; while the functionality is limited, it should be sufficient to get you through this course. You can find a list of free screenwriting software programs on Blackboard, under Course Materials and Links.

COMMUNICATION

You must have an active UTEP email address and check it regularly. You should also have regular access to Blackboard. These will be my primary means of communicating with you outside of class. Please note that I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts. If you want to contact me, use your UTEP email address.

You should also make sure that you can access **Microsoft Onedrive**, which is available through My UTEP. We will be using this service to share and discuss our work.

ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at UTEP provides students with disabilities accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. If you are dealing with a mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability, you are encouraged to contact them for a confidential consultation. For more information, visit http://sa.utep.edu/cass/.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected at all class sessions and is particularly important in this course, as in-person work responses constitute a significant portion of the course content.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any incident of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero on the assignment and possible disciplinary action. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Please check the UTEP Student Handbook for more information on academic dishonesty, and if you're ever in doubt about whether your use of a source is acceptable, don't hesitate to check with me.

SUBJECT MATTER

It is very possible that work produced by students may touch on sensitive subject matters. Consequently, some of the coursework (i.e. work responses) may require discussion of difficult and mature issues. I ask 1.) that you never write anything with the intention of offending or inflicting distress on any of your classmates and 2.) that you are mindful of others' dignity and welfare and always always ALWAYS keep your discussions respectful and professional.

If you have concerns about discussing specific subjects, please see me to discuss possible accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Portfolio (45%)

You will submit a total of 12 exercises over the course of the semester, each related to that week's lesson. These assignments will be submitted on-line prior to each week's class and will serve as the material for that week's in-class readings and responses. Carefully review the submission instructions and the terms of each assignment.

You will upload your script to that week's folder on Microsoft OneDrive. Once you have done so, it will be available to be viewed by everyone in the class. Bring an electronic device to class in order to pull up that week's submitted scripts.

At the end of the semester, you will compile all of your work and submit it as a portfolio through Blackboard.

Since these exercises are vital to work we are doing in class, late submissions will not be accepted. **Please bear in mind that these assignments will be shared with small groups, and some will be shared with the whole class, so make sure you submit work that you are comfortable sharing and discussing.**

Attendance/Work Responses (20%)

At the BEGINNING of each class period, we will divide into small groups to discuss that week's completed exercise. You will read and discuss each group member's completed assignment. This is the primary way you will be sharing your work and getting direct feedback, and enthusiastic participation and a spirit of collaboration and support are critical to getting the most out of these exercises.

Final Script (35%)

At the end of the semester, you will submit a 10- to 20-page script for a short film. Note that you will have submitted a treatment for this script as well as sample pages prior to the due date; you will be evaluated on the whole progression from treatment to submitted draft.

ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Portfolio:	45
Attendance/Work Responses:	20
Final Script:	35
TOTAL:	100

A = 90-100 points

B = 80-89 points

C = 70-79 points

D = 60-69 points

F = 0-59 points

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Class Meeting	Assignments (all assignments due by 12pm on the due date unless otherwise noted)
Week 1: Introduction Tuesday, Jan. 21	Acquire screenwriting software and acquaint yourself with the elements and functions.
Week 2: The Basics - Formatting Tuesday, Jan. 28	Formatting Exercise due Tuesday, Feb. 4
Week 3: Setting the Scene - Environment Tuesday, Feb. 4	Environment Exercise due Tuesday, Feb. 11
Week 4: Setting the Scene - Circumstances Tuesday, Feb. 11	Circumstances Exercise due Tuesday, Feb. 18
Week 5: Creating Characters - Behavior & action Tuesday, Feb. 18	Behavior & Action Exercise due Tuesday, Feb. 25
Week 6: Creating Characters - Dialogue Tuesday, Feb. 25	Dialogue Exercise due Tuesday, Mar. 3
Week 7: Creating Characters - Point-of-view & values Tuesday, Mar. 3	Monologue Exercise due Tuesday, Mar. 10
Week 8: Building a Scene - Conflict Tuesday, Mar. 10	
Week 9: Spring Break - No Class	
Week 10: Building a Scene - Beginnings, endings, and turning points l The game of the scene Tuesday, Mar. 24	Scene Structure Exercise due Tuesday, Mar. 31
Week 11: Structuring a Narrative - Transitions & Sequencing Tuesday, Mar. 31	Transition Exercise due Tuesday, Apr. 7
Week 12: Structuring a Narrative - The three-act paradigm Tuesday, Apr. 7	
Week 13: Structuring a Narrative - The three-act paradigm (cont'd) Tuesday, Apr. 14	Three-Act Outline due Tuesday, Apr. 21
Week 14: Structuring a Narrative - The treatment Tuesday, Apr. 21	Treatment for Final Script due Tuesday, Apr. 28
Week 15: Structuring a Narrative - Narrative devices Tuesday, Apr. 28	Opening Sequence Exercise due Tuesday, May 5
Week 16: Structuring a Narrative - The short film Tuesday, May 5	Portfolio due on Blackboard Sunday, May 10, by end of day.
Finals Week Final: TBA	Final Script due on Blackboard Tuesday, May 12, by end of day