

Writing for the Screen I – FMMC 0106

Fall 2019, Professor David Miranda Hardy

Class meetings:

T-TH 9.30 – 10.45, Axinn 104, Section A

T-TH 11:00 – 12.15, Axinn 105, Section B

Office: 213 Axinn Center

Email address: dmirandahardy@middlebury.edu

Office Hours: M 9 to 11 AM, W 1 to 3 PM, or by appointment

Writing for the Screen I is an introductory creative screenwriting workshop, concentrating primarily on the principles and techniques of dramatic writing for film and media.

This course is **writing intensive** and centered around the discussion of the students' work, ranging from short exercises to the final draft of a short film screenplay.

Through short lectures, readings, the watching of short films and clips, and the analysis of already-produced scripts, students will learn to appreciate screenwriting as a genre in itself, with its rules and specificity, relatively strict formats and particular challenges.

Writing for the Screen I operates under the premise that creative work represents a combination of the personal and the social. Students are encouraged to question the context of their writing, to interrogate their social interactions and to explore their personal histories. Students will learn to identify and develop the stories they are ready and eager to tell.

Learning Goals:

- Students will command basic screenwriting concepts like *classic dramatic structure, character arc, theme, conflict, tone & style, text & subtext and dialogue techniques.*
- Students will practice essential skills and techniques such as *pitching, analyzing scripts and films from a screenwriting perspective, writing summaries, outlines, scenes and dialogue, developing characters, conflict and themes.*
- Students will be able to apply the above concepts and skills to the development of a short 8-14 pages script.

Readings:

Additional readings will be assigned and will be available to students via Canvas.

Course Requirements:

- 10% Pitching and in-class presentations.
- 10% Short screenplay outline.
- 40% Advanced draft of a 8-14 page short.
- 20% Week-to-week assignments.
- 20% Class participation and feedback to classmates

Grades:

You will be graded using a 4.0 scale:

A (4.0) is for truly excellent work beyond basic expectations of the course goals.

B (3.0) is for above-average work, complete, polished and consistent.

C (2.0) is for satisfactorily meeting the course requirements in an adequate fashion.

D (1.0) is for not achieving course goals / not adequately meeting expectations.

F (0.0) is for failing to meet course goals as well as for specific situations such as not turning in one of the three major assignments, missing more than five class meetings or any instance of academic dishonesty.

Submitting Work: Late turn in of homework or assignments is highly disruptive for this class' workshop format and it throws off schedules for both student and professor. If an assignment is turned in late without a Dean's excuse, it will be penalized by one mark (e.g. an A- becomes a B+) for each day of lateness.

Academic Honesty: All work you submit must be your own and you may not inappropriately assist other students in their work beyond the confines of a particular assignment, in keeping with the Middlebury College Honor Code. The definitions of plagiarism and cheating used in this course are consistent with the material in the College Handbook, Chapter V.

Course Policies: Any student with a disability or who otherwise needs accommodation or assistance should make arrangements with Professor Miranda Hardy as soon as possible. If you know that you will have conflicts due to athletics or other college activities, you must notify Professor Miranda Hardy in advance and arrange to make up missed work – athletic absences are not excused and it is the student's responsibility to make all arrangements.

Email is Professor Miranda Hardy's preferred mode of communication (besides face-to-face conversation!), generally checking regularly during the work week – if you email him asking for a response and do not receive one within one working day (M-F), assume that your email may not have been received.

Computer Use Policy: Feel free to use laptops throughout all class meetings except during screenings, where the light from the screen can disrupt the viewing experience. If you are on your laptop, you are expected to engage with course materials, not free-range surfing the web, checking email, Facebook, etc.

SCHEDULE

Week 1	Telling Stories
Week 2	Character, dimensionality and specificity
Week 3	Conflicts and their role in storytelling
Week 4	Ideas, loglines, treatments
Week 5	The dramatic scene
Week 6	Script formatting and style
Week 7	Intro to dramatic structure
Week 8	Dialogue and Cliché
Week 9	Workshop
Week 10	Critique and Feedback
Week 11	Theme and subtext
Week 12	Workshop

*schedule may (read: will) change.