

Screenwriting CIN 3401
McDaniel College, Budapest
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Course Description:

This course is a creative workshop designed to help you acquire the basic rules and techniques of screenwriting and dramaturgy in practice. It is made up of a 11-week screenwriting workshop and a 3-week film shoot of a script written in class.

Along the term you will be developing your own screenplay for a short film (cc. 10 pages long in script format.) We will study the essential theoretical and practical aspects of dramatic composition, analyse short films, and work on original ideas, developing them from a basic story outline into a treatment and finally a screenplay. As a group we will workshop your scripts, discuss it scene-by-scene, line-by-line helping each other produce the perfect script.

Week-to-week revisions of your work is essential. You will also be given other exercises. For every class you will read and comment on the work of your peers too.

In the last three weeks of the workshop we will choose one of the scripts and make it into film. As the participants of the class you will have the chance to be either part of the crew and learn the basics of filmmaking, or perform as actors.

Grading:

You are graded on your weekly work and participation in class, there is no midterm or final exam.

- 50% screenplays (first draft, revisions, final draft) and other written exercises (character bio, outline, step outline, etc)
- 20% active participation in class
- 30% active participation in the film shoot

Thematic Questions

- 1 What makes a story? An introduction to basic storytelling.
- 2 How to create character? The basics of character psychology.
- 3 Character and plot, subject, premise and idea.
- 4 The character-driven plot, the need of conflict.
- 5 The basics of structuring the plot, the story arc

- 6 The character arc.
- 7 The beginning and the end
- 8 Setting up the story, the inciting incident
- 9 Progression of plot and turning points
- 10 Structuring the scene and the sequence.
- 11 The use and function of dialogue and action

Class Schedule by week:

(will change according to need)

1. Introduction
2. Discussion of short films, textbook, short written exercises
3. Initial ideas for film
4. character biography
5. story outline
6. step outline, scene breakdown
7. first draft of opening scene of script
- 8-9. first draft of full script
10. second, revised draft
11. final draft
- 12-14. film shoot

Reading:

- Robert McKee: Story. Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting. (Any recent edition.)

Recommended Reading:

- Campbell, Joseph: The Hero with a Thousand Faces. New World Library, Novato, 2008.
- Daniel, Frank on Screenwriting. Handout by FAMU, Prague.
- Field, Syd: Screenplay. Delta, New York, 2005.
- Monaco, James: How to Read a Film. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Scott, Kevin C. (ed.): Screenwriters' Masterclass. Faber and Faber, London, 2005.
- Tierno, Michael: Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters. Hyperion, New York, 2002.

Course Objectives

- You will learn to work in a creative way both independently and as a group
- You will learn to develop stories according to traditional dramaturgy

- You will learn to create fictional characters, stories and worlds
- You will learn to reproduce real situations and dialogues as fiction
- You will learn the complex tasks of a filmmaking
- You will learn to collaborate on producing creative work