JACK HEIFNER
Office hours: by appointment
jheifner@sfasu.edu

ARTS 4397-002  WRITING FOR FILMMAKERS
ARTS 5397-002 Fall Semester 2023
          MW 2 to 4:40 pm (on Zoom only)

Required text: William Goldman, WHICH LIE DID I TELL?

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This class covers the principles and techniques of writing for the screen with an emphasis on standard structures, formats and practices currently used by major American studios.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:
This is a beginning course for students interested in writing for film and television. The main emphasis will be on writing screenplays, but television writing will also be included. The student who successfully completes this course will be able to write film treatments and outlines, deliver oral pitches for movies and series, and understand the basics of writing a screenplay and sit-com script. The business angles for selling projects to producers, the proper form for the presentation of professional work, as well as the vocabulary used in the film and television industry will also be covered. The course is directed towards the person who wants to write and sell their work professionally.

The course will consist of work in four major areas and these areas will overlap:

The first area will be directed towards helping the student think creatively and develop ideas for movies and sit-coms. Writing exercises will be assigned to get the student “writing.” The exercises will be done both in and out of the classroom, and the results will be shared with the class. Discussion is encouraged. (Approximately 25% of total class time.)

The second area will focus on the vocabulary and form used in screenplays and, in some respect, the vocabulary and form used for sit-coms, soap opera and television movies. One of the objectives is for the student to understand the guidelines and restrictions set by the industry. (25%)

The third part is an analysis of movies. Why do certain movies work and others do not? Why are some movies successful? The required text will be discussed since it gives the student an inside look at the movie business from the point of view of an award-winning professional. Discussion of the business of selling scripts and the “ins and outs” of the entertainment industry will be covered. The text must be read and questions from the texts might be included on quizzes and on a final written exam. (25%)
The fourth aspect of the course is the actual writing of a movie script. During the semester the student will also be asked to write outlines and treatments, plus give oral presentations (known as “pitches”) for movies.

The goal of the class is to get the student writing and to understand how movie and television scripts are developed. At the end of the semester, the student will have written at least one partial or completed movie script. (25%)

Grading will be based upon the completion of writing projects, class participation, mid-semester and final projects, and possible quizzes and/or one written exam. The mid-semester project will be the pitching of a motion picture, as well as the writing of a treatment for such. The final project will be the actual writing of a script (either the same mid-semester project or another).

All written work must be submitted to the instructor on the date assigned. All assignments done out of the classroom must be typed and in the form used by professional writers. (This form will be covered in class.)

The mid-semester project pitch will be presented orally. This is in addition to the written treatment.

The class has two divisions: 4397-002 is for undergraduates and 5397-002 is for graduate students. The class work will be identical except that the graduate students will have a longer screenplay due at the end of the semester. The final script will be a partial movie script of at least 30 pages for students registered in 4397-002 and 90 pages for students in 5397-002. The scripts from all students is due approximately 3 weeks before the end of the semester. If the undergraduate has taken the class before and continues on the script they wrote in the past, then they will need to do 30 more additional pages to that script.

**Grading will be based on the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom participation, discussion &amp; attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-semester project (pitch and treatment)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project (30 pages of an original script)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or for graduate students the final script is 90 pages

Students are advised not to fall behind on assignments. **Projects are due on the date assigned. Late assignments will result in a lowering of your grade.**

Tardiness will result in a lower grade.

Missing assignments or assignments that are not typed will affect your final grade.

All work must be original. Plagiarism or the use of any material that is not written by the enrolled student in the course will result in a failing grade in the entire course and disciplinary action.
Please note that attendance is crucial to this course and excessive absences will result in a lowering of your grade. **A total of 7 excused or unexcused absences will result in a student receiving a failing grade.** In addition, excessive absences (over two) will affect your final grade.

The class is listed as a Livestream and Online class. This means that students will be attending via Zoom. You will be expected to be "in class" and keep your cameras working unless you are told to turn them off. Students attending via Zoom should be on "mute" except when addressing the class. Be sure to dress appropriately and refrain from eating, playing music or talking to other people who are not in the class.

**Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) supported in this course:**
1. The student will be able to analyze a script in ways that are necessary to a film practitioner or scholar/critic.
2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of film creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships.
3. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more screenwriting specialization(s).

**Student Learning Outcomes for this course (with supported PLOs):**
Students will be able to:
1. analyze the structure of a screenplay (1),
2. understand the purpose of a screenplay and its relationship to other aspects of filmmaking (1, 3),
3. write a script in standard format (1, 2, 3), and
4. present a story idea using a "pitch," outline and treatment (1, 3).

**Academic Integrity (4.1)**

*The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity* outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports,
and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to [https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

Students with documented disabilities who need course adaptations or accommodations please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.
Student Wellness and Well-Being
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:
• Health Services
• Counseling Services
• Student Outreach and Support
• Food Pantry
• Wellness Coaching
• Alcohol and Other Drug Education
www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:
• Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
• National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
• Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
• johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
SCREENWRITING SCHEDULE – Fall 2023 (subject to change)

Jack Heifner is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: My Meeting
Time: Aug 28, 2023 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
   Every week on Mon, Wed, until Dec 6, 2023, 30 occurrence(s)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://sfasu.zoom.us/j/92528321715?pwd=WkQ4a1Btd1gvSkxpM2h4U0c0aVpTUT09

Meeting ID: 925 2832 1715
Passcode: 583468

Schedule:

Aug 28 - Classes begin. Read Part One of Goldman (to page 50) by Monday, Sept 11.
   Aug 30

Sept 4
Sept 6 - Take one situation and outline what happens in Act One by next
   Wednesday, Sept 13. Type it. Follow the E.T. outline

Sept 11 – Discuss Part One of Goldman, read up to page 129 by Monday, Sept 18.
Sept 13– Outline of your story through Act One is due. Outline your story through Act
   Two by, Wednesday Sept 20

Sept 18– Discuss Goldman, read to page 211 by Monday, Sept. 25
Sept 20– Hand in your outline for your story through Act Two, outline your story
   through Act Three by Wednesday, Sept 27.

Sept 25 – Discuss Goldman, read to page 277 by Monday, Oct 2
Sept 27 - Outline of all Three Acts due, must be typed, start treatment
   now

Oct 2– Discuss Goldman, read to page 333 by Monday, Oct 9
Oct 4-

Oct 9 - Discuss Goldman, read the rest of the book by Monday, Oct 16
Oct 11

Oct 16– Discuss rest of Goldman
Oct 18 – All treatments due, must be typed, start writing your
   screenplay now
Oct 23 - pitches
Oct 25 - pitches

Oct 30 - pitches (if needed)
Nov 1 -

Nov 6 – First 5 pages of the screenplay are due to check formatting.
Nov 7 -

Nov 13 –
Nov 15 -

THANKSGIVING

Nov 27 -
Nov 29 - all screenplays due

Dec 4 – review
Dec 6