

**SYLLABUS**  
**FILM 264-WA : SCREENWRITING**  
**Instructor: Allan Moyé Office: Rose Terrace 226 (MBU Campus)**  
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**MARY BALDWIN UNIVERSITY**

***Purpose:***

Provides students opportunity to gain an appreciation and the skills required to write effectively for television and film through theory and the practice of **narrative** screenwriting.

***Course description:***

Students are introduced to the theory and practice of screenwriting including concept, research, treatment, plot, character, editing, style, revision and presentation. Analyzing successful scripts and workshop drafts will help students develop appropriate styles and modes of work.

**Concentration will be on “classical principles” of dramatic narrative for television and film.** Students who take this course should have basic writing skills. The course will emphasize revision and peer editing and **meets the MBU General Education requirements for writing emphasis. The class is designed as an introduction for beginners, but is also beneficial to experienced writers and those who wish to adapt previously written narratives to screen.**

***Goals:***

- Various, continuous bi-weekly writing exercises
- To write a first act for a full length feature screenplay
- On-line discussions and analysis by peers and instructor
- Assigned readings and viewings to enhance study of writing for film
- Screenings of accomplished scenes
- Scrutiny of published scripts
- **Most importantly... the practice of the craft, writing and revision.**

***Textbooks:***

*THE SCREENWRITER’S BIBLE* by David Trotter. ISBN: 1-879505-84-3. NEWEST EDITION.  
Various handouts will be provided in class.

***Recommended Reading:***

*THE WRITER’S JOURNEY: Mythic Structure for Writers* by Christopher Vogler

*THREE USES OF THE KNIFE: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama* by David Mamet

*SAVE THE CAT* by Blake Snyder

*INSIDE STORY: The Power of the Transformational Arc* by Dara Marks

***Other materials:***

- A convenient journal or notepad specifically for this class for writing down ideas, character sketches, snippets of dialogue, writer's names, etc.
- I will assign supplemental reading materials, including portions of scripts and handbook materials. Keep these throughout the semester for reference.
- You are responsible for having backup copies of your work throughout the semester if needed. You should be able to produce a copy of any of your work for this class upon request.
- Since we will be sharing our writing with the class via Blackboard, please make sure you follow instructions for pasting and commenting.
- You will be required to attend at least 2 screenings of films outside of class time. These will be announced.

### **Grades:**

Though grades constitute a necessity, I urge students not to think of their writing in those terms. **Write, write, write**, and all else will take care of itself. The writing assignments below are designed to lead you to your final project. Grades are based on the following:

- Observation/setting exercises and revisions
- Character exercises and revisions
- Dialogue exercises and revisions
- Reports on outside screenplay readings
- Final Project (around 30 pages of script: a short film script or first act of a feature)
- On line attendance/Deadlines/Participation

*All writing assignments must be typed or generated with word-processing software unless otherwise noted. All assignments are due on the day stated. In order to promote the meeting of deadlines, assignments can lose points for being late. **More importantly, the chance for revision (to improve your work and your grade) may be forfeited when first drafts are not handed in on time.***

*Opportunities for extra credit and grade bonus points may be available, but do not expect this.*

-No student can earn an A in this class without completing and handing in all assignments.

**-A passing grade cannot be obtained without completing and handing in the Final Project. (It is the culmination of all learned concepts.)**

-No extensions will be granted if less than 80% of the material has been completed by the end of the semester.

### **Attendance:**

**Sharing your work essential in this course.** For the writer to grow in a workshop situation, you must be able to **offer and accept constructive criticisms and comments**. It is essential for you to give fellow students the same considerations that you would expect from them. Active involvement in the development of other stories strengthens your own writing.

**This involvement is not only expected, it is required.** Therefore, the procedure (and your grade) is certainly enhanced by participation.

**The professor will comment within the group discussions, but also expect direct, more personal feedback as he and the student deem necessary and appropriate. The student should advantage of having an experienced writing coach.**

**CLASS PROCEDURES and PROTOCOLS** will be announced depending on class-size and situations.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *The study of any liberal art in depth, especially an art form such as film that constantly reflects and influences modern culture, depends upon addressing some issues that may be considered controversial or subversive to some participants. Some screenplays we will be reading and film examples we will be watching and discussing have been Rated R by the MPAA and deal with adult themes and language. We will discuss these films and themes responsibly. In essence, this course is rated R by MPAA standards (whatever they may be.)*

**This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.**