

F/TV 64A/B/C – Advanced Screenwriting Workshop I/II/III – 4 Units

Spring Quarter, 2025

Instructor/Contact: Thomas D. Gamburg; gamburgthomas@fhda.edu
Office Hour/Location: Tu/11:30am-12:30pm in AT120 or 5:30pm-6:30pm in AT103
Class Time/Location: AT103/6:30pm

This syllabus is a centralized resource to give you an overview of weekly course topics, assignment prompts, grading expectations and essential information. Every week you will receive supplemental information that you will need to complete the following week's work. It's a step-by-step process. Carefully review all Canvas postings from your instructor, as these will contain the most up-to-date instructions for all work deadlines, methods for submission and supplemental assignment information (prompts).

This course meets both in-person and roughly an equal portion of student time is spent on Canvas and online platforms such as Zoom and Google Groups, working on your own and with your writing workshop groups outside of class time. **The writing workshop is the most essential aspect of the course, so give that your all, both in and out of the classroom (i.e. collaborating with peers in Canvas Discussion Tab, Zoom meetings, etc.)**

To reiterate: information will be introduced on a step-by-step basis, in class time and through our Canvas page.

Course Format: Students will participate in individualized study and group work in-person and online, weekly readings, lectures, potential pop-up quizzes and short reading response papers, discussions, workshop critique, video clips, screenings, and writing exercises. **At the end of the quarter you will receive a Final Exam to be completed on Canvas, and you will submit the final, revised version of the first act of your screenplay in this course.** Most of our writing in the course will take place at a computer. **Laptops or other electronic devices such as Ipads are strongly recommended at each class meeting.** The computer lab may be available at some of our meetings as well. See section below marked "technology requirements" for more information.

Course Description:

Fictional screenwriting geared toward the planning, outlining and structuring of an original three-act feature-length fiction screenplay and the writing of the first act.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate a command of generating, planning, and outlining a feature-length narrative fiction screenplay through logline, beat sheet, scene list.
- Write the first act of a three-act feature-length fiction screenplay.

Student Success Center: Need help? De Anza's Student Success Center offers free online and on-campus tutoring and workshops! Visit <http://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess> for our hours and information. Or just stop by to chat or sign up!

- Academic Skills Center for workshops in ATC 302
- General Subject tutoring in ATC 304
- Listening & Speaking and World Language support in ATC 313
- Math, Science and Technology tutoring in S43
- Writing and Reading tutoring in ATC 309

Student Success Center Resources are available online to all De Anza students on Canvas: <https://deanza.instructure.com/enroll/MAF7Y8>

Required Text: *Screenwriting for Neurotics*, by Scott Sublett. Instructor will provide free electronic access.

Primary Recommended Text: *The Protagonist's Journey*, by Scott Myers. Instructor will provide free electronic access.

Secondary Recommended Text: *Essentials of Screenwriting: The Art, Craft & Business of Film & Television Writing*, by Richard Walter (available through De Anza bookstore and/or their library ebook database, Amazon, other retailers. Instructor cannot provide free access)

Recommended Reading: See below. Feel free to request recommendations that speak to your interests and development, including plays, literary and popular fiction, films and screenplays.

- Shakespeare's Complete Works
- Plays by Pinter, Ibsen, Strindberg, Beckett, Chekhov, O'Neill, Williams
- An Actor Prepares, Building a Character, Creating a Role. Stanislavski
- Poetics. Aristotle
- The Screenwriter's Roadmap. Neil Landau
- Write Screenplays That Sell. Hal Ackerman
- Hitchcock/Truffaut. Francois Truffaut
- The Art of Dramatic Writing. Lajos Egri

Other Technology Requirements / Equipment / Material: Screenwriting software is highly recommended for assistance with formatting and additional helpful features and benefits to the user. Celtx is free of charge and frequently used by students. **A variety of free screenwriting software programs are currently available to all students. Final Draft is the industry standard and recommended for this course.** Students have the option to use basic word processing. **Professional screenplay format is essential.**

Classroom Protocol and Participation: **Students who do not participate or behave inappropriately in contact with the instructor and/or other students will immediately lose credit points and administrative action in accordance with college policy will be taken.** It is essential that we treat one another with courtesy and respect at all times. **Active weekly**

participation in-person, Canvas, Zoom and other online platforms involving your writing workshops is worth up to 20 points of your overall grade.

Short prompts for each graded assignment are provided below, so you have an overview of what to expect. Note: Every week you will receive supplemental information and instructions to complete the following week's assignment, in addition to the explanations below.

Assignment 1: The Idea, Logline and Spine. Applying class discussion and chapters 1 and 2 from the text as guidance, students will **prepare two ideas (with loglines), identify the spine components of each idea (Hero, Goal, Central Question, Central Conflict, Hook), and submit them for instructor approval. Indicate which of the two ideas and spines most interest you. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade. After the instructor assigns credit and delivers feedback, students may be required to submit the revision for workshop review. Details to be announced.**

Assignment 2: Mini-Step Outline. Students are required to fill in the blanks and submit for credit, instructor feedback, and workshop review. This to be workshopped in preparation for outlining. **The mini-step-outline assignment is worth up to 5 points max** in your overall grade for the course. Like the beat sheet assignment, the mini-step-outline helps build out your spine into a full outline, step-by-step. Now is the time to define the pillars of your story and implement them into the three-act structure paradigm. Make the major structural choices now. Use our text and the additional three-act structure handout for further guidance.

Assignment 3: Beat Sheet. Applying relevant handouts, class discussion and chapters from the text as guidance, students will analyze the structure of a relevant feature film of their choice, and will **create a beat sheet that identifies what specifically occurs in each scene** that furthers character and plot, from start to finish. Label the chain of events, noting the main action and conflict, tracking the linear progression of cause-and-effect plot structure. Number each scene and **cite the Point of Entry, Inciting Event, Point of No Return, Midpoint, Big Gloom, Enlightenment and Climax as they appear in the order of events.** By identifying the event of each scene, the main action, focusing on spine and specifically conflict, action and motivation, distilling each step into one or (if necessary) a few sentences, students will practice the skill needed to craft their own step outline. In your beat sheet you may leave out connective tissue, transitions and establishing shots between scenes that are not essential for identifying the development of the main action. **Submit copy to the instructor for credit. No workshop review. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.**

Assignment 4: Treatment/Summary. This is a two-page prose summary of your entire feature script, focusing on completing your protagonist's entire inner and outer journey/arc in the narrative, leaving out every element that isn't absolutely essential to furthering character and story. Apply your mini-outline steps with structural pillars, along with your developing understanding of how to create a beat sheet and my example handout on *Silence of the Lambs* to create your treatment. **Students are required to submit a copy for credit, instructor feedback, and workshop review. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.**

***Assignment 5: Full-Step-Outline:** Applying the approach outlined in our text and building on the work we have completed thus far with beat sheets and the handouts on mini-step-outline/three-act-structure, students will craft an original, full step-outline for their screenplay. **Students are required to submit a copy for credit, commentary and workshop review. Worth up to 10 points of your overall grade.**

***NOTE: The Full-Step Outline Assignment may not be set in stone. Your instructor may choose to make it an Optional Extra Credit Assignment, substitute an Oral Pitch Assignment or an in-class Midterm Quiz, or even eliminate any assignment in Week 6 altogether. This is to be announced/determined pending assessment of student progress.**

***Assignment 6: Feedback/Rewrite Assignment: The First 5 Pages**

This assignment has two parts: submission mid quarter (feedback), and (rewrite) of material due on our last day. **Students are required to submit the first 5 pages of their screenplay mid-way through the quarter, and then rewrite and improve those 5 pages for end of quarter submission with the rest of Act I**, incorporating instructor observations and feedback from peers. Rewritten pages will be evaluated with the rest of the submitted manuscript delivered on the last day of class.

***NOTE: Special attention will be paid to how you execute the revision of your first 5 pages.** Instructor will draw comparisons between your first attempt and last in calculating final grades. This first submission of 5 Pages for feedback from peers and instructor is **worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.**

***Workshop Pages: Five Rounds/Weeks of 5 Pages Each, for a Total of At Least 25.**

***NOTE: Students will be split into writing workshop groups that meet in-person during class and also over Canvas in the Discussion Tab and student Zoom meetings primarily. Each student will submit a minimum of 5 properly-formatted screenplay pages per week, five weeks in a row, for workshop review. Groups to be assigned. More information to follow. Worth up to 20 points of your overall grade.**

***Manuscript Submission:** Students will submit a properly-formatted, revised copy of the first 25 pages minimum of original script (the complete first act) to the instructor for evaluation on our last day. **Special attention will be paid in final grading of your manuscript to the effectiveness of revised pages.** Manuscript Submission assignment is worth up to 15 points of your overall grade.

***NOTE: Less than 25 pages is not acceptable for credit.** You may choose to take up to 30-35 pages or so if your story truly calls for it, so long as the Point of No Return clearly defines the transition from Act I into II. **We need to have a complete Act I, and it should contain substantive revision of the first five pages at a bare minimum**, submitted to the instructor and workshopped during the quarter (second part of the Feedback/Rewrite assignment). Your final manuscript submission of all Act I pages should reflect rethinking, editing and improving on

material produced during the quarter. Rewriting is as important as the first draft (if not more so), for many writers.

Final Examination: An electronic exam will be administered through Canvas during Finals Week. The instructor is still verifying whether that should take place in-person or online. **If the exam takes place in-person as assumed, students will not have an open book exam.** Details including information on prep will be provided in advance. Reviewing past homework, supplemental handouts, assigned chapters and their summaries at the end of each section will be essential.

Summary of Grading Information and Determination of Grades: See above for the essential prompts for each assignment and the charts below for a summary of due dates and assignment weight. **Further prompts elaborating on assignment goals and parameters will be provided orally in class and/or in handouts.**

Late work will be penalized by half the total possible points for that assignment. No credit will be given for work that is submitted more than one week late. Extra credit offered at instructor's discretion.

Total Points Possible – 100

A + (97-100 points); A (93-96 points); A – (89-92 points)

B + (85-88 points); B (81-84 points); B – (77-80 points)

C + (73-76 points); C (69-72 points); C – (65-68 points)

D (61-64 points); F (60 points and below)

Due Dates and Assignment Weight: Many assignments (including in-class exercises) will be initiated and workshopped during class time and completed at home for submission.

1. The Idea and Spine Assignment (including loglines, ideas and spines, all one sheet) – 5 points max. Due at any point before our next class at 6:30pm, 4/15.
2. Mini-Step-Outline Assignment – 5 points max. Due at any point before our next class at 6:30pm, 4/22.
3. Beat Sheet Assignment – 5 points max. Due at any point before our next class at 6:30pm, 4/29.
4. Treatment/Summary Assignment – 5 points max. Due at any point before our next class at 6:30pm, 5/6.
5. *Full-Step-Outline Assignment - 10 points max. Due at any point before 6pm, on 5/13.
**NOTE: Instructor may choose to substitute another assignment or eliminate an assignment altogether during this week.*
6. *Feedback/Rewrite Assignment: The First 5 Pages of Script – 5 points max. Due at any point before our next class at 6:30pm, 5/20

**NOTE: The rewrite portion is submitted later as part of the revised 25 page minimum Act I of your feature screenplay.*

7. Workshop/Submission of Original Script Pages – 20 points max (five rounds of 5 pages at a time, for a total of 25 original pages). Due 5/20, 5/27, 6/3, 6/10, 6/17.
8. Class Participation (accumulation of consistent attendance and engagement with workshop contributions, discussion groups and more) – 20 points max.
9. Manuscript Submission (minimum of 25 pages, including revised and improved material) – 15 points max. Due by our last meeting on 6/24 through electronic submission.
10. Final Exam – 15 points max. Instructor is still currently verifying that the exam will need to take place in-person in AT103 on 6/24, scheduled from 4pm – 6pm.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE MEETS ON 4/8

Topics: The Personal Screenplay; Protagonists; Dramatic Principles; Openings; Idea, Spine and Logline

Activities: Introductions; Clips (students will screen the film *Whiplash* and read the script on their own during Week One); Script Analysis; Writing Exercise; Electronic Handouts

Required Assignments, Due on Canvas before 6:30pm on 4/15:

1. Read Chapter 1 (The Idea) and 2 (The Spine): Screenwriting for Neurotics
2. Prepare idea (indicating logline) and spine components (from Ch. 2 in Screenwriting for Neurotics) for submission. Submit to instructor for credit, feedback and potential workshop and revision.
3. Read the script (provided electronically) and watch the film, *Whiplash*.

WEEK TWO MEETS ON 4/15

Topics: Formatting and Terminology; Chapters Review and Primer; Ideas, Spines and Loglines; Character; Structure; Openings; Dramatic Principles

Activities: Workshop Ideas, Spines and Loglines; Develop Mini-Step-Outline; Clips; Script Analysis; Electronic Handouts; Writing Exercise

Required Assignments, Due on Canvas before 6:30pm on 4/22:

1. Read Chapter 3 (Plot) and 4 (Deeper into Plotting): Screenwriting for Neurotics
2. Complete Mini-Step-Outline for submission and group critique

WEEK THREE MEETS ON 4/22**Topics:** Character; Scene Work, Structure, Point of View**Activities:** Chapters Review and Primer; Workshop Mini-Step-Outlines; Beat Sheet Analysis Prep; Clips; Script Analysis; Writing Exercise; Electronic Handouts**Required Assignments, Due on Canvas before 6:30pm on 4/29:**

1. Read Chapters 5 (The Scene) and 6 (The Step Outline): Screenwriting for Neurotics
2. Watch a film model of your choice and prepare Beat Sheet for submission to instructor

WEEK FOUR MEETS ON 4/29**Topics:** Antagonists, Character Complexity, Supporting Characters, Counterpoint Characterization and Core Instability; Novel vs Script; Scene Work and Description; Subplots and Structure; Ensemble Narratives; The Hero's Journey; Alternative Narrative Structures; Point of View; Suspense and Superior Position; Subtext and Dialogue**Activities:** Chapters Review and Primer; Develop Treatments/Summaries; Writing Exercise; Clips; Script Analysis; Electronic Handouts**Required Assignments, Due on Canvas before 6:30pm on 5/6:**

1. Complete Two-Page Treatment/Summary of your entire script.
2. Read Chapter 7 (Formatting) and Chapter 8 (Description): Screenwriting for Neurotics

WEEK FIVE MEETS ON 5/6**Topics:** Deeper into Antagonists, Character Complexity, Supporting Characters, Counterpoint Characterization and Core Instability; Novel vs Script; Scene Work and Description; Subplots and Structure; Ensemble Narratives; The Hero's Journey; Alternative Narrative Structures; Point of View; Suspense and Superior Position; Subtext and Dialogue; Dramatic Irony; Thematics**Activities:** Chapters Review and Primer; Writing Exercise; Workshop Treatments/Summaries**Required Assignments or Readings Due Before 6:30pm on 5/13:**

1. Read Chapter 9 (Dialogue): Screenwriting for Neurotics

2. Prepare Full Step Outline for submission and group critique

WEEK SIX MEETS ON 5/13

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television

Activities: Workshop Full Step Outlines; Chapters Review and Primer; Clips

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 5/20:

1. Read Chapter 10 (Miscellany): Screenwriting for Neurotics.
2. Prepare First 5 Script Pages for submission and group critique.

WEEK SEVEN MEETS ON 5/20

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television -- Continued

Activities: Workshop First 5 Script Pages; Clips/Screening, Lecture, Group Discussion

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 5/27:

1. Read Chapter 11 (The Rewrite): Screenwriting for Neurotics
2. Prepare Script Pages 6-10 for submission and group critique

WEEK EIGHT MEETS ON 5/27

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television -- Continued

Activities: Workshop Script Pages 6-10; Clips/Screening; Lecture and Discussion

Required Assignments, Due before 6:30pm on 6/3

1. Prepare Script Pages 11-15 for submission and group critique.
2. Read electronic handouts on Pitching, Revision and Television Writing.

WEEK NINE MEETS ON 6/3

Topics: Pitching and The Business; Guest (Industry Professional) Q & A. Note: I cannot guarantee availability but make every effort to schedule electronic interviews/discussions with working film and/or television writers.

Activities: Workshop Script Pages 11-15; Clips/Screening; Lecture and Discussion

Required Assignment, Due before 6:30pm on 6/10:

1. Prepare Script Pages 16-20 for submission and group critique.
2. TBD

WEEK TEN MEETS ON 6/10**Topics:** Pitching and The Business -- Continued**Activities:** Workshop Pages 16-20; TBD**Required Assignment, Due before 6:30pm on 6/17:**

1. Prepare Script Pages 21-25 for submission and group critique

WEEK ELEVEN MEETS ON 6/17**Topics:** Review; TBA**Activities:** Workshop final pages and prep for Final Exam**Required Assignment, Due before 6:30pm on 6/24:**

1. Revise Act I for submission to instructor on Canvas. **Show evidence of revision and improvement, including your First 5 rewritten Script Pages** from the Feedback/Rewrite Assignment, incorporating student and instructor feedback.
2. Prepare for Final Exam on 6/24 by reviewing readings, handouts and lecture notes. Revisit past prompts, assignments and script-related documents. Prepare any final questions you may have for your instructor.

WEEK TWELVE MEETS ON 6/24.**FINAL EXAM****ACT I OF SCREENPLAY DUE****PARTING WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND INSPIRATION****PARTY TIME! ☺**