Screenplay Writing Course Syllabus

Peace Film Initiative

Screenplay Writing Course Syllabus

Students will learn to:

- Understand plot and narrative structure.
- Analyze the key components of classical dramatic narrative.
- Develop dramatic situations and scenes.
- Write engaging and entertaining dialogue, between well-realized characters.
- Find their personal style and voice.
- Write log-lines, synopses, and treatments.
- Create series bibles and pitch decks.

Introduction to Screenwriting:
- The visual nature of movies.
- Screenplay as a blueprint.
- Where to find ideas.
- Forming a premise.
- The high and low concept.
- Log-line; synopsis; outline; treatment; series bible; and the pitch deck.

Plot I:
- Finding a major dramatic question.
- The three-act structure.
- The difference between classic plots and subplots.
- Making a story map.

Character:
- Finding a strong protagonist.
- Handling other characters.
- Making characters three-dimensional through desire and contrasts.
- Creating character profiles.
- Showing characters through their actions.

Scene:
- Scene defined.
- Tenets of a good scene—importance, desire/conflict, structure, compression, visual storytelling. Sequences.
- Making a step outline.
- Writing effective screenplay narratives.

Dialogue:
- Dialogue's illusion of reality.
- Compression.
- Characterization through dialogue.
- Subtext.
- Exposition.
- Stage directions.
- Voice over.

Subplot:
- The value of subplots.
- Romantic subplots.
- Other kinds of subplots for the protagonist.
- Non-protagonist subplots.
- Subplot structure.
- Finding subplots in your story.

Plot II:
- Creating an effective opening section.
- Techniques for sustaining Act II.
- Creating an effective climax.
- Flashbacks.

Tone/Theme:
- Developing tone through genre, world, and lightness/darkness.
- Consistency of tone.
- Types of themes.
- Weaving theme into a story.

Presentation:
- Log-lines, synopses, pitches.
- Character Arcs.
- Dialogue – the cinematic language.
- Dramaturgy - Cinematic Syntax.
- Theme & subtext.
- Conflict – plots and subplots.
- Pace, Style, and Tone.
- Visualization.

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