

**Screenwriting Workshop**  
**Rm 221**  
**Ms. Amelia Whitcomb**  
**MTThF 1:35-2:50**  
**Google Classroom Code: rzsoaw2**

**Course Description:**

In this course, we will be exploring the craft and profession of screenwriting. Through film clips, readings, discussions, research, and thematic exercises and projects, we will study and practice the particularities of cinematic structure, genre, the process of adapting work to film, and avenues for experimenting with the medium itself. Together, we will explore all the possibilities of this unique method of storytelling, and develop ways for working within and outside of its confines.

Film and television are collaborative media, true team efforts. As fellow cinematic storytellers, we will be working closely together this semester to fully realize our collective narratives through this distinct and highly particular literary and artistic craft. This will take the form of workshop sessions, table readings, and collaborative projects.

**Classwork and Assignments:**

**-Discussions, Reading, and Participation:** Students will be expected to show up to class prepared to engage and write. Ample class time will be given for all reading and writing assignments, and students will be expected to use their time fully.

**-Workbooks:** Students will be expected to keep a notebook (digital or physical) to complete independent workbook exercises and document their inspirations and process. The workbook will be “collected” twice during the semester for grading. While some class time may be given to working on workbook assignments, it is the expectation that students will be working in their workbook independently and outside of class. This is the only real homework for this class, and the only assignment eligible for extra credit (All other assignments will be given class time for writing and development). So get into it! The more you use your workbook, the more you’ll get out of it - both in terms of your grade and your writing process. And, as film is a visual medium, visuals are encouraged!

**Writing Exercises:** Regular writing exercises will be assigned throughout the semester to practice key concepts and skills in screenwriting. For each unit, students will complete a polished piece, be it a scene, a short, an episode, or a full script. Students will be expected to complete these activities during class time (or, if they find it necessary, independently) and turn in these assignments through Google Classroom in a TIMELY manner. While deadlines are flexible, missing assignments will result in a zero.

**Collaborations:** Filmmaking is a collaborative art form. Actors, directors, producers, cinematographers, best boy grips - it takes a cast of thousands sometimes to make a film. Even the act of writing a screenplay is rarely a solitary activity, with teams of writers working together on draft after draft of a film or TV pilot in writers’ rooms. As a result, this class will involve some collaborative writing activities to mimic the experience of the writers’ room.

**Table Readings and Feedback:** Before a film, TV show, or play is produced, actors sit around a table together and do test reads of the script. These table reads give the actors, the director, and the writer the opportunity to hear the material and see what works and what doesn’t. We will conduct our own table reads

during the semester to test out our work together, both in small groups and as a class. You will have the opportunity to “cast” your roles from your fellow students (and teachers). :)

### **Student Assessment & Grading**

25% Projects and Collaborations

25% Writing Exercises

20% Workbook Checks

10% Table Readings and Feedback

10% Attendance

10% Participation

### **Rules**

**-Phones are to be OUT OF SIGHT:** either in phone caddies or backpacks. Students may use phones only with explicit teacher permission.

**-1st offense:** device will be taken and returned after class. Parent/guardian will be emailed.

**-2nd offense:** device will be returned at the end of the day. Parent/guardian will be emailed.

**-3rd offense:** device will be given to Administration and returned to student’s parent or guardian. If device not surrendered, student will be sent to the Dean’s office.

**-Begin class on time and in your seat with all materials** (workbook, pen, Chromebook, assigned text, etc).

**-Computers should be closed unless we’re writing...**or possibly if we’re reading a PDF. We’re in person for a reason - let’s give our eyes a rest from screens whenever we can and be grateful for the chance to stare at each other’s actual faces instead of through the glitchy square of a Zoom screen. :)

**-Do not eat in class.** This is for everyone’s safety. Unless you have a documented medical reason, it’s important that we do our snacking en plein air. :)

**-Students are expected to use the restroom/get water before and after class, or wait until instruction is complete.** Do your best to hold it until after you’ve got a handle on what we’re doing for the day. Only one student can use the bathroom pass at a time, so be kind to your peers, and don’t dawdle.

**-If you’re feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or need to take a break, come talk to me or use our class nonverbal signal (TBD) to let me know.** We can then figure out a way for you to take a moment to yourself, even if the bathroom pass isn’t available.

**-Be mindful, be compassionate, be considerate.** These are unprecedented times. We’ve all been through a lot and are continuing to go through A LOT. Let’s practice patience, empathy, and care with one another, and with ourselves too.