



**MASTERS STUDIES PROGRAM  
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND THE ARTS**

Updated July, 2007

Course: **SSW 510 MAD**

Course Title: **STORY STRUCTURE FOR STAGE AND SCREEN**

Semester: **Fall 2007** | Credits: **3**

**Distance**

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**All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of this syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be brought to the attention of the instructor. **Students are responsible to obtain all textbooks prior to the beginning of the Semester.****

**THEME SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 13:34 (New International Version)

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

## Welcome to Story Structure

*“Cool stuff with no structure is like that perfect scene you recorded when you left the lens cap on” – Dan Harmon*

When an audience in a dark theater hangs on to every emotional beat delivered by a story from its set up till its resolution, it is usually because the writer’s words have been so eloquently translated to the movie screen or theater stage that it poses, to the audience, a life threatening or life affirming question which the story must resolve before they can leave. A story that involves an audience does not achieve such involvement by luck; a story that involves the audience does so because it was structured to do so. The structure of a story is about the strategic choice and sequencing of events to “arouse specific emotions and to express a specific point of view of life” – thus the intent of structure, like the intent behind most expressions, is rhetorical (McKee 33).

In this class, we will be acquainting ourselves with the tools of story structure and applying these tools to guide us towards crafting well structured stories. The ability to conceive well structured stories is what separates good writers from great writers, and as Christians, as well as storytellers, a well structured story takes us another step forward in carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ further into culture.

Again, welcome to story structure – *Kevin C.*

## **DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF COURSE**

The aim of this course is to acquaint and equip screenwriting students – and also play writing students -- with the necessary tools and principles required to structure their stories in preparation for turning those stories into feature length scripts or plays. The emphasis of this course is on story structure and story structure alone. During the course, each student will have the opportunity to develop a story for either stage or screen. However, instead of writing a full length script or play manuscript, each student is expected to write, apart from various other writing exercises, a story treatment (30 – 35 pages) within which all the structural concerns of the story will be worked out with the help of the instructor and feedback from other class members. At the end of the course, each student is expected to turn in a quality feature length treatment which can later be expanded into a feature length screenplay.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- a. **Identify** and work through the various plot point moments in a film, television or theatre piece. This will be informative not only to prospective writers but to directors and producers who will be reading and evaluating scripts in the future.
- b. **Prepare** and carry out the work that normally precedes the writing of the script: research, premise and loglines, pitching the story, synopsis, treatment and step-outline.
- c. **Form** the basis for developing critical insights into your own work and fellow student’s scripts.

- d. *Write* and re-write various plot point moments and get the opportunity of exploring the requisites involved in re-writing.
- e. *Develop* the hook of a story idea and develop a pitch to summarize and communicate its premise, plot, and characters in an exciting and efficient way.

## **SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

This course encourages an ongoing dialogue into the investigation of one's own faith and how it works itself out through creative writing. Areas of investigation will include: the Christian world view in relation to the arts and what this means to you. Your moral stance as a Christian and how to apply Christian Biblical disciplines are issues that will continue to surface in our discussions.

## **PREREQUISITES**

None.

## **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

1. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting* by **Robert McKee** (Hardcover): 480 pages. Publisher: HarperEntertainment; 1st edition (December 17, 1997) Language: English. **ISBN-13:** 978-0060391683.
2. *Art of Dramatic Writing: It's Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives* by **Lajos Egri** (Paperback): 320 pages. Publisher: Touchstone; Newly Rev. Ed edition (February 15, 1972) Language: English. **ISBN-13:** 978-0671213329.
3. *Story Structure Architect: A Writer's Guide to Building Dramatic Situations and Compelling Characters* by **Victoria Lynn Schmidt** (Paperback) Paperback: 288 pages. Publisher: Writer's Digest Books (July 26, 2005) Language: English. **ISBN-13:** 978-1582973258.

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

1. *Writing the Thriller Film: The Terror Within*  
by Neill D Hicks  
(Michael Wiese Productions) (Paperback): 150 pages. Publisher: Michael Wiese Productions (October 25, 2002). Language: English.  
ISBN-13: 978-0941188463
2. *Writing for Emotional Impact: Advanced Dramatic Techniques to Attract, Engage, and Fascinate the Reader from Beginning to End*  
by Karl Iglesias  
(Paperback): 240 pages Publisher: Wingspan Press (September 1, 2005) Language: English. ISBN-13: 978-1595940285

**3. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting***

by Syd Field

(Paperback): 336 pages. Publisher: Delta (November 29, 2005). Language: English  
ISBN-13: 978-0385339032

**4. *The Screenwriter's Bible: A Complete Guide To Writing, Formatting, and Selling Your Script, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.***

by Dave Trottier.

(Paperback): 350 pages. Publisher: Silman-James Press; 4 edition (August 20, 2005).

Language: English

ISBN-13: 978-1879505841

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS**

Additional course materials, including writing samples, film clips, and lecture notes, and guidelines for your weekly assignments, are **indicated with a \*** and will be made available in the COURSE MATERIAL section (or other sections) in Blackboard.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PROFESSOR**

The general discussion board will include a forum titled “Questions/Comments/Concerns.” Please post any questions you have there (instead of emailing me privately) and I will answer them here. This way everyone can see my general comments regarding things that deal with the entire course/class. If you have a question of a private/personal nature, please email me directly. To facilitate a more timely response to your email inquiries, please **included our course number (i.e. SSW 510) in the subject line of any e-mail that you send.**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

The schedule below shows what we shall be covering for the next sixteen weeks. Each week includes the general topic to be covered that week, readings, writing exercises, title of the film clip you will be viewing, and due dates for turning in your writing exercises and responses to the discussion questions. Keep this schedule in a convenient, visible place and refer to it as you work through each week. Follow it closely and make sure you have completed all assignments by their deadlines as late assignments are subject to a grade reduction.

\* denotes item found in “**Course Materials**” section of **Bb** (unless otherwise noted)

### **WEEK ONE TOPIC: INTRODUCTIONS**

#### **WEEK 1**

<b>Class starts:</b>	<u>Syllabus:</u> Read the syllabus thoroughly and become familiar with the course blackboard site, the textbooks, and all due dates. I have created a forum titled
<b>Wednesday, Aug. 22</b>	<b>“Questions/Comments/Concerns”</b> on the general discussion board. Please post any questions you have there (instead of emailing me privately) and I will answer

them here. This way everyone can see my general comments regarding things that deal with the entire course/class. If you have a question of a private/personal nature, please email me directly. To facilitate a more timely response to your email inquiries, please **included our course number (i.e. SSW 510) in the subject line of any e-mail that you send.**

Blackboard General Discussion Boards

(Introduction Stories)

Introduce yourself to your classmates by telling **two** stories. Each story should tell us some of the things you will like us to know about you. But there is a catch and the catch is this: one of your stories should be true and the “other story” should be a well crafted **piece of fiction**. Your classmates, in their replies to your introduction stories, will pick which story they think is true and which story they think is false, and why. In Week 2, after we have all replied, you can go back and indicate which story was true and which was false – have fun.

Blackboard homepage

Create your “homepage” using the form under the “user tools tab.” Post your picture and a new introductory message. Like a “my space” page, your blackboard homepage will give your classmates paint a better picture of who you really are (if you don’t know how to create a home page, I’ve provided a link in the course procedures section of the syllabus).

**Due Date: Saturday, September 1, 2007**

**WEEK 2**

**WEEK TWO TOPIC: WHAT IS STRUCTURE?**

Readings:

1. The Elements of Story: *McKee (31 -110)*
2. The 21 Genres: *Schmidt (20 – 26)*
3. The Creation Story: *Sean Gaffney (32 – 40)\**

Watch the following clip:

“Structuring the Story” by *Dr. Linda Seger\**

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 2 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

**(Remember we have all been holding our breaths so, please, go back to your week one introduction and indicate which story is true).**

Writing Exercise (WEEK TWO)

1. Write a dramatic short story about a place you are familiar with, which you think would make a good scene for a play or a film. Note: Your story should be a dramatic situation that allows you to describe the place in connection to the situation which unfolds there (1 paragraph/ Single-spaced/ no more than 15 lines max. 12 font/ Word doc)
2. Write a dramatic short story that tells us about a toy or something you owned that

defined you and you never wanted to get rid off? To serve the drama, it is better if you conceive a specific situation in which the toy or thing plays a significant role in relation to you (*1 paragraph/ Single-spaced/ no more than 15 lines max. 12 font/ Word doc*)

3. Write a dramatic short story or conceive a unique situation to tell us how you ran away from home or planned to run away from home, and where you thought of going (*1 paragraph/ Single-spaced/ no more than 15 lines max. 12 font/ Word doc*)

**Due Date: Saturday, September 8, 2007**

**Note:** Regent Theater production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (September 14-23. See "Review" (pg. 18) below under "Methods of Learning and Evaluations and Major Due Dates" for instructions.

**WEEK 3**

**WEEK THREE TOPIC: THE THREE ACT  
STRUCTURE (PART I)**

Readings

1. Principles of Story Design: *McKee (135 – 251) and (288 – 303)*
2. Conflict: *Egri 125 – 237*
3. Excerpts from *Aristotle's Poetics\**

Watch the following short films:

**Still Life** | 8:48mins | Canada | Wrt. Charles Johnston | Dir. Jon Knautz\*  
**Clutch** | 8:00mins | Australia | Wrt. by Greg Waters | Dir. by Jackie Schulz\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 3 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

Writing Exercises (WEEK THREE)

1. Write a dramatic short story that paints a unique situation involving a "loaded object" or something that is so important that it brings up a specific kind of conflict between two people. Remember, a "loaded object" is loaded because it is conflicting and meaningful by representing an idea on which two people stand opposed (*Word doc/1 paragraph/no more than 15 lines max. 12 font*)
2. Write a dramatic short story using a unique situation to tell us about siblings or family members who you feel have had a profound impact on your life – good or bad. This dramatic telling means your story uses a specific situation to describe these people. How they act and react in this situation should somehow shed light on how and in what way they have had a profound impact on your life (*Word doc/1 paragraph/no more than 15 lines max. 12 font*).
3. Write a dramatic short story that uses a unique situation to tell us about your experience of rebellion and teenage angst and where that rebellion centered or what/who it was targeted at. Whatever dramatic situation you come up with, it should give you the means to describe specifics like: what you wanted more than anything else when you were a teen, your favorite places, things you were into: music, cars, books, TV shows, and what influence did they have on you and so on

(Word doc/1 paragraph/no more than 15 lines max. 12 font).

**Due Date: Saturday, September 15, 2007**

**WEEK 4**

**WEEK FOUR TOPIC: WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?**

Readings

1. Elements of structure and how they work (document)\*
2. A Closer Look at the Inciting Incident (document) \*
3. “The Terminator” treatment by James Cameron\*

Watch the following short films:

**Round 5** |10:00mins | Mexico | Wrt & Dir. by Jorge and Javier Aguilera\*  
**Gulp** | 7:12mins | United States | Wrt. and Dir. by Jason Reitman\*

View the following PDF Doc:

Story Structure and Treatments\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 4 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

Writing Exercises (Week 4)

1. Write a dramatic short story that uses a unique situation to tell us of your first “crush” or who you fell in love with before you were twelve?
2. Write a dramatic short story that uses a unique situation to describe the one thing about yourself, which you felt you developed before you were twelve, which you will give anything to change now.
3. Write a dramatic short story that uses a unique situation to tell us about specific family moments as a teen that you wished were caught on tape or could be deleted from memory.

**Due Date: Saturday, September 22, 2007**

**WEEK 5**

**WEEK FIVE TOPIC: THE THREE ACT  
STRUCTURE (PART II)**

Readings

Building the Structure: *Schmidt* (28 – 93)

View the following PDF Doc:

The Three Blocks of Structure \*.

View the following short films:

**Damned If You Do** |17:50 minutes | United States | Written by Jimmy Zeilinger\*  
**In God We Trust** |16:35mins | United States | Written by Jason Reitman\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 5 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

Writing Exercises Week 5

1. Write a short story about a protagonist (*a protagonist is a story's main character. The protagonist is characterized by his/her ability to change or evolve*). The story should be a dramatic situation that allows you to describe the protagonist's flaws, habits, age, his or her primary want, and his or her primary need. Your protagonist should be based on someone you passionately admire or passionately dislike (*Word doc/1 paragraph/ no more than 15 lines max. 12 font*)

2. Write a dramatic short story about an antagonist (*the antagonist is that character, group, or sometimes force which provides the chief obstruction to the protagonist or "main character" in a story*). Your story should be a dramatic situation that describes or hints us about what drives your antagonist, his or personal proclivities, primary wants, primary need, age, and flaws. Your antagonist should be based on someone you passionately dislike or passionately admire (*Word doc/1 paragraph/ no more than 15 lines max/ 12 font*)

3. By now you should be conversant with all the aspects of a 3 ACT structure. I need you to go over all the dramatic short stories you have written in last 4 weeks and select from them or use them in combinations to structure or lay out a story about the protagonist you wrote about this week.

I need you to indicate which short story, or combination of short stories, along this protagonist's journey represents: 1. the set up, 2. the inciting incident, 3. the first turning point and/or plot point one, 4. the midpoint. 5. the second turning point and/or plot point two, 6. the climax, 7. the resolution -- explain why, in each case, you chose a story, or combination of stories, to represent that aspect of structure. (Note: except minor modifications like changing the protagonist's name, you don't need to completely modify any of the stories you have written).

**Due Date: Saturday, September 29, 2007**

**WEEK 6**

**WEEK SIX TOPIC: RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING STORY IDEAS AND CHARACTERS (PART I)**

Readings

1. Finishing Touches -- Research: *Schmidt* (266 – 272)
2. How to Get Ideas: *Egri* (265 – 274)

Watch the following short film:

**Sweetnightgoodheart** | 9:00mins | United Kingdom  
| wrt. and dir. by Daniel Zeff\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for **WEEK 6** questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.



Writing Exercise (Week 6)

Search online and find three newspaper articles/stories that contain interesting characters and situations. Use each newspaper article to conceive a dramatic situation that allows you to describe: In Story 1: A protagonist an audience will find engaging. In Story 2: an interesting antagonist (or antagonistic force) that presents a formidable challenge to your protagonist. In Story 3: an interesting situation in which the protagonist and antagonist (or antagonistic force) you have created and described now come into conflict. Supply web links to all the newspaper articles and stories used. (Word document/ one paragraph/ no more than 15 lines for each story – single spaced)

**Due Date: Saturday, October 6, 2007**

**Note:** Regent Theater production of *Arms and the Man* (October 11-21, 2007). See “Review” (pg. 18) below under “Methods of Learning and Evaluations and Major Due Dates” for instructions.

**WEEK 7**

**WEEK SEVEN TOPIC: RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING STORY IDEAS AND CHARACTERS (PART II)**

Readings

1. Adding Stories: *Schmidt* (99 – 187)

Watch the following short film:

**The Silent Treatment** | 9:50mins | United Kingdom|  
Wrt. and Dir. by Peter Lydon\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 7 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

Writing Exercise (Week 7)

Choose any event from the Bible which you feel gives you an active protagonist, a very interesting villain, and an interesting situation that brings all these story elements together in conflict. Use your chosen Biblical event to conceive a dramatic situation in which the following happens: The villain justifies his or her motivations and actions by revealing to the protagonist something from his or her childhood – remember, *show* us; don't *tell* us. Feel free to use your own childhood experiences here.

**Due Date: Saturday, October 13, 2007**

**WEEK 8**

**WEEK EIGHT TOPIC: PREMISE AND LOGLINES**

Readings

1. Ideas, premises, and writing your log lines (document)\*
2. Write the Logline First by Michael T Kuciak\*
3. Adding Stories: *Schmidt* (188 – 263)

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for **WEEK 8** questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

WRITING EXERCISE (WEEK 8)

I have provided, in the course material section of our blackboard course site, **25 PLOT summaries\*** of some popular films pulled from the All Movie Guide. After completing readings and lecture notes for WEEK 8, **pick 8 out of the 25** plot summaries, identify, and write the following for each of them: 1. the protagonist, 2. the antagonist, 3. the conflict, 4. the protagonist's goal, 5. what is at stake? 6. write out the log line using the following template *as a guide*:

When -----, -----,  
(protagonist) (the conflict/gets into  
trouble with the antagonist)

he / she must ----- or -----.  
(what he/  
she risks) (lose)

Example: North by Northwest (1959) (written by Ernest Lehman and Alfred Hitchcock).

Logline: When an advertising executive is mistaken for a secret agent, he is thrown into a maelstrom of espionage and must risk his life to save a beautiful spy.

**Due Date: Saturday, October 20, 2007**

**WEEK 9**

**WEEK NINE TOPIC: IDEAS FOR YOUR FINAL TREATMENT  
--- PITCH SESSION (I)**

Readings

1. "You Hate Pitching. You Have to do it. Here's How" by Tom Matthews\*
2. "The Art of Pitching" by John Rogers\*

Watch the following Clips:

1. A Scene from "Talk Fast: Pitching a Screenplay in 2 mins"\*
2. A Scene from "How to Pitch and Sell your Screenplay"\*
3. The pitching scene from The Player (1992)\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 9 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

Pitch session (I) [2 mins]

Prepare a pitch for each of the three story ideas you want to work on for your final treatment. Go to the Pitch session (I) voice board and record your pitch. When you

are satisfied with the recording, post it on the board. Your classmates will tell you what they think on the discussion board.

WRITING EXERCISE (WEEK 9)

Come up with 3 new story ideas for the final feature length treatment you going to write. For each idea provide the following: 1. the protagonist, 2. the antagonist or antagonistic force, 3, the conflict, 4. the protagonist's goal, 5. what is at stake? 6. the log line for each idea. (Note: you will be pitching these same 3 story ideas and loglines on the PITCH SESSION ( I ) voice board this week so come prepared -- trust me, it's going to be loads of fun!!)

**Due Date: Saturday, October 27, 2007**

**WEEK 10**

**WEEK TEN TOPIC: SCENE DESIGN AND ANALYSIS --  
CONSTRUCTING AND ARRANGING YOUR BEATS**

Readings

1. Scene Analysis: *McKee 31 – 66; 252 – 287*
2. Mamet on Directing\*
3. The 2001 “Page One Screenwriting Contest” Winner from Eric Heisserer of Cyprus Texas\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 10 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

WRITING EXERCISE 10

Come up with a new and improved version of the dramatic short story about the person(s) who had a profound impact on your life from week 4. This time I want you to use visuals, dialogue, and behaviors in pairs or in combinations to deliver your beats or exchanges that turns your story towards its objective (An EXAMPLE of such a scene is provided in the course material section) (Word doc., *no more than 15 lines max*)

**Due Date: Saturday, November 3, 2007**

**WEEK 11**

**WEEK ELEVEN TOPIC: FINAL STORY IDEA – PITCH SESSION (II)**

Readings

“How to Pitch” by Craig Mazin\*

Watch the following clips

1. Another Scene from “How to Pitch and Sell your Screenplay”\*

Blackboard Discussion Board

Go to the Blackboard discussion board for WEEK 11 questions. Post your answers to the discussion questions, return feedback, and discuss with others.

WRITING EXERCISE (1 page **Synopsis**)

By now, you should have received lots of feedback from classmates and your instructor on the 3 story ideas you posted and pitched in WEEK 9. Go on and choose the idea and logline that garnered the most positive response. **Write a synopsis** (1 page – single spaced). Use the sample synopsis/template provided in the course material section as a guide. Remember, you will be pitching a one minute version of this story idea and logline this week on the pitch session (II) voice board.

Pitch Session (II) [1 min]

You've chosen your final story idea. You have written the logline and, perhaps, the synopsis. Go to the Pitch session (II) voice board and record your final pitch. See if you can sell us this idea in 1 minute flat!

**Due Date: Saturday, November 10, 2007**

**WEEK 12**

**WEEK TWELVE: WRITE YOUR ACT ONE**

By now, you should have received feedback from your instructor and classmates on your synopsis. Write and turn in your ACT ONE.

**Due Date: Saturday, November 17, 2007**

**WEEK 13**

**WEEK THIRTEEN: WRITE YOUR ACT TWO (CATCH UP WEEK)**

By now, you should have received some feedback from you classmates and instructor on your ACT ONE. Go ahead and start on your ACT TWO.

**Due Date: Saturday, November 24, 2007**

**Note:** Regent Theater production of *The Great Divorce* (November 29 – December 9, 2007). See “Review” (pg. 18) below under “Methods of Learning and Evaluations and Major Due Dates” for instructions.

**WEEK 14**

**WEEK FOURTEEN: CONTINUE ACT TWO**

Finish up your ACT TWO and turn it in.

**Due Date: Saturday, December 1, 2007**

**WEEK 15**

**WEEK FIFTEEN: WRITE YOUR ACT THREE**

Turn in your complete final treatment as a single Word document or rich text (30 – 35 pages).

**Due Date: Saturday, December 8, 2007**

**WEEK 16**

**WEEK SIXTEEN: REVIEWS**

**Classes end:**

**Dec. 19**

A review worth 10% of your final grade is due this final week of class. I have placed a sample of a theater review in the course material section to point you in the right direction. For the distance students who are on or near campus, you will be reviewing one of the Fall Regent Theater productions (WATCH: dates carefully! See pg. 18 below). For those outside of the Regent area, you will be reviewing a recent Hollywood release at your local Box Office.

**CLASS ENDS**

**Wednesday, December 19, 2007**

**COURSE ONLINE PROCEDURES**

This course is based on a close reading of the following books: 1) *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting* by Robert McKee, 2) *Art of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives* by Lajos Egri, 3) *Story Structure Architect: A Writer's Guide to Building Dramatic Situations and Compelling Characters* by Victoria Lynn Schmidt along with other material—articles, film clips, PDF files—provided in the course material section of this course in blackboard.

**Assignment Submission**

**Note: All submitted assignments should be in MS Word Document (.doc) or Rich Text File (.rtf) formats.** Further, in posting material, each student should **clearly label** their assignments with something that includes their last name and the type of assignment. For example, Jim Smith would submit his synopsis as **JSmith-synopsis.doc** (or JSmith-synopsis.rtf). A file called “synopsis.doc” will get lost when I copy it to my class file. Plus, any assignment will be returned in like kind (that is, I will return an attached Word file that is marked up with the **Word Comment** function).

Please **do not** send me files in Adobe Reader (.pdf), as these cannot be marked/edited on screen.

**CAUTION:** Many computers CANNOT read **WORD 2007**, or files created on the new **VISTA** Platform. PLEASE SEND your Word files as a **WORD 2003 OR EARLIER VERSION**. I WILL SEND IT BACK TO YOU IF YOU DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO THIS.

As tragic as it may be, on many levels, losing computer access, a crashed computer or hard drive or anything of this sort will not excuse lack of participation in the course. Also, all monetary burdens for computer access are borne by the student.

### Assignment Overview

1. **Personal Homepages:** Your first task will be creating your “homepage” using the form under the “user tools tab” in blackboard course site. Post your picture and a new introductory message. Your “homepage” will be your “my space” page and it will help your classmates and I with the few more clues that will help us interact with you better.
2. **Readings:** Always tackle the readings first before attempting either the discussion questions or the writing exercise. It is crucial that you go through all the readings to gain all the facts you need to properly tackle the questions and exercises for the week.
3. **Discussion Questions** are questions from the weekly readings or assigned film clips (check the syllabus course schedule). Your responses to these questions are to be posted on the discussion board under the assigned week. For example, your answers to the discussion questions for week 2 and your feedback to answers given by your fellow classmates are to be posted on the week 2 forum of the general discussion board. The questions you will be responding to on the boards are designed not only to test your understanding of what you read, but also to stimulate ideas and comments which you are to discuss with other class members. I will normally be on the discussion board every week giving feedback to all your answers and comments and helping to steer—and stir up—what I am sure will be a very lively discussion board. We are all scholars and Christians and, therefore, debates and arguments are not only in line with the creative process but are also welcomed. **Each student has a week (Saturday noon until noon of the following Saturday)** to post his/her answers to the discussion questions and give feedback to the comments of other class members.
4. **How answers to the discussion questions will be graded:**
  - A. I will be grading you for the effort you put into answering the questions. This will be the [effort I “see” on the page](#) in terms of presentation, organization, and creativity.
  - B. Show me you’ve done your readings [by citing passages from the readings](#) to support some of the claims you make. For example, if the topic of the reading is “locating the inciting incident” then I will expect you to state your opinion or your understanding by borrowing evidence from someone other than yourself to support your claim. **For example:**

*“I think the inciting incident in Kramer vs. Kramer happens too soon. My*

*reasons are 1) we barely had a chance to meet the main character. 2) I think because of where it was placed, the inciting incident did not explode off the page like it should have” (McKee 202 - 203).*

By citing “Robert McKee: pages 202 to 203” tells me that you have found evidence in those pages of McKee’s text to support your notion that an inciting incident should “explode” off the page. If you are going to cite an example from a film, give the title of the film and include the year it was released in brackets. (Extra points if you can include the name of the **writer**—not the DIRECTOR—in the brackets too☺).

C. Quoting **facts** to support your claims from other **sources outside** your readings, when relevant and when needed, is allowed and highly encouraged.

D. I am also looking out for your **own** understanding of what you read so give **examples** and **illustrations** whenever you can.

E. Points will be taken off for assignments turned in or posted later than noon on Saturday. After four days the assignment will be “zeroed” out unless it is due to extenuating circumstances, and prior arrangements have been made with the Professor.

5. **Writing Exercises:** While some of the exercises have you identifying examples of some of the structural elements (e.g. protagonist and antagonist, villain and exposition, turning points and plot points etc) we will be studying in films and provided clips, other exercises are aimed at guiding you in writing a number of dramatic short stories in preparation for your final feature length treatment. **The way each exercise is designed is not meant to constrain your creativity; rather, the exercises set up certain parameters to help you stretch your imaginations and realize your creativity.**

**Writing within the parameters I have set up will help you address some necessary structural elements as you create your short stories. Try to stay within the parameters of each exercise.** Each student has a week (**Saturday noon until noon the following Saturday**) to complete the writing exercises. These should always be **submitted to me via the “digital drop box” in Bb**, as either a **Word document** or **rich text file**. If for any reason Bb is down, you can **also email me directly** at [Kevicra@regent.edu](mailto:Kevicra@regent.edu) and include your writing exercise(s) as an **attachment**.

Points will be taken off for assignments turned in or posted later than noon on Saturday. After four days the assignment will be “zeroed” out unless it is due to extenuating circumstances, and prior arrangements have been made with the Professor.

6. **Writing your dramatic short stories\*\***

I am interested in the telling of stories not the telling of life, therefore, I’m interested in the following 3 things:

Each story you tell must have:

(1) A **HOOK**. Your story's **HOOK** must grab our attention in the opening line and then go on to sell us your story's central conflict or what your story is about (Read up on "conflict" in McKee)

(2) Think carefully through each experience you pick and look for areas of conflict – those areas where you or your main character and other characters' interests and prejudices all collide.

(3) Since you have only 15 lines to work with, make each word you choose to write a word that does not repeat what we already know. Rather let it be a word that reflects the conflict you have found within that experience you are now telling as a story. I want a structure and a choice of words that pushes your story forward every step of the way. Whenever you can, avoid the passive voice, use simple and powerful verbs, words and metaphors that paint vivid images, and avoid the heavy use of dialogue – remember, always *show* us; don't *tell* us.

7. **Timely Feedback:** To maintain the fairness and the tempo of our discussions, every student is required to post his or her work for the week on time and in an efficient manner so that other class members will have enough time to read, digest, and respond before the deadline.
8. **Blackboard Grade book:** The blackboard grade book will be updated regularly with the weekly points you earn from the work you do on the weekly Writing Exercises and Discussion Questions/ On-line participation and feedback, which all go towards 40% of your final grade. Remember to check the grade book, from time to time, to confirm your work was graded and entered.
9. **Feedback:** Weekly discussion questions and writing exercises will be posted on the general "**discussion board**" in **Bb** on or before **SATURDAY** and you will have until the following **SATURDAY noon** to respond. Also, apart from the feedback you will each be receiving from the instructor, a vital aspect of this class is the feedback you will all be giving yourselves. Unlike the on campus component of the class, being online gives us the added advantage having virtual around-the-clock access to each others' work and enables each of you to give each other feedback on your work and responses every step of the way. **Remember that your prompt response ensures that other class members will have enough time to reply to your writing, responses, and feedback – every week you are all being graded for your on-line participation and feedback.**

**Note:** Please know that I monitor *all* discussion threads each week and frequently enter the discussion myself. However, when I choose not to enter the discussion by writing my own post, be assured that it is not because I have not read your posts. I *always* monitor discussion threads, whether my name appears in them or not, in order that by the end of the course I have a firm grasp of the quality of your discussion contributions. Also, Blackboard allows me to call up a quantitative review of each individual's contributions. I'm saying here that it is important that you keep up on discussions and that they will be monitored by me. Your participation will be a significant part of your course grade (i.e., 40%). Besides, it is frustrating when the rest of the course members must go back to old



discussion threads just because one or two persons did not keep up on reading or bother to make discussion responses when they were due.

- 10. Voice boards and Pitches:** Story pitches have become an important time saving and gate keeping tool which Hollywood agents and studios use in screening, circulating, and marketing scripts. A writer, in addition to knowing how to write a well structured story, needs to also know how to pitch the movie or play version of that story. A good pitch is an indication that a story *might* be structurally sound and, thus, a good pitch is a valuable story structure measuring tool. **In weeks 9 and 11**, after we have worked extensively on your loglines, we will attempt to make use of blackboard's new Horizon wimba voice boards. The voice board is a blackboard instructional and learning feature, which allows you to send your recorded voice messages and receive recorded voice messages from your instructor and classmates on separate discussion board. I have set up two voice boards in our blackboard course site: the first is for your two minute pitches (WEEK 9) and the second is for your revised one minute pitches (WEEK 11). Before WEEK 9, I will be organizing a few **test runs** to see if there we have any compatibility problems and to make sure everyone can access and use the voice boards. In the meantime, you can get in touch with Regent's IT [help desk](#) [(757) 226-4076] or Horizon wimba for technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at [technicalsupport@horizonwimba.com](mailto:technicalsupport@horizonwimba.com) or at 866.350.4978.

**Note:** Instructor reserves the right to **CANCEL** or modify this feature, at any time, during the course. I will advise you by **"Announcement" in Bb** of any changes due to technical difficulties, etc. In the event that I/we modify this assignment, all "pitches" will be done in writing. I will still expect you to give the same care and attention to "writing" your pitch, as you would if you were "presenting" it verbally. Emphasis will be upon evocative re-wording of your loglines, synopses, etc. – as if you were trying to grab the attention of a 'pitch-weary' executive in Hollywood who's heard it all before. **Btw:** **"Virtual pitching"** (by email, etc.) is becoming just as popular, today, as the traditional verbal pitch used to be in Hollywood. Yes, "tinsel town" is going "digital"!

**Reference:** <http://www.virtualpitchfest.com/>

- 11. A Small Reminder about Postings:** Our blackboard discussion board will be tidier if your responses to the "Discussion Questions" pertaining to the readings and viewings for a particular week and your "writing exercise" for the same week are all contained in one single and appropriately titled posting or thread. To do this, you might need to work in Microsoft Word then "cut" and "paste" on blackboard by clicking on blackboard's "paste" icon. Having all your work--answers to the discussion questions and writing exercises--for a particular week located in a single thread makes your work easier for your class mates to locate, read, and reply at one seating.

## **BLACKBOARD INFORMATION**

- [1. HOW TO COPY AND PASTE IN THE BLACKBOARD TEXT EDITOR](#)
- [2. HOW TO CREATE YOUR PERSONAL HOME PAGE](#)

### 3. HOW TO USE THE VOICE BOARDS

## **METHODS OF LEARNING AND EVALUATION AND MAJOR DUE DATES**

### **1. Discussion questions/ feedback to other classmates/online writing exercises (40% of your final grade)**

All through the duration of the course, weekly points will be awarded for your online participation (answers to discussion questions, writing exercises, and feedback to other classmates) and the total points at the end of the class goes towards 40% of your total grade. Late submissions and postings must be negotiated with the instructor *prior* to the due date for each submission. Your grade will be adversely affected if you are chronically absent from the discussion board, or if you hand in your assignments late. Every assignment that is handed in late is automatically reduced by one letter grade. Note also: weekly tasks must be posted on the discussion board; any work privately emailed to the instructor will not be graded or entered into the grade book. **DUE DATES:** check syllabus for schedule.

### **2. Review (10 % of your grade)**

Distance students located on/near campus will be required to attend and write a 5-page review on any one (1) of the plays held in the Regent University Theatre this fall: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (September 14-23, 2007), *Arms and the Man* (October 11-21, 2007), or *The Great Divorce* (November 29 – December 9, 2007). Tickets can be obtained by calling the Regent University Box Office: 757.226.4245 or visit online at: [www.regent.edu/theatre](http://www.regent.edu/theatre). Reviews are due on final week of the semester. Your reviews will analyze the effectiveness of the scripts, as best you can determine, analyzing all its structural elements to the best of your abilities (a sample review can be found in the course material section of our blackboard course site). For those who are not close enough to Regent to review these productions, you will be reviewing a current Hollywood feature film release at your local Box Office. (5 PAGES SINGLE-SPACED). Your review should be turned in on or before **DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> 2007**.

### **3. Synopsis (10% of your grade)**

In week 11, you will be turning in a one page, single-spaced, synopsis of the story idea (logline) you've chosen to develop into a treatment. You will find in the course material section a structured template/example of a one paged synopsis **to guide you** in your writing your synopsis. Your synopsis should be turned in on or before **November 15th**

### **4. Pitches I and II (5% each = 10% of your grade)**

Each pitch is worth 5% of your grade. You will find guidelines and assigned viewing material on what to do in the course material section of our blackboard course site. Your participation on pitch session (I)/ voice board (I) and pitch session (II)/ voice board (II) will go towards 10% of your final grade. **Pitch (I) takes place in Week 9 and Pitch (II) takes place in Week 11.**

### **5. Final Treatment (30% of final grade)**

From weeks 12 to 15, you will be turning in your ACT ONE, ACT TWO, and ACT THREE of your final treatment. Each ACT turned in (10%) goes towards 30% of your final grade. In Week 15

of the course, you will turn in the final treatment containing all the 3 ACTS as a single document for a bonus grade. The grading criteria for your final treatment will be as follows:

1. Correct margins and fonts (5 points)
2. Overall storytelling and presentation (5 points)
3. Use of the necessary structural elements (20 points)
4. Scene composition, transitions, use of visual verbs, metaphors, avoidance of heavy use of dialogue (10 points)

Guidelines for what your treatment should look like will be posted in the course material section of our blackboard course site. Due Dates for final treatment: ACT ONE (NOV 17), ACT TWO (DEC 1), ACT THREE and the COMPLETE TREATMENT (DEC 8).

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Students are on their honor to complete assignments with integrity. This means that all written assignments are to reflect your own work and are to be submitted for credit only in this course. Where other secondary sources are used, appropriate references and citations must be included. Relative to the entire course of study, it must be assumed that cheating and plagiarism are sins contrary to God's laws and the mission of Regent University. Plagiarism is using the intellectual property of others without proper citation, giving the impression that it is your own work.

### **STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION**

You will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the course through e-mail, telephone, and on-campus appointments. Near the end of the course, you will complete an anonymous online course evaluation. Since the results contribute to improving course design and presentation, it is important that you are honest and constructive in your evaluation. You will receive an e-mail from the University when it is time to complete the evaluation for this course. Please take time to provide this feedback. If you have questions about the online evaluation please contact [evaluation@regent.edu](mailto:evaluation@regent.edu).

**(continued)**

## **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

**Students desiring an incomplete must submit their request to the course instructor and academic dean prior to the end of the term. An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor, including equipment breakdown and shortages, and not because of neglect on the student's part. Incompletes require the final approval of the school dean or his/her authorized representative. A regular grade will be given by the instructor if all requirements for the course are submitted by the end of the following academic term. The instructor will submit the new grade to the Registrar's Office no later than two weeks after the beginning of the subsequent term. If all work is not submitted by the end of the term following the granting of the incomplete, a grade of FX (NP on pass/fail courses) will be posted automatically unless a Request for Extension of Incomplete has been approved and submitted to the Registrar's Office. The FX shall be counted as an F in the computation of the GPA. Any student desiring reinstatement to the course after an FX or NP has been posted must register for the course in a subsequent term and pay the full current tuition for the course. In progress grades can only be given for independent studies, internships, practica, portfolios, theses and dissertations.**

## **GRADING: PHILOSOPHY AND CRITERIA**

The following descriptions of undergraduate work correlate with the letter grade that will be assigned for the quality and quantity of work in this course:

### **A or A-**

Work of superior quality in all areas. Work displays an outstanding mastering of the principles of structure, a creative and critical use of the knowledge acquired. Practical or formational implications of work are included, as appropriate. The grade for such work will vary from A to A- according to the quality and quantity of the work.

### **B+, B, or B-**

Good grasp of elements of structure and creativity, showing good comprehension of what was required. Practical or formational implications of work are included, as appropriate. The grade for such work will vary from B+ to B- according to the quality and quantity of the work.

### **C+, C, or C-**

The student has shown an average grasp of the facts of the course, and a satisfactory level of creativity, or comprehension. Practical or formational implications of work are included, as appropriate. The grade will vary from C+ to C- according to the quality and quantity of the work.

### **D+, D, or D-**

The student has shown a below average grasp of the facts of the course, and an unsatisfactory level of creativity, analytical performance, or comprehension. Practical or formational implications of work are included, as appropriate. **All grades of D warrant the course to be retaken by the student.**

**F**

The student's work indicated major deficiencies both in routine learning and in use of data. This grade denotes either unacceptable performance in spite of some effort, or failure to complete the assigned work. **All grades of F warrant the course to be retaken by the student.**

**GRADING SCALE**

Letter grades correspond to ranges of points earned out of the total possible. Likewise, all grades correspond to a point Grade Point Average point value as noted in the table below.

<b>% Range</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>GPA Points</b>
93 - 100	A	4.00
90 - 92	A-	3.67
87 - 89	B+	3.33
83 - 86	B	3.00
80 - 82	B-	2.67
77 - 79	C+	2.33
73 - 76	C	2.00
70 - 72	C-	1.67
67 - 69	D+	1.33
63 - 66	D	1.00
60 - 62	D-	0.67
0 - 59	F	0.00

*This syllabus is subject to change without notice.*

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