

University of Calgary

Department of Communication, Media and Film

Film Studies (FILM) 409 L01/B01

Special Topics in Film Studies: Writing for the Screen

Spring 2021

May 5 to June 17 (excluding May 24)

Lectures: Synchronous, Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00-1:50pm Zoom

Labs: Synchronous, Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-4:45pm Zoom, beginning June 3 (see schedule below for more details)

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR SPRING 2021:

This Spring 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous course sessions will normally be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor: Dr. Leah Vonderheide
Email: leah.vonderheide@ucalgary.ca
Webpage: D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00pm

Course Description

This course is an intensive workshop in writing an original feature-length screenplay (to the midpoint). To achieve this goal, students will read screenplays, see and analyze feature-length films (including *Thelma and Louise*, *Ida*, *Moonlight*, and *Brokeback Mountain*), and learn the fundamentals of screenwriting in the process of developing and writing their own screenplay. Weekly assignments and readings will address the art of visual storytelling, dramatic structure and plot, action, characterization, dialogue, and point of view. Students are expected to watch films on their own time.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

In addition to completing weekly readings and viewings, students will map and outline a full-length screenplay and write to the midpoint by turning in 7-10 pages a week. Students will also work collaboratively and provide each other with feedback during workshop critiques after each table reading. Please note that all lectures meet synchronously, and attendance will be noted at every class meeting. **Labs will meet synchronously beginning June 3 and will continue to meet synchronously for the remainder of the term.** This is to allow for all of the table reads. You must be available to meet synchronously for all table reads.

Please make every effort to attend our class meetings with your video on. Being able to see one another helps to create community in our virtual classroom. Furthermore, it is expected that students will be respectful of our class time together. Do not conduct other work or participate in other activities on your computer during our Zoom class meetings. Also, please be mindful of your presence and interactions in Zoom class meetings. For example, turn your microphone off unless you are speaking and use the hand-raising icon to ask questions. In general, I ask that you treat the Zoom space as you would treat a classroom: arriving on time and ready to engage with the entire class period.

Also, because the class will represent a diversity of individual beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences, every member of this class must show respect for every other member of this class. Our course materials and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. Some of us will have emotional responses to these topics; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of these topics; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space – even, and perhaps especially, in the virtual classroom – that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Please keep in mind that many of us are still adapting to online course instruction, so I also ask for your patience – for myself and your peers – as we navigate some of the challenges related to this new mode of instruction. Above all, please be respectful, and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom. As your instructor, I value your voice and perspective and am firmly committed to diversity, inclusivity, and equity in this course and in all areas of campus life.

Objectives of the Course:

- Demonstrate the craft of writing a feature-length screenplay including story structure, plot, and scene, through mapping, outlining and writing.
- Execute the fundamentals of characterization, dialogue, and point of view for the screen.
- Employ conflict and action specific to film.
- Refine artistic voice and vision in the process by writing to the midpoint of a feature-length screenplay.

Textbooks, Readings, and Screenings

John Yorke, *Into the Woods: A Five Act Journey into Story*, New York: Abrams, 2015.

Additional required readings and screenings will be available on D2L. See the schedule for details.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links. If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
15%	Participation This includes not only a student's presence in all class meetings onZoom, but also the demonstration of the ability to contribute to discussion and workshop critiques in a thoughtful and meaningful manner.	Biweekly
35%	Weekly Pages Students will be asked to submit 7-10 (new) pages of their screenplay each week.	Weekly, starting May 12
20%	Draft of Screenplay for Table Read Students must submit the work-in-progress draft of their screenplay to their fellow students and instructor ahead of their table read (students will sign up for the date of their table read).	Relates to each student's table read date (see below)
30%	Screenplay (written to midpoint) Students must submit a final draft of their screenplay written to at least the midpoint (app. 45 pages).	June 17

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete all assignments or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all

assignments. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized by a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit: <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access>

Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*.

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, percentage grades or numerical scores will be used for all assessments.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at: <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> Or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to: <https://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf>) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see:

<https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the University Calendar:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

For information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk, please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines>

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For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Week One: Story Idea

May 6

Lecture: Introductions; Course overview

Write: Ideas and the opening of your movie; backstory, bios, photos, song list, casting, strengths, flaws, and bad behaviors; write first 7-10 pages; **submit 7-10 pages by May 12, 11:59pm (MT)**

Week Two: Character & Three-Act Structure

May 11

Watch: *Thelma & Louise* (1991)

Read: *Thelma & Louise* screenplay (follow along while watching the film); Chapters 1-3 of *Four Screenplays* (up to page 28)

Lecture: Discuss *Thelma & Louise*

May 13

Read: Chapters 4-7 of *Four Screenplays* (pgs. 28-76)

Lecture: Mapping and Notecards

Write: Map/outline your story with beginning, end, inciting incident, and other major plot points; notecard scenes; write 7-10 pages; **submit cumulative pages by May 19, 11:59 (MT)**

Week Three: From Three Acts to Five Acts

May 18

Watch: *Ida* (2013)

Read (only after watching *Ida*): “How we made *Ida*: Pawel Pawlikowski on the journey from script to film” (2014)

Lecture: Discuss *Ida*

May 20

Read: Chapters 1-3 of *Into the Woods* (pgs. 3-44)

Lecture: Discuss five-act structure

Write: 7-10 pages (to the first plot point); **submit cumulative pages by May 26, 11:59pm (MT)**

Student 1 submits screenplay to class by Tuesday, May 25, 5pm (MT)

Week Four: Change and Turning Points

May 25

Watch: *Moonlight* (2016)

Read: Chapters 4 & 5 of *Into the Woods* (pgs. 45-73)

Lecture: Discuss *Moonlight*

May 27

Read: Chapters 6-11 of *Into the Woods* (pgs. 77-119); Student 1 Screenplay

Lecture: Discuss Change and Turning Points; **Table Read: Student 1**

Write: 7-10 pages; **submit cumulative pages by June 2, 11:59pm (MT)**

Students 2, 3, and 4 submit screenplays to class by Tuesday, June 1, 5pm (MT)

Week Five: Why?

June 1

Read: Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" (before watching *Brokeback Mountain*); *Brokeback Mountain* screenplay (follow along while watching the film); Chapters 12-17 of *Into the Woods* (pgs. 123-168)

Watch: *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Lecture: Discuss *Brokeback Mountain*

June 3 (Note: Lab Meetings Begin)

Read: Chapter 22 of *Into the Woods* (pgs. 205-233); Students 2, 3, and 4 Screenplays

Lecture: Discuss "Why?"; **Table Read: Student 2**

Lab: **Table Read: Student 3; Student 4**

Write: 7-10 pages; **submit cumulative pages by June 9, 11:59pm**

Students 5, 6, and 7 submit screenplays to class by Sunday, June 6, 5pm (MT)

Students 8, 9, and 10 submit screenplays to class by Tuesday, June 8, 5pm (MT)

Week Six: Table Reads

June 8

Read: Students 5, 6, and 7 Screenplays

Lecture: **Table Read: Student 5**

Lab: **Table Read: Student 6; Student 7**

June 10

Read: Students 8, 9, and 10 Screenplays

Lecture: **Table Read: Student 8**

Lab: **Table Read: Student 9; Student 10**

Write: **Revise and submit “final” screenplay (to the midpoint) by June 17**

Students 11, 12, and 13 submit screenplays to class by Sunday, June 13, 5pm (MT)

Students 14 and 15 submit screenplays to class by Tuesday, June 15, 5pm (MT)

Week Seven: Table Reads

June 15

Read: Students 11, 12, and 13 Screenplays

Lecture: **Table Read: Student 11**

Lab: **Table Read: Student 12; Student 13**

June 17

Read: Students 14 and 15 Screenplays

Lecture: **Table Read: Student 14**

Lab: **Table Read: Student 15; Course wrap up**