

LONDON

FILM AND MEDIA INSTITUTE

a partnership of



University
of Pittsburgh

LNDN FILM 3360 Masterclasses: Written in Disappearing Ink: Writing for the Screen(s) Race, Class, and Gender in Film

CAPA London Film Program

Fall and Spring

Course Descriptions (Masterclass 1)

In this class we will consider the art, craft, business and history of writing for the moving image or better yet, *writing for the screen(s)*.

We take our bearings in part from the tradition that calls the one who writes drama a 'playwright' *not*, it should be noted, a 'playwrite'. 'Wright' as in *Shipwright* – the builder of ships. So we will consider in what ways writing for film and television is a form of *building* – and how that changes our sense of it.

We will cover the script *building* process itself from concept or assignment, to story construction, outline and drafts, rewriting and the kind of 'rewriting' that is entailed by the production and post-production processes themselves.

While of course discussing feature film writing, we will focus much on writing for Television, and look at the ways television drama is in the process of reshaping in turn the way feature films too are written and how the role of the Writer-Producer-Showrunner opens a much needed counterweight to several generations' focus on the Director as 'Auteur' and perhaps a better window into many contentious areas of film production and film studies – in particular the notion and reality of *Genre*. At the heart of this will be an examination of the history of serialized storytelling – particularly from its commercial rise in Victorian print culture through its fall in standing and reputation during most of the 20th century to its unexpected revival and renaissance in late 20th and early 21st century culture, especially on TV.

Students will also participate in the process of 'the writers' room' and gain some skills which they can use to help themselves and each other while working on their projects for their other classes.

But above all, we will be hanging the sign before the doorway that says: abandon all hope ye who enter here. For we shall be teaching that writing for the screen(s) is ultimately unlike any other form of writing both in its uniquely difficult triple form and its uniquely thankless (if occasionally over-paid) essence. We will show how every script has to speak three languages at once, often to very different audiences: how it must simultaneously *tell* a story, *tell how* to tell that story, as well as *convince* the powers and principalities that this story should be told in the first place. We will examine through example drawn from the very sentences and words on the page, how a script achieves these three quite different ends. A script that fails on any one of these levels will generally never be made. One that seamlessly works on all three registers *may* be made – which of course takes us to the other element that makes screenwriting different from all other kinds of writing:

It is written in disappearing ink.

For if it succeeds, the script itself will literally disappear, its words never to be read again – in success it is destined to be replaced for all time by the work that stands now in its place; a film or television show.

(Masterclass 2)

The masterclass revolves around representations of race, class and gender as depicted in three films, all directed by women and made in very different contexts: United States (1991), Iran (2002) and the UK (2010). Each film relates to one of these general themes (race, class and gender), but each narrative is focused on a situation faced by a mother at moments of social pressure and family tension, raising questions about the structural muteness of the maternal voice in patriarchal society and culture. The directors' representational strategies address cinematic language, aesthetics and modes of narration, demonstrating that when women make films, the cinema mutates in their hands and through their eyes. This is not to argue that there is an essential or coherent 'women's cinema' but rather that a 'women-inflected cinema' can take up topics and perspectives hitherto neglected or simply not imaginable by a male-dominated culture.

Course Aims

(Masterclass 1)

1. Understand the script-building process from beginning to end
2. Understand the changing role of television writing
3. Gain a high level understanding of the history of serialized writing
4. Gain experience and potential networking with industry professionals.

Requirements and Prerequisites

(Masterclass 1 & 2)

None.

Developmental Outcomes

(Masterclass 1 & 2)

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

Class Methodology

(Masterclass 1 & 2)

The courses will be taught in an intensive British tutorial style with a great deal of class participation.

Assessment/Grading Policy

(Masterclass 1 & 2)

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7
			1.0	
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

(Masterclass 1 & 2)

Assessment Task	Grade %	Due Date
Class participation/ small group discussion	50%	Daily

Essay	50%	Monday after end of masterclass 1
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Assignments

Students will complete a writing exercise under close consultation with the course instructor. Details of the assignment, its topic, structure and length, will be discussed on the first day of the masterclass.

Required Readings: (Masterclass 1)

Readings will be distributed via hardcopy during the masterclass or via Courseweb.

Pilot Scripts to be assigned from the following:

- Alias, Truth Be Told
- Atlanta, Pilot
- Bosch, Under Color of Law
- Deadwood, Pilot
- Deer Run, Pilot
- Elementary, Pilot
- Fargo, Pilot
- Fringe, Pilot
- Gilmore Girls, Pilot
- Grey's Anatomy, A Hard Day's Night
- A Haunting in Connecticut
- House, Pilot
- Legends, No Mercy
- Legion, Pilot
- Lost, Pilot
- Lucifer, Pilot
- The Mentalist, Pilot
- Narcos, Descenso
- Orange is the New Black, Pilot
- Peaky Blinders, Soldier's Heart
- Pushing Daisies, Pie-lette
- Quantico, Pilot
- Rituals, If It Don't Hurt, It Ain't A Sacrifice
- Riverdale, The River's Edge
- Rosewood, Pilot
- Salem, The Vow
- Scandal, Sweet Baby
- Sherlock, A Study in Pink
- Sons of Anarchy, Pilot
- Stranger Things, Montauk
- Supernatural, Pilot
- The Magicians, Unauthorized Magic
- The Good Wife, Pilot
- The Sopranos, Pilot
- The Wire, The Target
- This Is Us, Thirty-Six
- Transparent, Pilot
- Weeds, You Can't Miss the Bear
- The West Wing, Pilot

(Masterclass 2)

Readings will be assigned by the instructor during the week.

SUNY-Oswego On-line Library Resources

Students are advised to review assignments and readings. If you do not have access to sufficient additional resources from your home institution to complete the coursework for this class, you may request access to the on-line library resources of SUNY-Oswego: <http://libraryguides.oswego.edu/c.php?g=500670>. To access this resource, you must request access during the first week of the program.

Additional Resources

An interactive tutorial guide on how to avoid plagiarism and how to cite sources:

<http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/>

http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/citation.html

If you scroll down, you'll find links to all major styles and formats for citing and referencing.

Course Schedule (Masterclass 1)

DAY 1	
Lesson 1	Serialised Storytelling
Meeting time and Venue	10:00am-5:00pm CAPA classroom
In-class activity	Lecture and discussion
Readings	None
Assignments	Pilot Script Analysis

DAY 2	
Lesson 2	Pilot Script Analysis
Meeting time and Venue	10:00am-5:00pm CAPA classroom
In-class activity	Presentation by students of script analyses; class discussion
Readings	Pilot scripts
Assignments	Pitch Draft

DAY 3	
Lesson 3	Pitch Draft and Writers Room
Meeting time and Venue	10:00am-5:00pm CAPA classroom
In-class activity	Presentation by students of pitch draft and revised pitch draft; class discussion and writers room class discussion
Readings	None
Assignments	Final Essay

(Masterclass 2)

DAY 1	
Lesson 1	Introduction and film screening
Meeting time and Venue	TBD
In-class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Masterclass, introduction to the film. • Screening: <i>Daughters of the Dust</i> • Seminar discussion
Film synopsis	<i>Daughters of the Dust</i> (Julie Dash US 1991).

	The film is set in 1902 when the first generation of African Americans born after slavery have become adults. The central character, the family's mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, embodies the family's island home as place of memory and as a trace of Africa. But the younger generation have decided to leave the island for the industrialised North, investing their hopes in the future as represented by city life and modernity. Taking place over one day in a single location, the depiction of time is central to the film's magical realist aesthetic, using the language of the cinema to fuse memories of the past and dreams of the future.
Readings	None
Assignments	None

DAY 2	
Lesson 2	Film screening
Meeting time and Venue	TBD
In-class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the film, melodrama and some background to Iranian cinema. • Screening: <i>Under the Skin of the City</i> • Seminar discussion
Film synopsis	<p><i>Under the Skin of the City</i> (Rakhshan Bani-Etemad Iran 2002)</p> <p>The film revolves around a working-class family in Tehran. The mother of the five children and her beloved eldest son support the family and their close relationship lies at the heart of the film. But certain events throw the everyday out of kilter, reinforcing the structural muteness of class and gender oppression and the family struggles to comprehend, unable to articulate the fate that has overtaken them. The film's social realist style gives way, under these emotional and social pressures, to an estrangement, or dislocation of sound and image that breaks with the norms of transparent cinematic language.</p>
Readings	None
Assignments	None

DAY 3	
Lesson 3	Film screening
Meeting time and Venue	TBD
In-class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to compilation film and background to the film • Screening <i>The Arbor</i> • Screening extracts from <i>Un'ora sola ti vorrei</i> • Seminar discussion
Film synopsis	<p><i>The Arbor</i> (Clio Barnard UK 2010)</p> <p>Set in the post-industrial desolation of a housing estate in Bradford, the film is divided between the story of Andrea Dunbar, whose plays depicting the desperate conditions of her environment were staged in London in the 1980s, and the story of her mixed-race daughter Lorraine, who descended, after her mother's untimely death, into prostitution funded drug addiction. Barnard</p>

	fragments the time of the narrative into multiple strands. She recorded interviews with Andrea's family and friends that are then lip-synched by actors creating an uncanny dislocation between the performers and the voices of the original interviewees. And documentary footage of Andrea adds a further layer of temporal complexity to the film, creating a kind of dialogue across the decades between mother and daughter.
Readings	None
Assignments	None

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unless otherwise expressed by your instructor, the first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, his/her grade will not be impacted. The second time a student has an unexcused absence in that class, it will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become a B+ [89]). The student will be placed on academic probation at this time. Three unexcused absences per class will result in failure of the course. A pattern of three absences in more than one course will result in dismissal from the program.

Excused Absences: Absences are only excused for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday. To request an excused absence, students must contact excused.absence@capa.org ahead of time and provide evidence (e.g. a doctor's note) of the reason for his/her absence, otherwise the absence will not be excused. Even if the student knows the absence will not be excused, the student should still contact CAPA to inform CAPA they will not be in class.

In addition to contacting excused.absence@capa.org, it is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability should contact the instructor and/or the director of academic affairs privately to discuss your specific needs.

Academic Integrity: A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and cheating can result in dismissal from the program.

Self-plagiarism, copying an assignment entirely or partially to submit to a different class in an attempt to receive credit twice for one piece of work is unacceptable and considered cheating by duplication. Students risk receiving an "0" for any assignments in which they have duplicated their own work.

All substantial writing assignments (typically anything worth 20% or more of the final course grade) will be run through the plagiarism checking software Turnitin when submitted via CANVAS. See CAPA's Academic Standards and Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX: CAPA The Global Education Network is committed to encouraging a safe and healthy environment at our seven CAPA centers. This commitment includes the understanding of, and applicable adherence to, the guidelines outlined in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX necessitates that US universities provide equity in all educational programs and activities without sex discrimination.

CAPA understands the implications of Title IX compliance for our institutional partners and thus endeavors to support this compliance as a vital aspect of partnership. The safety and security of all students during a program is a matter of crucial

importance to CAPA. To facilitate this, CAPA encourages students to openly disclose any and all information that is Title IX relevant so that CAPA staff can provide support and connect students with appropriate resources. Because students may not understand the implications of Title IX abroad, CAPA will work to advise students about the resources available through Title IX and explain the importance of compliance in Title IX reporting. CAPA will work to build student confidence in CAPA's status as a mandated reporter by outlining the advantage of disclosure for the student, reassuring them that any information disclosed will not be used in an inappropriate manner, and stressing that individuals will only be informed on a need-to-know basis

Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

Behaviour during Examinations: During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.