

F/TV 6A Screenwriting Fundamentals for Film/Video I – 4 Units**Spring Quarter 2025/Asynchronous**

Instructor/Contact: Thomas D. Gamburg; gamburgthomas@fhda.edu
Office Hour/Location: Tu/12-12:30pm in AT120 and 5:30-6:30pm in AT103. Also reachable over canvas and email messaging.
Class Time/Location: Asynchronous Instruction/Canvas

Note: This syllabus is a centralized resource to give you an overview of weekly course topics, assignment prompts, grading expectations and essential information. Every week you will receive supplemental information that you will need to complete the following week's work. It's a step-by-step process. **Carefully review all weekly Canvas modules, announcements, the discussion tab and any other online postings from your instructor, as these will contain the most up-to-date instructions for all work deadlines, methods for submission and supplemental assignment information, to be entirely conducted online. Material is introduced gradually, from week-to-week. Keeping up with reading and assignments is essential to succeed in the course.**

At the instructor's discretion, students may be asked to share work-in-progress in the Discussion Tab on Canvas for peer feedback.

Course Format: Students will complete work outlined in Canvas on their own schedule, though assignment due dates must be adhered to at all times.

Canvas is our primary central resource for coursework in this class. All writing in the course will take place at a computer and submitted electronically per weekly instructions.

Course Description: Introduction to scriptwriting for film & electronic media; the script's role in media production; script format & structure; basic skills of writing for fiction and nonfiction.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO): Upon successful course completion, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a command of story structure, the creation and development of dynamic and original characters.
2. Demonstrate a command for writing short and feature-length scripts for fiction and non-fiction films.

Student Success Center: Need help? De Anza's Student Success Center offers free online and on-campus tutoring and workshops! Visit <http://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess> for our hours and information. Or just stop by to chat or sign up!

- Academic Skills Center for workshops in ATC 302
- General Subject tutoring in ATC 304
- Listening & Speaking and World Language support in ATC 313
- Math, Science and Technology tutoring in S43

- Writing and Reading tutoring in ATC 309

Student Success Center Resources are available online to all De Anza students on Canvas: <https://deanza.instructure.com/enroll/MAF7Y8>

Required Text: *Screenwriting for Neurotics*, by Scott Sublett. Instructor will provide free electronic access.

Primary Recommended Text: *The Protagonist's Journey*, by Scott Myers. Instructor will provide free electronic access.

Secondary Recommended Text: *Essentials of Screenwriting: The Art, Craft & Business of Film & Television Writing*, by Richard Walter (available through De Anza bookstore and/or their library ebook database, Amazon, other retailers. Instructor cannot provide free access)

More Recommended/Optional Reading: Please feel free to request other recommendations that speak to your specific interests and development, including plays, autobiographies, writers, filmmakers and actors advice on the film artist's craft, literary and popular fiction, films and screenplays.

- Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performance for Film & TV, by Judith Weston
- Shakespeare's Complete Works
- Plays by Pinter, Ibsen, Strindberg, Beckett, Chekhov, O'Neill, Williams
- An Actor Prepares, Building a Character, Creating a Role. Stanislavski
- Poetics, by Aristotle
- The Screenwriter's Roadmap, by Neil Landau
- Write Screenplays That Sell, by Hal Ackerman
- Hitchcock/Truffaut, by Francois Truffaut
- The Art of Dramatic Writing, by Lajos Egri

Other Technology Requirements / Equipment / Material: Screenwriting software is highly recommended for assistance with formatting and additional helpful features and benefits to the user. Celtx is free of charge and frequently used by students. **A variety of free screenwriting software programs are currently available to all students. Final Draft is the industry standard and recommended for this course.** Students have the option to use basic word processing. **Professional screenplay format is essential.**

Classroom Protocol and Participation: Students who behave inappropriately in contact with the instructor and/or other students will lose credit points and will be reported in accordance with the administration's policies.

Short prompts for each graded assignment are provided below, so you have an overview of what to expect. Note: Every week you will receive supplemental information and instructions to complete the following week's assignment, in addition to the explanations below.

Assignment 1: The Idea, Logline and Spine. Applying class discussion and chapters 1 and 2 from the text as guidance, students will **prepare one idea (with logline), identify the spine components of the idea (Hero, Goal, Central Question, Central Conflict, Hook), and submit**

it on Canvas for instructor evaluation. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade. After the instructor assigns credit and delivers feedback, students may be required to submit the revision before proceeding into the next assignment. Details to be announced.

Assignment 2: Mini-Step Outline. Students are required to fill in the blanks and submit for credit and instructor feedback. The mini-step-outline assignment is worth up to 5 points max in your overall grade for the course. Like the beat sheet assignment, the mini-step-outline helps build out your spine into a full outline, step-by-step. Now is the time to define the pillars of your story and implement them into the three-act structure paradigm. Make the major structural choices now. Use our text and the additional three-act structure handout for further guidance.

Assignment 3: Beat Sheet. Applying relevant handouts, class discussion and chapters from the text as guidance, students will analyze the structure of a relevant feature film of their choice, and will create a beat sheet that identifies what specifically occurs in each scene that furthers character and plot, from start to finish. Label the chain of events, noting the main action and conflict, tracking the linear progression of cause-and-effect plot structure. Number each scene and cite the Point of Entry, Inciting Event, Point of No Return, Midpoint, Big Gloom, Enlightenment and Climax as they appear in the order of events. By identifying the event of each scene, the main action, focusing on spine and specifically conflict, action and motivation, distilling each step into one or (if necessary) a few sentences, students will practice the skill needed to craft their own step outline. In your beat sheet you may leave out connective tissue, transitions and establishing shots between scenes that are not essential for identifying the development of the main action. Submit copy to the instructor for credit. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.

Assignment 4: Treatment/Summary. This is a two-page prose summary of your entire feature script, focusing on completing your protagonist's entire inner and outer journey/arc in the narrative, leaving out every element that isn't absolutely essential to furthering character and story. Apply your mini-outline steps with structural pillars, along with your developing understanding of how to create a beat sheet and my example handout on *Silence of the Lambs* to create your treatment. Students are required to submit a copy for credit and instructor feedback. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.

Assignment 5: Feedback/Rewrite Assignment: The First 2 Pages

This assignment has two parts: submission mid quarter (feedback), and (rewrite) of material due on our last day. Students are required to submit the first 2 pages of their screenplay and rewrite for later submission, incorporating instructor observations and feedback from peers. Rewritten pages will be evaluated with the rest of the submitted manuscript delivered on the last day of class. Worth up to 5 points of your overall grade.

***Assignment 6: Full-Step-Outline:** Applying the approach outlined in our text and building on the work we have completed thus far with beat sheets and the handouts on mini-step-outline/three-act-structure, students will craft an original, full step-outline for their screenplay. Students may be required to submit a copy for credit. Worth up to 10 points of your overall grade. *Note: Alteration/Substitution to this assignment expectation may arise. A Pitch

Presentation may be substituted, or an instructor decision may be made to eliminate this assignment or any substitution to it, so that you may focus on completing your script pages. Details to be announced.

10 Screenplay Pages (Five Rounds/Weeks of 2 Pages Each, for a Total of 10 pages): Each student will submit two properly-formatted screenplay pages per week, five weeks in a row. Students may be asked to share work-in-progress in the Discussion Tab threads for peer feedback. More information to follow. **Worth up to 20 points of your overall grade.**

Note Assignment 5 again above. You get an additional 5 (essentially free) points at the end of the quarter if the instructor sees that the first two pages were significantly rewritten and improved based on instructor feedback and your growing knowledge over the course of the quarter. Then you get another potentially 15 points with Final Manuscript Submission (see details below).

The total points for your screenplay pages submitted in this class possible is actually 40. That's 40 percent of your overall course grade!

Get those script pages in every week on time as instructed and then please make sure to revise all of your pages, especially and starting with the first two.

Final Manuscript Submission: Students will submit a properly-formatted, revised copy of the first 10 pages of original script to the instructor for evaluation. Manuscript Submission assignment is worth up to 15 points of your overall grade. Less than 10 pages is not acceptable for credit. The work should contain substantive revision of the first two pages submitted to instructor and workshopped during the quarter (second part of the Feedback/Rewrite assignment). **Your manuscript submission should reflect rethinking, editing and improving on material produced during the quarter.** Rewriting is as important as the first draft (if not more so), for many writers. **Poorly executed, improperly-formatted script pages will receive lower scores.**

Final Examination: An electronic exam will be administered over Canvas. Details including information on prep will be provided in advance. Reviewing past homework, supplemental handouts, assigned chapters and their summaries at the end of each section will be essential. **The exam may be worth between 20 - 30 points. The precise number (grade percentage point) is to be determined as the quarter progresses and as the instructor assesses student progress.** As noted earlier the Full-Outline assignment may be eliminated, and thus the Midterm and Final Exam may be weighed more heavily as a result.

Summary of Grading Information and Determination of Grades: See above for the essential prompts for each assignment and the charts below for a summary of due dates and assignment

weight. **Further prompts elaborating on assignment goals and parameters will be provided as weeks progress on Canvas in announcements and modules.**

Late work will immediately be penalized half the total possible points for that assignment, before instructor evaluates it for a grade. No credit or feedback will be given for work submitted more than one week late.

Extra credit is offered at the instructor's discretion.

Total Points Possible – 100

A + (97-100 points); A (93-96 points); A – (89-92 points)

B + (85-88 points); B (81-84 points); B – (77-80 points)

C + (73-76 points); C (69-72 points); C – (65-68 points)

D (61-64 points); F (60 points and below)

Due Dates and Assignment Weight:

Assignments are due on Sundays, every week, before midnight

1. The Idea and Spine Assignment (including logline, idea and spine, all on one sheet) – 5 points max. Due any point before midnight on Sunday, 4/13.
2. Mini-Step-Outline Assignment – 5 points max. Due any point before midnight on Sunday, 4/20.
3. Beat Sheet Assignment – 5 points max. Due any point before midnight on Sunday, 4/27.
4. Treatment/Summary Assignment – 5 points max. Due any point before midnight on Sunday, 5/4.
5. Feedback/Rewrite Assignment: The First 2 Pages of Script – 5 points max. Due at any point before midnight on Sunday, 5/11. **Note: the rewrite portion is submitted on our last day as part of your revised 10 page script final submission. If you do not thoroughly rewrite/improve the first two pages you received credit for earlier in the quarter, then you will not receive any rewrite credit points at the end of the quarter. Be sure not to overlook this heavily-weighted portion of your grade in the course if getting an A and achieving your best writing is important to you.**
6. Full-Step-Outline Assignment - 10 points max. Due at any point before midnight on Sunday, 5/18. You get extra time for this one! *Substitution/alteration for this assignment, such as oral Pitch Presentations may arise, or a decision may be made to eliminate this assignment or any substitution to it, so that you may focus on completing and rewriting your script pages. This change may increase the weight of your Midterm Quiz and Final Exam by 10 or more additional points. Details to be determined as the quarter progresses.*
7. *Open Book Midterm Quiz based on readings, clips, links and Discussion Tab posts is due before midnight on Sunday, May 25 – 10 points max. Details to be announced. *The*

instructor may determine to change the date, substitute for another assignment or eliminate the quiz at his discretion.

8. Submission of Original Script Pages – 20 points max (five rounds/weeks of 2 pages at a time, for a total of 10 original pages). *Due dates for script pages may be adjusted at instructor's discretion* but are likely to be: 5/11, 5/18, 5/25, 6/1, 6/8.
9. Class Participation (Weekly Discussion Tab engagement) – 10 points max. Due on a consistent, weekly basis in response to instructor and student peer posts. This is tallied at the end of the quarter by the instructor and based upon the consistency and quality of student weekly engagement. **A minimum of one thoughtful question or answer to our ongoing Discussion Tab thread that changes every week is essential if you wish to receive full participation points. Further, students may be asked to share some work-in-progress with peers for feedback in Discussion Tab threads. This will give you a little taste of the writing workshop experience and increases your participation points in this class.**
10. Manuscript Submission (10 pages, including revised and improved material) – 15 points max. Due before midnight on Wednesday 6/25 through Canvas.
11. *Open Book Final Exam – *The exact number of possible points is to be determined as the quarter progresses at the instructor's discretion.* Students will receive their final exam through Canvas with a limited window of time (likely 24 hours) to submit their answers to Canvas before midnight on Wednesday 6/25, along with their final Manuscript Submission (first ten pages of your revised screenplay). Draw from your materials examined during the quarter to complete the exam and improve your script pages.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE: WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE TO CANVAS ON SUNDAYS BEFORE MIDNIGHT.

NOTE: WEEK ONE BEGINS MONDAY 4/7

Topics: The Personal Screenplay; Protagonists; Dramatic Principles; Openings; Idea, Spine and Logline

Module Activities: View and analyze provided media clips; watch the film Whiplash on your own time and read the script provided as a PDF; Contribute to Discussion Tab; Complete writing assignment; review electronic handouts and links provided.

Required Assignments, Due before midnight on Sunday, 4/13:

1. Begin reading your textbook provided as a free PDF. Chapter 1 (The Idea) and 2 (The Spine) in *Screenwriting for Neurotics*, by Scott Sublett

2. Prepare idea (indicating logline) and spine components (from Ch. 2 in *Screenwriting for Neurotics*) for submission.
3. Read the script (provided in Canvas Week 1 module or under “Files”) and watch the film, *Whiplash*.

WEEK TWO STARTS MONDAY, 4/14

Topics: Formatting and Terminology; Chapters Review and Primer; Ideas, Spines and Loglines; Character; Structure; Openings; Dramatic Principles

Module Activities: View clips; Contribute to Discussion Tab; Review any new script uploaded and any new electronic handouts; Complete writing assignment

Required Assignments, Due before midnight on Sunday, 4/20:

1. Read Chapter 3 (Plot), 4 (Deeper into Plotting), 7 (Format): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*
2. Complete Mini-Step-Outline for submission to Canvas

WEEK THREE STARTS MONDAY, 4/21

Topics: Character; Scene Work, Structure, Point of View

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab, electronic handouts and all other module materials provided

Required Assignments, Due before midnight on Sunday, 4/27:

1. Read Chapters 5 (The Scene) and 6 (The Step Outline): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*
2. Watch a film model of your choice and prepare a Beat Sheet for Canvas submission.

WEEK FOUR STARTS MONDAY, 4/28

Topics: Antagonists, Character Complexity, Supporting Characters, Counterpoint Characterization and Core Instability; Novel vs Script; Scene Work and Description; Subplots and Structure; Ensemble Narratives; The Hero’s Journey; Alternative Narrative Structures; Point of View; Suspense and Superior Position; Subtext and Dialogue

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab, electronic handouts and all additional module materials provided.

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 5/4:

1. Complete 2 Page Treatment/Summary of your entire script and submit to Canvas
2. Read Chapter 7(Formatting) and Chapter 8 (Description): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*

WEEK 5 STARTS ON 5/5

Topics: Deeper into Antagonists, Character Complexity, Supporting Characters, Counterpoint Characterization and Core Instability; Novel vs Script; Scene Work and Description; Subplots and Structure; Ensemble Narratives; The Hero's Journey; Alternative Narrative Structures; Point of View; Suspense and Superior Position; Subtext and Dialogue; Dramatic Irony; Thematics

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all other module materials provided.

Required Assignments or Readings, Due before midnight on Sunday, 5/11.

1. Read Chapter 9 (Dialogue): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*
2. Complete First 2 Screenplay Pages for submission to Canvas (also considered the first part of the Feedback/Rewrite Assignment).

WEEK SIX STARTS ON MONDAY, 5/12

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all other module materials provided. Workshop your first two pages of material with your peers before Canvas submission.

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 5/18:

1. Read Chapter 10 (Miscellany): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*.
2. Complete Screenplay Pages 3 and 4 for submission to Canvas.
3. Prepare for Midterm Quiz

WEEK SEVEN STARTS ON MONDAY, 5/19

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television -- Continued

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all other module materials provided.

Required Assignments, Due by midnight on 5/25:

1. Read Chapter 11 (The Rewrite): *Screenwriting for Neurotics*
2. Prepare Screenplay Pages 5 and 6 for submission to Canvas.
3. *Prepare Full Step Outline for submission and group critique (substitution/alteration to this assignment may arise, such as a Pitch Presentation, **or the assignment here may be omitted entirely.** Details to be provided)

WEEK EIGHT STARTS ON MONDAY, 5/26

Topics: Miscellany; Rewriting; Writing for Television -- Continued

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all module materials provided

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 6/1:

1. Prepare Screenplay Pages 7 and 8 for submission to Canvas.
2. Read electronic handouts on Pitching, Revision and Television Writing.

WEEK NINE STARTS ON MONDAY, 6/2

Topics: Pitching and The Business

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all materials provided.

Required Assignments, Due by 6pm on 6/8

1. Prepare Screenplay Pages 9 and 10 for submission to Canvas.
2. Review all modules, readings, current and previous materials

WEEK TEN STARTS ON MONDAY, 6/9

Topics: Development

Module Activities: Engage with Discussion Tab and all other materials provided.

Required Assignments Due by 6/25, The Last Day of Class

1. Revise your 10 Pages of Script (or more) for submission to instructor. Show evidence of revision and improvement, including your rewritten pages from the Feedback/Rewrite Assignment, incorporating student and instructor feedback.
2. Review all past materials and ensure you are set up to receive all points possible.

WEEK ELEVEN STARTS ON MONDAY, 6/16

Topics: Review of all materials over the course of the quarter in preparation for Final Exam

Module Activities: Check Canvas module and announcements for new updates

Required Assignments Due by 6/25, The Last Day of Class:

1. Prepare for Final Exam by reviewing readings, handouts and lecture notes. Revisit past prompts, assignments and script analysis-related documents. Prepare any final questions you may have for your instructor.
2. Revise your 10 Pages of Script (or more) for submission to Canvas. Show evidence of revision and improvement, including your rewritten pages from the Feedback/Rewrite Assignment, incorporating student and instructor feedback

WEEK TWELVE, FINALS WEEK, STARTS MONDAY JUNE 23.

OUR FINAL EXAM AND REVISED 10 SCREENPLAY PAGES ARE DUE NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY BEFORE MIDNIGHT ON 6/25

THERE WILL BE PARTING ADVICE, RELEVANT CLIPS AND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT, EDIFICATION AND INSPIRATION!

PARTY TIME!

CONGRATS, FELLOW SCRIBES! YOU'VE GOT THE FOUNDATIONAL TOOLS TO WRITE LIKE A PRO! ☺