



WRITING 2224G: WRITING FOR THE BIG SCREEN – WINTER 2023

SECTION: 001

Tuesdays | 12:30-3:30pm | Online, Synchronous

Instructor	Email	Office	Office Hours
Bryce Sage	bsage3@uwo.ca	Virtual (Zoom)	Wednesdays 12-2pm; by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the fundamentals of feature length screenplays via lectures and practical workshops. Students will be guided through the various stages of screenwriting, including pitching ideas, outlining, drafting and revisions. Weekly discussions and assignments focus on the three act structure, hero's journey and genre; character development and archetypes; and the construction of scenes and sequences. Through the course, students will pitch and write the proposal for a feature film and the first act of a feature length screenplay.

Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audience;
- identify the essential story beats of three-act structure in narrative screenwriting;
- create compelling characters and build narrative scenes and sequences
- write the first act of a feature screenplay with industry standard formatting;
- respond to peer feedback and incorporate revisions into scripts.

Required Texts and Software

- The Writer's Journey, 25th Anniversary Edition by Christopher Vogler
- Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting by Syd Field (both available at Western University Bookstore)
- Celtx Screenwriting Software (online, free)

Recommended Texts

- Save the Cat by Blake Snyder (available on [amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca) and most bookstores)

OWL

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Course Requirements

The overall course grade will be calculated as below:

Assignment	% of Grade	Deadline
Feature Film Pitch and Written Proposal	30%	Pitches: Weeks 4 & 5 Proposal: Week 6
5-Page Scene	20%	Week 7
Final Draft of First Act screenplay	40%	Week 12 (First Draft due Week 8-11)
Workshop Feedback & Peer Review	10%	Weeks 4-11

Assignment Format

All assignments must be word-processed in a 12-point Courier font for scripts and a 12-point for other assignments. Scripts must be formatted in proper screenplay format as described in class. Students must use either the online Celtx software or another screenwriting program. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor's name on the first page. Please include page numbers.

Submitting Assignments

In this course, you will be required to submit the final version of each of your assignments electronically via OWL as a PDF to Turnitin.com and provide your instructor with a hard copy in class the day the assignment is due. Late assignments will receive a penalty of up to 5% per day including weekends. If you need an extension for a medical reason, you must contact Academic Counselling of your home Faculty.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.

- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons with your instructor within one week of that absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

Note: a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of 'make-up class' in another course **will** count as non-attendance, and **will** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario **shall not require** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student's other scheduled class times. If you are asked or 'required' to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean's office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below. For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Prerequisites

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The prerequisite for registration in this course is:

At least 65% in one of [Writing 2101F/G](#), [Writing 2125F/G](#) (or the former [Writing 2121F/G](#)), [Writing 2111F/G](#), [Writing 2130F/G](#) or [Writing 2131F/G](#); or at least 65% in one of [Writing 1000F/G](#), [Writing 1030F/G](#), or [Writing 1031F/G](#); or at least 65% in each of [MIT 1020E](#) (or both [MIT 1021F/G](#) and [MIT 1022F/G](#)) and [MIT 1025F/G](#); or permission of the Department (consult the Undergraduate Program Director, Writing).

Academic Accommodation

Medical Accommodation

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These

documents will be retained in the student's file and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines.

The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Support Services

Academic Counselling

Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Class Meeting Schedule

Date	Lecture Topics / Exercises	Readings, Assignments due
Week 1: Jan 10	Introduction to Feature Films Story, Character & 3 Act Structure	Syllabus posted to OWL. Read: Field, Chapters 1-2 (15-42); Vogler, "A Practical Guide" (3-30)
Week 2: Jan 17	Creating and Building Characters Discussion of Assignment 1: <i>Feature Film Pitch & Proposal</i>	Field, Chapters 3-5 (43-88); Vogler, "Hero" (31-42); "Shadow" (75-80); "Ordinary World" (99-118)
Week 3: Jan 24	The Hero's Journey; Plot Mechanics; Conflict & Theme	Field, Chapters 6, 8,9 (89-105, 127-159) Vogler, "Stages of Journey" 119-150)
Week 4: Jan 31	In class: Feature Film Pitches	Vogler, "Stages of Journey" 151-204)
Week 5: Feb 7	In class: Feature Film Pitches	Vogler, "Stages of Journey" 205-249)
Week 6: Feb 14	Screenwriting Formatting & Software (Celtx); Scenes Discussion of Assignment 2: <i>5-Minute Scene</i>	Field, Chapter 13-14 (215-256) <i>Assignment Due: Feature Film Proposal</i>
Reading Week: Feb 17 - Feb 26	N/A	N/A
Week 7: Feb 28	From Outline to Draft: Writing the First Act Discussion of Assignment 3: <i>Feature Film First Act</i>	Field, Chapter 7 (106-126) <i>Assignment Due: 5-Minute Scene</i>
Week 8: Mar 7	Workshopping of 1st Draft Screenplays	Field, Chapter 10-12 (160-214)
Week 9: Mar 14	Workshopping of 1st Draft Screenplays, continued	Vogler, Epilogue (265-358)
Week 10: Mar 21	Workshopping of 1st Draft Screenplays, continued	No Readings
Week 11: Mar 28	Workshopping of 1st Draft Screenplays, continued	No Readings
Week 12: Apr 4	Final Class	<i>Assignment Due: Final Draft, First Act Screenplay</i>