

# Courses in Screenwriting

## REQUIRED COURSES (40 units)

### **FILM 500: SCREENWRITING AND STORYTELLING FUNDAMENTALS (4)**

Study and practice the fundamentals of narrative, the art of visual storytelling and the elements of dramatic writing for the screen. Strategies on narrative structure, pacing, setting, characterization, and dialogue will be honed via film/script analysis and writing exercises. Writers will develop and complete the first draft of an original feature script. **Prerequisite for other screenwriting courses. Offered fall only.**

### **FILM 502: CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR – FEATURE WRITING (4)**

Workshop course in which students further develop skills in the writing and craft of narrative screenplays. Writers develop and complete the first draft of an original feature script. Designed for those with prior experience in screenwriting. **Prerequisite: FILM 505. interchangeable with 506 Television Writing Seminar. Can be repeated for credit but may not be taken more than once per term. Offered fall, spring, summer.**

### **FILM 504: CREATIVE WRITING SEMINAR – TELEVISION WRITING (4)**

Workshop course in which class members further develop skills in the writing and craft of narrative TV writing. Writers compete the first draft of their pilot and a series pitch document (aka mini-bible). Designed for those with prior experience in screenwriting. **Prerequisite: FILM 505. Interchangeable with 504 Feature Writing Seminar. Can be repeated for credit but may not be taken more than once per term. Offered fall, spring, summer.**

### **FILM 506: PRODUCERS TRACK, PART I - THE INDUSTRY (4)**

In part I of this two part track, students will become versed in the fundamentals of producing and will get a comprehensive overview of how the industry works, including the dynamic relationships between writers, managers/agents, producers and buyers, how projects ultimately get made and the current state of the business. **Cannot be repeated for credit. Offered fall only.**

### **FILM 508: PRODUCERS TRACK, PART II - DEVELOPMENT (4)**

In part II of this two part track, students will have the opportunity to act as both producer and writer, partnering to develop two projects from concept/IP to a full pitch. The course will culminate with writer/producer teams pitching to a panel of industry professionals who will provide feedback and guidance on student projects. **Prerequisite: FILM 508. Cannot be repeated for credit. Offered spring only.**

### **FILM 520: REVISION WORKSHOP(4)**

A workshop course in which writers take the first draft of an original feature or TV pilot to a polished, submittable draft. Via table reads and notes sessions, participants receive feedback on their draft and provide feedback on colleagues work. In addition to a polished draft, the workshop will hone writers' ability to give and receive constructive and collaborative feedback. Designed for those with prior experience in screenwriting. **Prerequisite: FILM 507. Can be repeated for credit. Offered summer only.**

### **FILM 595: ADVANCED SCREENWRITING INDEPENDENT STUDY (4)**

Functioning as "professional writers", students are mentored one-on-one by their IS advisor, who fulfills the role of producer/manager/agent in guiding the student to develop and write the first draft of a feature OR the first draft of a TV pilot and a series pitch document (aka mini-bible). **Prerequisite: FILM 504 or FILM 506. Can be repeated for credit.**

### **FILM 599: THESIS COURSE (4, 4)**

Functioning as "professional writers", over the course of the fall and spring terms of their second year, students are mentored one-on-one by a thesis advisor, who guides the student to develop and write the first draft of a feature OR the first draft of a TV pilot and series pitch document (aka mini-bible.) Prior to starting, students must secure a second reader for an additional round of feedback on their completed draft. A completed thesis, which must be submitted prior to graduation, consists of a student's thesis course project and one additional original feature project OR TV pilot and series pitch document (aka mini-bible) written in a Hollins course. **Students begin their thesis course in fall term of their second year.**

**ELECTIVE COURSES DIFFER EACH YEAR. SEE FOLLOWING FOR RECENT EXAMPLES. (8 units)**

**FILM 530: CRITICAL STUDIES: FILM STYLES AND GENRES – BLACKNESS ON WHITE SCREENS: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY FROM WHITE SUPREMACY TO BLACK SELF (4)**

The class will trace the history of African American identity in film from its early racist beginnings with *Birth of a Nation* through the Civil Rights era, to the modern era of black filmmakers - Spike Lee, John Singleton and Jordan Peele. The course will explore in detail how white control of black identity on the big screen helped codify racial stereotypes about black people in America that has long lasting ramifications to this day.

**FILM 530: CRITICAL STUDIES: WOMEN IN FILM: FROM ALICE GUY-BLACHE TO AVA DUVERNAY (4)**

This course centers on the trials, triumphs, lives, and socio-political context of female directors throughout history. Students will watch and analyze films of relevant female directors, will learn about how they came to be filmmakers and the historical context of their work. The course will then dive into the study of contemporary female directors, how their careers have taken shape and the current climate in the industry.

**FILM 550: SPECIAL TOPICS: ADAPTATIONS (4)**

Writers are taken through the process of identifying intellectual property worthy of cinematic adaption (can be a news article, true story, book, play etc.), or can choose to adapt their own IP in another format (novel, short story, play, etc.). Writers are taken through the unique process of breaking the story on an adaptation, and will then craft the pitch, work out a detailed beat outline, and complete the first draft of a feature or series.

**FILM 550: SPECIAL TOPICS: PITCH IT UP A NOTCH (4)**

Screenwriting is a business, and successful writers need skills to market themselves, their ideas, and their stories. In this workshop, students will improve their pitching skills, from conception to writing and delivery, while deepening their understanding of how meetings are setup, meeting etiquette, maintaining relationships, and more. In a highly competitive market, it's crucial that a writer find their own unique vision and style, while also understanding how to finesse a pitch to a specific studio, executive, production company, etc.

**FILM 550: SPECIAL TOPICS: WRITING ANIMATION FOR TV (4)**

The animated TV market is booming, with animation for kids, families, and adults regularly topping the ratings, and new content arriving almost weekly. Nowadays, an aspiring writer's portfolio is not quite complete without a professional sample for animated programming. This advanced class will cover the major differences between writing for animation and live action, as students develop and execute their own animated teleplay spec.

**FILM 550: SPECIAL TOPICS: HORROR/THRILLER FEATURE WRITING (4)**

If the question is, "What is the single most popular genre of film in the industry today?" The answer is unquestionably HORROR. Part lecture/discussion and part workshop, this class will focus on the essential films and conventions of this lucrative genre. Students will utilize the exploration of the various tropes and effective horror elements to then develop their own feature film from concept to outline to first draft.

**FILM 550: SPECIAL TOPICS: THE WRITER'S ROOM (4)**

Once divided into "writers' rooms" of 4-8 people, students will choose a currently running series and will develop the upcoming season, functioning as a working writer's room while moving through developing a season overview to breaking the season, breaking episodes, writing episodes, receiving studio notes and revising episodes. This course aims to prepare students intent on a TV career with the skills to manage the uniquely challenging and highly fulfilling role of staff writer on a series.