**Spring 2017**

**Tentative Syllabus**

**Professor:** Lex Williford

**Section:** CRW 5372-002, CRN 27879

**Date and Place:**
- Tuesday, 6-8:50 pm, HUD 313
- Jan 17, 2017 - May 04, 2017

**Office:** EDUC 901A

**Office Hours:** 2-4 MWTRF

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**Phone:** (915) 747-5721 (EDUC 901A), (915) 433-1931 (Mobile).

**Course Description:**
Intensive study and practice in various forms and approaches of screenwriting, including workshop discussion of individual student screenwriting. This course will be an intensive study of screenplay format for the feature film, screenplay structure and screenwriting, including workshops of student pitches and Ackerman Scenograms, treatments, screenplays, scenes and synopses. Students will write a feature-length script (90-120 minutes/pages).

**Required Text:**
- ISBN-10: 1935247069

**Grades:**
Your grades will be determined by your completion of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Item</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One Pitch of your screenplay (no more than about three well-crafted sentences) and</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. One Ackerman Scenogram, or another short graphic representation of your script story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. One Critical Analysis of a produced screenplay (8-10 pages).</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. One Treatment of your screenplay (no more than ten pages, double-spaced, no exceptions).</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. One Format Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. One Feature-length Original Screenplay (90-120 pp.) and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. One Synopsis of your screenplay (no more than one double-spaced page in Courier font), included with your Script as part of your final portfolio.</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Adobe Acrobat Comments and class participation (Discussions and workshops)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Scripts (.PDF):**
- *Laberinto del Fauno/Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006.

**Blackboard Navigation:**

Begin at START HERE! to get an overview of the course, including a basic map of the course itself.

I've designed numerous course shells through several versions of Blackboard since the UT Telecampus in 2005 and have had many course developers over the years, but I've tried to revise the somewhat complex course layout—the first online course I ever taught and the first ever taught in our online MFA—to make it reasonably straightforward to follow. That said, occasionally you may find yourself lost. When in doubt, start at Home in the left menu. You can also refer to the Course Work menu for shortcuts to reading and writing assignments. Though it's hard to read you may also want to refer to the Course Navigation Map under Home, just in case you're having trouble.

The best way to navigate the course is to try out each link and explore the Blackboard course in depth at the beginning of the semester. I've tried to give you redundant links, not to confuse you but to give you more than one route to get from one place to another.

If you find any dead links or conflicting or confusing instructions, please let me know so I can revise BB to avoid confusion for others. You can just send me an e-mail and let me know where the problem is in the course and I'll get it fixed right away. No matter how thorough I am, I'm sure I've missed a few things along the way from older versions of the course.

**Class Pacing:**

This class will be fast paced, and your progress will depend greatly on how well you can keep up with the deadlines, for both reading and writing assignments. *I don't recommend taking this course with another intensive writing course this semester or with a heavy class load of writing or reading.*

This course is set up like a three-act screenplay: the first act of the semester focuses on story development, writing the Ackerman Scenogram and/or a Scene Map and a Pitch; the second act moves directly to writing and critiquing Treatments and scenes; and the third act focuses on writing, workshopping and revising your screenplay drafts for revision and a final grade. Almost as soon as we're finished critiquing Treatments, we'll begin analyzing drafts of screenplays, so begin writing as soon as the semester starts, if not before, and keep up with your deadlines, which will come at you fast, especially in the summer.

This course isn't designed for procrastinators; you simply can't wait until the last minute to do your work. If you get stuck, don't hesitate to call me or make an appointment with me during my office hours; I may be able to save you some time and hours of procrastination and writer's block, but if you wait until the last minute to meet with me, I won't be much help. Set up a regular weekly writing schedule, at least a few hours every day, if possible, and keep to it. The best cure for writer's block is what Paco Taibo calls, “Tiempo de nalgas.” Time you've put your ass in your writing chair and waited for something to come.

**Plagiarism:**

UTEP's English Department Plagiarism Policy:

“Plagiarism is defined as the use of another person's ideas or words without giving proper credit. Plagiarism occurs whenever a student quotes, paraphrases or summarizes another person's work without providing correct citation. Plagiarism occurs whether the work quoted is a book, article, website, reader's guide like Cliffs Notes or SparkNotes, another student's paper, or any other source. An entire essay is considered fraudulent even if only a single sentence is plagiarized.” ([http://academics.utep.edu/Portals/1559/docs/resources/Avoiding%20Plagiarism%20-%20Syllabus%20Statements.doc](http://academics.utep.edu/Portals/1559/docs/resources/Avoiding%20Plagiarism%20-%20Syllabus%20Statements.doc)).
The best way to learn how to write screenplays is to read as many as you can get your hands on. Students may, if they wish, download other screenplays from the internet; I’ve included quite a few links (under Screenwriting Resources) in BB, which means you should be able to find the scripts of movies you love if you persist. When in doubt do a Google search, especially for newer scripts.

Creative writing doesn’t mean creative grammar. Carefully revise all manuscripts, making them free of grammatical errors and typos before you turn them in for workshop or upload them for a grade. Think of the workshop as submitting the manuscript for acceptance by a screen agent or director and present your work as professionally as you would when submitting it to a script reader at Paramount or to the Sundance Film Festival. One of the most common complaints of script readers (other than their jobs being awful) is that most of the scripts that come into them are so riddled with format, grammatical and spelling errors that script readers rarely get past the first five pages. I’ve been an editor, and the vast majority of stories I’ve read have failed before I’ve gotten through the first page. Make the manuscripts readable and compelling from the beginning.


If you prefer not to get too deeply into all the conflicting formatting advice (and there’s a lot of it), follow the format guidelines in Screenplay: Writing the Picture closely as well as my YouTube video, which refers to pages listed in earlier editions. If you have questions about format, ask in class.

Hollywood screenplay readers often toss out screenplays that don’t follow the accepted screenplay formats for reading (or spec) scripts, the kinds of scripts we’ll be writing (not shooting scripts, a distinction we’ll discuss in class). These rules, like many rules of grammar, may seem arbitrary at first but are logical and usually consistent once you know them.

Remember, too, that the format of published screenplays or those Acrobat scripts supplied by script websites (in the BB left menu under Web Links or Home —> Recourses for This Course —> Screenwriting Resources) are not models for formatting or, for that matter, quality. They’re simply screenplays for study and discussion, sometimes with flaws of form, formatting and content, often unformatted or poorly formatted scripts people have written while watching the films; many of the scripts available online are either shooting scripts or early drafts of well-known scripts, so they may be significantly different from the edited films you’ve seen—or the spec scripts the screenwriters wrote.

I highly recommend using final drafts of scripts for your Critical Analyses of Produced Scripts, unless you’re comparing earlier versions to the final draft.
1. For some years I've been using Adobe Acrobat as a means of saving paper and time for everyone, mostly because it retains the original formatting of Final Draft documents. That doesn't mean that I like the program or find it easy to work with. You may have to spend a bit of time learning the program before you figure it out. Sorry about that. It's the best I can do for now. Just remember that you can read all your peers' comments in workshops documents, and that's the best trade off I can think of when Adobe becomes confusing and hard to work with.

2. If you haven't got the latest version of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, please download and install it now from [http://get.adobe.com/reader](http://get.adobe.com/reader). Though we'll discuss early drafts of the assignments in Discussion Boards (in online courses only), we'll base all our final workshops upon Adobe Acrobat comments. (The most recent version of Adobe Acrobat Reader usually works best, so please upgrade or uninstall the previous version before installing the new version.)

3. Shared Reviews in Adobe Acrobat Reader allow students to share ("Check for Comments" or "Publish") their comments through an online server I've set up, making it possible for them to make comments, publish them online and read other students' comments, constantly syncing everyone's comments in the document you've saved to your computer. If you're not seeing your comments in class as we workshop, I recommend that you send me your documents via e-mail so I an import them for you.

4. Here are the steps we'll follow for workshops:
   
   - After we've discussed drafts on Discussion Boards students up for workshop will write their workshop documents—say, a treatment—in Word or Rich Text Format or their scripts in Final Draft format, then export them to Adobe Acrobat format if possible and copy them to the appropriate Dropbox folder I'll share with you for the week your workshops are due. Be sure to copy these (not move them) and to do so no later than midnight the night outlined in our weekly schedule below. If you're having trouble with Dropbox, just email me the documents by that same schedule. **Do not use Dropbox's commenting functions. Use Acrobat only.** (We'll comment on everyone's pitches, scenes and Scenograms as single Adobe Acrobat documents.)
   
   - Using Adobe Acrobat Professional, I'll enable the document for comments, listing the e-mails of all the students in the course so they'll have access to the online document's comments repository, then upload the document to a server for comments. (Most of our workshop discussions will occur in the document itself. It'll get cluttered, so keep your comments in the margins and at the ends of document to make room for others'.)
   
   - Open the e-mail I sent with the document. If the program prompts you, save the document to your desktop or to a folder you've created for workshops. **(Not the shared Dropbox folder please.)**
   
   - Open the document. Then using the Comment and Mark-up tools in Adobe Acrobat Reader make as many comments as you'd like—at least the number I've recommended each week—including an end note of a paragraph or two. (Right clicking the toolbar gives you the option to select the tools you want to use.) Use the Sticky Note tool for most comments, and avoid using the Call-Out tool, which tends to cover up the document so it's difficult for others to read, move or delete.
   
   - When you're finished making comments, make sure the Internet is connected; then click Publish Comments to make your comments available to the rest of the class.
   
   - If you want to see others' comments, click on Check for New Comments. I'd suggest you do that the moment you open the documents just to make sure you have all the latest comments when you begin making your own. You can respond to other comments, creating a conversation within the document. These responses can be helpful, especially if you disagree with others' comments.
   
   - Here's a direct link to a YouTube video if you have questions: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdLeLhnQUkA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdLeLhnQUkA). You can also watch the video in Blackboard.
4. Workshop Discussions:
   - **Hybrid Courses:** We'll conduct most of our discussions in class based upon the Adobe Acrobat comments class members have already made. I'll project these comments onto a screen so that we can discuss them.
   - **Online Courses:** I expect students to do most of their discussion in the actual workshop documents. Students may look back at each other's comments and reply to them as if the students were in an actual classroom. In fact, some online workshops are more thorough than standard on-campus workshops.

5. Important:
   - I'd rather have unfinished work than late work.
   - Please don't wait until the last minute to meet your workshop deadlines. If you're unable to complete your treatment or screenplay, turn in what you've written so far. If you must miss class the week your screenplay's up for discussion, please let me know immediately so we can arrange to workshop other screenplays. Our schedule will be tight.
   - Please write concrete, helpful comments for your fellow writers, based upon technique rather than vague, subjective judgments. If you write, "Cool, dude," or "I like/don't like this idea/scene/treatment," you're not helping other students. If you find a problem with a treatment or script, please offer a specific helpful suggestion or two to get the writer on track. You'd want the same for your work. It's okay to say you like something; you just need to say why, as concretely as you can, recognizing that saying, *This does/doesn't work should include also for me.* It's probably best not to say you don't like something in any case—that's a subjective comment that often doesn't help and ends up creating conflict, something we want on the page and not in class. Mostly focus on craft, authenticity, credibility and technique. One of the most important things you can tell a writer is this: "I don't believe this character/line of dialogue/action/scene." Just be sure to say why or why not—especially how to make what's inauthentic or unbelievable work a bit better for you.

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FADE IN:

   **Act 1: Imagining, Proposing and Pitching**
   
   **The Script Story and Preliminary Structure**

**Inciting Incident:**

You (the protagonist) decide to take this course and to write a feature-length script in fifteen weeks.

**EXTERNAL CONFLICTS:**

Deadlines, assignments, grades, an incredibly demanding professor (the antagonist/villain).

**INTERNAL CONFLICTS:**

Writer’s block, insecurity, envy of other students who you’ve convinced yourself are better writers than you, fear of failing (or succeeding), something your dad or mother or brother or sister or aunt or grandmother, et al, said about your frivolous decision to write rather than get a practical degree like Engineering or Accounting.

**Dramatic Questions:**

Will you overcome all the obstacles—external and internal—to finish a script by the end of the semester? Can you find the time, passion and level of commitment...
you need to write and revise, to do all the assignments, and to comment on other students’ work? Is the script idea you’ve been telling your friends about for years really doable? If not, can you come up with a compelling script idea based on a similar premise? Can you write the entire arch of the story in just three sentences? One page? Ten pages? Can you keep up with the class’s grueling schedule? Can you meet all the deadlines on time or before? Can you make an A? Can you make your script marketable? Can you get your script produced? Is it even possible to get a script noticed? Should you move to LA and wait tables until your big break? Watch Sunset Boulevard and Barton Fink again? Follow your parents’ advice and get a real job? No pressure, right?

### Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>All final drafts of written assignments are due to be uploaded to Blackboard no later than midnight Sunday throughout the semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comment on workshop documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Comment on workshop documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Comment on workshop documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workshop documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Workshop documents due for next Tuesday no later than midnight (11:59 pm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Group: Pitches/Scenograms/Optional Mindmaps/Beat Boards/Story Maps, Scenes (all student documents combined).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Individual: Treatments, Scripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>I’ll e-mail everyone PDF documents enabled for comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Comment on workshop documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Daily Schedule

For simpler navigation, the subheadings below correspond roughly with the left-menu items in Blackboard [BB]. All readings, including those for Screenplay: Writing the Picture (SPWP), below are shown for the weeks they’re due, not for the weeks they’re assigned. Look at least two or three weeks ahead to meet important deadlines. Occasionally, because I’m a complete dingbat or because I get distracted easily, I forget to tell you what you need to do in class in a week or two. If I do forget, let me know and I’ll clarify instructions for the future in e-mails and/or BB Announcements to class. I try to make my instructions clear, but if you’re confused, someone else probably is, too.

### Writing Assignments and Deadlines

- Write a preliminary pitch and Scenogram (or a mind map) for workshop in Week 2:
  - Write only what we can see and hear.
  - Show; don’t tell.
  - Write summarized dramatic scenes, narrative and dialogue only.
  - Give us actions and dialogue only; don’t interpret action or dialogue for us.
  - Optional: Following the guidelines in exercise 2, SPWP 342, rehearse a pitch and then pitch it to your partner; then have your partner pitch it back to you. Pay attention to what’s missing. Then revise and try it again.
- Please copy your pitches and Scenograms to the course shared Dropbox, Week 2 Pitches and Scenograms Workshop 1, no later than Thursday midnight, January 19, so I can combine them and send them out Friday to give everyone plenty of time to make comments for workshop next Tuesday.
• If you find yourself having trouble getting started here are a few heuristic exercises you can try:
  • *SPWP*, Exercise 1, 44 Write three of your themes/obsessions. How can you move from abstraction/theme to concrete drama, theme arising organically from the drama?
  • Before filling in your Scenogram, fill in the blanks in Exercise 1 or 2, 110.
  • Before filling in your Scenogram, fill in the blanks, 162.
  • Following the guidelines in Exercise 2, 342, rehearse a pitch and then pitch it to your partner; then have your partner pitch it back to you. If your partner got it wrong, you need to keep working on it, clarifying and simplifying the storyline and premise as much as possible.

**Screenplay: Writing the Picture (SPWP)**

• If you have time before the first class, please read:
  • FADE IN, xi.
  • Preface, xiii
  • Writing in Style, 14
  • Final Thoughts, 15
  • Part One: The Basics, 1
  • CHAPTER 1:
    • How to Impress a Reader, 3
    • Who Are Those Guys? 4
    • What Are They Looking For? 5
  • Glossary: 405-408.

**Blackboard [BB] and Other Reading Assignments**

• Set aside a few hours before the first class to become familiar with this Blackboard [BB] course's somewhat complex structure and most if not all course links, including all menus, links and sub-links. That way, if you have questions on day one, you can ask them.
• As soon as the course is available, please login to BB, navigate to this course and take a look at the left menu, then review the following to prepare for the first five weeks (Act I) of this class:
  1. **START HERE!**
     • Review the overall course here.
  2. **Home:**
     • The Syllabus,
     • Course Navigation Map
     • Course Introduction
     • The Course in Three Acts
     • Resources for This Course.
  3. These reading Assignments:
     • Conflict, Structure and the Imagination
     • Introduction to Dramatic Summaries
     • Writing the Scenogram and/or Scene Map
     • Scenogram Fill-In (Word .docx file)
     • Links to Recommended Mind-Mapping Software for Scene Maps
     • Scene Map Templates for Mind-Mapping Programs
     • Ackerman Scenogram of *Chinatown*
     • Scene Map of *Chinatown*
     • Writing the Pitch
     • Read *Spotlight*, the script to discuss next Tuesday.
     • Also begin reading *Chinatown*, the Shooting Script, for discussion over the next three weeks.
Notes:

• Because students have asked for specific instructions about how to write each assignment for this class and because good examples are often impossible to find, either in books or online, I’ve had to write many of them myself over many years. I’ve used Chinatown as the story template for each of these assignment examples, from the Pitch and Scenogram to the shooting script. I’ll ask that you read each of these to get a sense of how you can write each of these assignments, and using Chinatown is simply a way of creating some continuity. (The move still holds up after all these years, I think.)

• If the instructions feel a bit prescriptive, just remember you have a great deal of freedom in your choice of script content, form and structure, that I’ve designed this course so that it matches my students’ writing processes in a way that will make more sense as we develop our stories. I’ve adapted each assignment, from story development to the final script, in a way that will help you focus on each step, I hope, at the right moment.

• Focus on your assignments and deadlines week by week, looking two or three weeks ahead as you go to help you plan ahead. The first few weeks especially are busy, but don’t panic.

• If you don’t have the most recent version of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, download it by clicking here (http://get.adobe.com/reader) and install it on your computer. We’ll be using Adobe Acrobat Reader exclusively in workshops, especially because Acrobat keeps script format intact as is. Weeks 2 and 3, we’ll focus primarily on writing, revising and workshopping your pitches and Scenograms so get started on those right away, reading all the documents related to them.

Agenda

1. 6-6:50: Introduction to the course.
   • Syllabus and workshop sign ups.
   • Meet and greet.
   • Writing partners.
   • Discuss the differences between Dropbox (for workshops) and Blackboard (for final drafts), BB Menu, Course Map and Introductory YouTube Presentation
   • Discuss script story ideas, preliminary pitches.
   • Discuss “Writing the Scenogram.”
   • Discuss alternatives: Mind Maps, Final Draft 10’s Story Map and Beat Board.
   • Discuss the “Ackerman Scenogram Fill-In.”
   • Discuss the Chinatown Scenogram.
   • Discuss “Writing the Pitch.”

2. 6:50-8:50: View film: Spotlight, 2016 Best Motion Picture of the Year, Best Writing, Original Screenplay: Josh Singer, Tom McCarthy.

Please read:

• CHAPTER 4
  • The World of the Story, 45
  • Through the Looking Glass (Story and World), 46
  • The Right (Wo)man at the Right Time in the Right Place (Character and World), 47
  • Laughing Past the Graveyard (Contrast and Irony), 49
  • Show and Tell (World and Exposition), 55
  • Been There, Done That (Research and Consistency), 58
  • Final Thoughts, 59

• CHAPTER 16:
  • The Pitch, 328
  • To Pitch or Not to Pitch, 328
• Getting in the Door, 331
• Final Thoughts, 342

**BB AND OTHER READING ASSIGNMENTS**

Be sure you've read:
• “Conflict, Structure and the Imagination.”
• The Summarizing and Dramatizing Skills Chart
• “Introduction to Dramatic Summaries.”
• “Guide to Writing the Critical Analysis of a Produced Script.”
  - Click on *(Home)* Screenwriting Resources, then Online Scripts to Read for Your Critical Analysis of a Produced Script and begin searching for a script you admire so that you can begin reading it and preparing for writing your Critical Analysis of a Produced Script later in the semester.
  - Click on Reading Assignments, then Guide to Critical Analysis of Produced Scripts and check the list of screenwriting techniques you may write about; you may write about others, of course. We'll be discussing many of these techniques in class this semester. If you wish, you may write about a script we read together, but I recommend that you read *at least another script or two* this semester just to become familiar with script-writing conventions and how screenwriters put theory into practice.
• Continue reading all the BB and Other Reading assignments listed in Week 1. Have them all read by Week 3.
• Please view film at home:
  - *Chinatown*, 1974 (130 minutes): Roman Polanski, Director; Screenwriter, Robert Town; Oscar Winner, Best Original Screenplay, 1975.

**AGENDA**

• Discuss: *Spotlight*, the film and script.
• Discuss *Chinatown* Script/Film.
• Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 1: The Basics
• Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 4: The World of the Story
• Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 16: The Pitch
• Discuss “Writing The Critical Analysis of a Produced Script.”
• Discuss Screenwriting Resources: BB Online Scripts to Read for the Critical Analysis of a Produced Script
• Discuss the Summarizing and Dramatizing Skills Chart
• Discuss “Introduction to Dramatic Summaries.”
• Discuss “Writing the Pitch” and “Writing the Scenogram.”
• Discuss “Writing the Ackerman Scenogram.”
• Discuss Mind Mapping Alternative Options
  - Discuss mind-mapping software: BB: Screenwriting, Mind-Mapping and Nonlinear Word-Processing Software
  - Discuss screenwriting software, including Scrivener: BB: Screenwriting, Mind-Mapping and Nonlinear Word-Processing Software
• Discuss “Writing the Pitch”
• Discuss "Conflict, Structure and the Imagination”
• Pitch and Scenogram Workshop 1.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES**

• Our first treatment workshops begin next week. If you're scheduled for a treatment workshop next week, please copy your treatment to the appropriate Dropbox folder *(Week 4 Treatment Workshop 1)* no later than Thursday, February 2.
• Friday, I'll combine all the treatments for the following week and send them out for comment.
  • If you don't get your treatment in on time, we won't workshop it.
  • If you haven't already begun writing your treatment, get started now.

  **SPWP**

  **CHAPTER 3**
  • Theme, Meaning and Emotion, 37
  • Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying Nothing (Yet), 37
  • Themes All Right to Me, 39
  • Write from the Heart, 41
  • Papa, Don't Preach, 41
  • How to Reveal the Theme, 42
  • Some Consequence Yet Hanging in the Stars, 43
  • Final Thoughts, 44

  **CHAPTER 6**
  • Historical Approaches to Structure, 91
  • Structure Strictures, 93
  • Aristotle and Poetics, 94
  • Plotto and Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations, 97
  • Lajos Egri and The Art of Dramatic Writing, 97
  • Joseph Campbell and the Hero’s Journey, 98
  • The Three-Act Structure, 100
  • Automated Story Development, 108
  • Final Thoughts, 109

**Part Two: Story Structure, 91**

**BB and Other Reading Assignments**

• Please read:
  • “Writing the Treatment.”
  • “Chinatown Treatment”

• Please finish reading:
  • Chinatown, the Shooting Script

**AGENDA**

• Discuss SPWP: Chapter 3: Theme, Meaning and Emotion
• Discuss SPWP: Chapter 6: Historical Approaches to Structure
• Discuss “Writing the Treatment,” the Chinatown Treatment
• Discuss Chinatown Script/Film
• Pitch and Scenogram Workshop 2

**Act II: The Treatment**

**Act II: Discovering, Developing and Drafting the Script Story**

INT. SCREENWRITING WORKSHOP – DAY

As you map and write scenes on 3 x 5 cards and sequence those scenes in either a linear or modular way, you also begin developing your script by writing a ten-page treatment, a concise, detailed dramatized summary of your script story. For the purposes of this class, this treatment will be a story-development tool only. When you market your script later, you’ll probably have to rewrite your treatment significantly after you’ve written several drafts of your script to summarize the script’s final draft as it is written, rather than as you discovered the story.
**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Due: Final Draft of Pitch and Scenogram: *no later than midnight Sunday, February 12.*
  - Please upload both assignments, preferably in the same PDF document to Blackboard: *Course Work: Writing Assignments — > The Pitch and Scenogram and/or Scene Map.*
  - Please don't upload final graded assignments to our shared Dropbox or e-mail them to me. *I do all grading directly from Blackboard.*
- If you’re scheduled for a treatment workshop next week, please copy your treatment to the appropriate Dropbox folder (*Week 5 Treatment Workshop 2*) *no later than Thursday, February 9.*
  - Friday, I’ll combine all the treatments for next week and send them out for comments.
  - *If you don't get your treatment in on time, we won't workshop it.*

**SPWP**

- **CHAPTER 10**
  - Entering the Story, 183
  - *Big Night: Soul vs. Success*, 187

- **CHAPTER 11**
  - The Structure of Genres, 194
  - A Moving (Picture) Experience, 195
  - Courage, 197
  - Fear and Loathing, 206
  - The Need to Know, 214
  - Laughter, 220
  - Love and Longing, 229
  - Final Thoughts, 234

- Appendix C: A Few Clichés to Avoid like the Plague, 402

**AGENDA**

- Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 10: Entering the Story
- Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 11: The Structure of Genres
- Treatment Workshop 1

- Treatment 1: Saul Hernandez

- Treatment 2: Oscar Moreno

- Treatment 3: Aldo Amparan

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- *Students signed up for treatment workshops: Please copy your treatments to the appropriate weekly folder (Week 6 Treatment Workshop 3) of our shared course Dropbox no later than Thursday midnight, February 16.*
- Friday, I’ll combine all the treatments for next week and send them out for comment.
  - If you don't get your treatment in on time, we won't workshop it.

**SPWP**

- **CHAPTER 7**
  - Power and Conflict, 111
  - *May the Force Be with You (Power and Conflict)*, 112
Act II
Week 5, Cont’d.

- The Orchestration of Power and Conflict, 117
- Types of Story Conflict, 119
- Final Thoughts, 134

CHAPTER 8
- Beats, Scenes and Sequences, 135
- Follow the Beat, 135
- Making a Scene, 138
- Sequences, 149
- That’s Another Story (Subplot Sequences), 156
- Final Thoughts, 157

AGENDA
- Discuss SPWP: Chapter 7: Power and Conflict
- Discuss SPWP: Chapter 8: Beats, Scenes and Sequences
- Treatment Workshop 2

Treatment 4: Will Daugherty
Treatment 5: Giannina Deza
Treatment 6: Fiorella Manrique
Treatment 7: Irma Nikicicz

Act II
Week 6
Treatment Workshop 3
February 21

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES
- Due: Critical Analysis of a Produced Screenplay no later than midnight Sunday, February 26.
  - In BB, go to: Writing Assignments —> Upload Here: Critical Analysis of a Produced Script.
- Please prepare for the Format Quiz on Tuesday, February 28.

SPWP
- CHAPTER 2
  - Format, 16
  - Formatting and Formatting Software, 17
  - Setting Up Your Script, 17
  - Appendix A: The Movie Template, 393-95.

BB Assignments
- I recommend that you view the Script Format Presentation (Web Links —> Script Format Resources —> Script Format Presentation (YouTube)) before class so that if you have questions you may ask them as I go over the formatting presentation again during class. Please note that the page numbers cited in the presentation may be different from those in your edition of the text. The rules haven't changed, just the page numbers.
- Read and compare the two script types in Spec and Shooting Scripts.pdf (in Script Format Resources). We'll be writing spec scripts only, so please note the differences between each.

BB Assignments
- Please begin reading the shooting script for Laberinto del Fauno/Pan's Labyrinth (en español o in English) (Reading Assignments).
**AGENDA**

- View, discuss Script Formatting Presentation.
- Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 2: Format
- Discuss the Format Quiz
- Prepare for the format quiz in class.
- Treatment Workshop 3

**Act II**

**Week 6, Cont’d.**

**Treatment 8: César Ruiz**

**Treatment 9: Mario Martínez**

**Treatment 10: Jesús Peña**

**Treatment 11: Daniela Armijo**

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Due: *Final draft of the treatment no later than midnight Sunday, March 5.*
  - Go to BB: Writing Assignments —> Upload Here: The Treatment: Final Draft.
  - All students: Please copy a single scene you’d like to submit to a group workshop, no more than about three pages long, to the appropriate Dropbox folder (*Week 8 Script Scenes Workshop*), no later than midnight Thursday, March 2.
    - You may choose a scene among these different options, or one of your own choosing:
      - Your script’s opening scene.
      - The most dramatic scene you’ve written.
      - The least dramatic scene you’ve written.
      - What you consider to be the strongest scene in your script.
      - What you consider to be the weakest scene in your script.
      - The scene that’s giving you the most trouble.
      - A scene you’re stuck in, can’t write your way out of, or can’t seem to “fix” (your biggest writer’s block scene).

  **SPWP**

  - Review Script Formatting Presentation.

**BB and Other Reading Assignments**

- Review “Spec and Shooting Scripts.pdf.”

**AGENDA**

- Format Quiz
- Video Exercises in Preparation for Scene Workshop in Week 8.
  - View and Discuss Exercise 1 Video Clip (Bookends): *Kramer vs. Kramer*
  - View and Discuss Exercise 3 Video Clip (The Silent Scene): *Big Night.*
  - View and Discuss Exercise 2 Video Clip (Setups, Payoffs and the Recognition Scene): *Monster’s Ball.*

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Work on your scripts. Try to get a draft finished before the end of Spring Break.
Act II
Week 8
March 7

• CHAPTER 9
  • Scene Cards
  • It's in the Cards, 163
  • Final Thoughts, 164

AGENDA
• Discuss scene cards development and other methods.
• Script scenes workshop.
• View film: Laberinto del Fauno/Pan's Labyrinth, 2006, Writer/Director: Guillermo del Toro.

SPWP

INTERMISSION
Week 9
March 14

Spring Break (No Class)

Act III: The Script

Act III: Writing, Workshopping, Revising and Marketing the Script

INT. SCREENWRITING WORKSHOP – DAY

You finish a draft of your script and begin workshopping and revising to begin marketing it.

Writing Assignments and Deadlines

• Heuristic Exercise (Optional): Write up a character description based upon the lists on SPWP, 72-73 and/or SPWP Exercise, 90.
• Students up for script workshops next week: please copy your scripts, preferably in Adobe Acrobat format, to the appropriate weekly folder (Week 11 Script Workshop 2) in our shared course Dropbox, so we can workshop your script in class. Please try to write an entire draft of your script before workshop so that you can get the most extensive comments you can.
• If you've not finished your script, turn in what you have so far.
• If you don't meet the deadline, we won't workshop your script.

SPWP

• CHAPTER 5
  • Character, 60
  • Which Came First, the Honey or the Bee? 60
  • Geez, You Act like You're in a Movie, 61
  • What on Earth Is He Doing Here? (Character Functions), 62
  • What's the Situation (Character and Context), 68
  • Turn on the Spotlight (Character Elements), 72
  • The Arc of the Covenant (Character Arc vs. Catalytic Character), 81
  • Write You Are (Building Characters), 83
  • A Piece of Sugar (The Shorthand of Dogs, Cats, Children and Tucking in Blankets), 88
  • Final Thoughts, 89
### Act III
#### Week 10, Cont'd.

**Agenda**
- Discuss *Laberinto del Fauno/Pan's Labyrinth* script and film.
- Do you really know your characters yet?
- Discuss SPWP: Chapter 5: Character.
- Script Workshop 1
  
  **Script 1:** Saul Hernandez
  
  **Script 2:** Oscar Moreno

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#### Week 11

**Script Workshop 2**
March 28

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**
- Heuristic Exercise (Optional): Write only what we can see and hear in narrative: Exercise 2, 251. Or find a passage in which you've used value-judgment adjectives (sad/ugly), "is" verbs and abstractions, giving us a character's thoughts or interpreting a character's actions for us, and write only what we can see and hear, allowing the details to help establish and show the subtext.
- Students up for script workshops next week: please copy your scripts, preferably in Adobe Acrobat format, to the appropriate weekly folder (*Week 12 Script Workshop 3*) in our shared course Dropbox, so we can workshop your script in class. Please try to write an entire draft of your script before workshop so that you can get the most extensive comments you can.
- If you've not finished your script, turn in what you have so far.
- If you don't meet the deadline, we won't workshop your script.

**SPWP**
- **CHAPTER 12**
  - Narrative, 237
  - Keep It Moving, 237
  - Write Only What We Can See and Hear, 242
  - Describing Characters, 243
  - Describing Locations, 244
  - Final Thoughts, 250

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#### Week 12

**Script Workshop 3**
April 4

**Agenda**
- Discuss SPWP: Chapter 12: Narrative
- Script Workshop 2
  
  **Script 3:** César Ruiz
  
  **Script 4:** Mario Martinez
  
  **Script 5:** Aldo Amparan

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**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**
- Due in 3 Weeks: The Final Portfolio: Feature-Length Script and Synopsis: No later than midnight Friday, Week 15.
- Students up for script workshops next week: please copy your scripts, preferably in Adobe Acrobat format, to the appropriate weekly folder (Week 13 Script Workshop 4) in our shared course Dropbox, so we can workshop your script in class. Please try to write an entire draft of your script before workshop so that you can get the most extensive comments you can.
  - If you've not finished your script, turn in what you have so far.
  - If you don't meet the deadline, we won't workshop your script.
  - Revision Exercise (Optional): Modeling the scene in exercise 5, find a scene in your script in which characters talk in speeches or monologues, and rewrite that scene to make the dialogue more natural.

- CHAPTER 13
  - Dialogue, 253
  - The Role of Dialogue, 254
  - How Can I Say This? (Dialogue Techniques), 260
  - I Was Born in a Log Cabin I Built with My Own Hands . . . (Exposition), 276
  - Technical Do's and Don'ts, 280
  - For Crying Out Loud! 283
  - Final Thoughts, 284

**BB and Other Reading Assignments**

- Writing the Synopsis

**AGENDA**

- Discuss *SPWP*: Chapter 13: Dialogue
- Discuss writing the synopsis.
- Script Workshop 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Script 6: Will Daugherty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Script 7: Giannina Deza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Script 8: Fiorella Manrique</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Due in 2 Weeks: Final Portfolio: Feature-Length Script and Synopsis: No later than midnight Friday, Week 15.
- The last student up for script workshop next week: please copy your script, preferably in Adobe Acrobat format, to the appropriate weekly folder (Week 14 Script Workshop 5) in our shared course Dropbox, so we can workshop your script in class.
  - If you've not finished your script, turn in what you have so far.
  - If you don't meet the deadline, we won't workshop your script.
- All students: Please copy a single scene you'd like to submit to a group workshop, no more than about three pages long, to the appropriate Dropbox folder (Week 14 Script Scenes Workshop), no later than midnight Thursday, April 13.
  - You may choose a scene among these different options, or one of your own choosing:
    - Your script's opening scene.
    - The most dramatic scene you've written.
    - What you consider to be the strongest scene in your script.
    - What you consider to be the weakest scene in your script.
    - The scene that's giving you the most trouble.
### Act III  
#### Week 13, Cont'd.

- A scene you’re stuck in, can’t write your way out of, or can’t seem to “fix” (your biggest writer’s block scene).
- A scene which, no matter how many times you’ve revised it, you still don’t believe.

**SPWP**


**AGENDA**

- Discuss scriptwriting alternatives.
- Script Workshop 4

#### Script 9: Irma Nikicicz

#### Script 10: Jesus Peña

### Act III  
#### Week 14

#### Script Workshop 5  
#### Scene Workshop  
#### April 18

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Due in 1 Week: Final Portfolio: Feature-Length Script and Synopsis: *No later than midnight Friday, Week 15, April 28.*
- Revision Exercise (Optional): Modeling the scene in exercise 7, find a scene full of obvious exposition or exposition through dialogue in your own script and rewrite that scene. How can you spread out this exposition and use it in the script’s most dramatic moments? How, in other words, can you dramatize the exposition?

**SPWP**

- CHAPTER 14
  - Rewriting, 291
  - It’s Great! Now Let Me Fix It, 292
  - Taking It Apart and Putting it Back Together, 297
  - Final Thoughts, 301.

**BB and Other Reading Assignments**

- Go to Home Page (On-Campus)/Screenwriting Resources/Script Registration and Marketing and browse the links to the marketing sites I’ve linked to. Spend a few hours surfing. Register your script. Look for contests and other potential markets targeted specifically for a script like yours.

**AGENDA**

- Script workshop
- Script scene workshop

#### Script 11: Daniela Armijo

### Act III  
#### Week 15  
#### Marketing  
#### April 25

**Writing Assignments and Deadlines**

- Due: Final Portfolio: Feature-Length Script and Synopsis: *No later than midnight Friday, April 28.*
  - Go to Assignments/Upload Assignment: Upload Here: Synopsis and Script: Final Draft.
  - *Please be sure to include your portfolio cover sheet—filled in completely—as well as your synopsis and script, preferably in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format.*

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17.
You may upload all three documents separately.
When trying to determine your grade, refer to the Grading Rubric for Screenwriting at the end of this syllabus and attached to the assignment.

Part Four: Marketing, 303

• CHAPTER 15
  • Marketing the Script, 305
  • The Writers Guild of America, 305
  • Representation, 305
  • Production Companies, 320
  • Networking, 323
  • Film Schools, 326
  • Final Thoughts, 327
  • Final Thoughts on Becoming a Screenwriter, 389
  • Appendix B: Suggested Reading, 400.
  • Appendix D: Graduate (MFA) Screenwriting Programs

BB and Other Reading Assignments

• Continue to browse the links to the script marketing sites I’ve linked to. Be prepared to talk specifically about some of the marketing options you’re considering for your script.

Agenda

Discuss Marketing (Web Links):
• Register Your Script with the Writers Guild of America
• Moviebytes
• InkTip
• Other Script Marketing Resources, Contests, Conferences, etc.
• Discuss your plans for marketing the script you’ve written this semester.

Midnight, Friday, April 28

Final Portfolios Due:
• Feature-Length Script, Synopsis and portfolio cover sheet, filled in completely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>E-Mail Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldo Amparan</td>
<td>915-373-4901</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aiamparan@miners.utep.edu">aiamparan@miners.utep.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Daugherty</td>
<td>915-740-0233</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wrdaugherty@miners.utep.edu">wrdaugherty@miners.utep.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giannina Deza</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gmdeza@miners.utep.edu">gmdeza@miners.utep.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela Armijo Gonzalez</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:dgonzalezarmijo@miners.utep.edu">dgonzalezarmijo@miners.utep.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saul Hernandez</td>
<td>210-363-5376</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shernandez120@miners.utep.edu">shernandez120@miners.utep.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiorella Manrique</td>
<td>915-300-7743</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fdmanrique@miners.utep.edu">fdmanrique@miners.utep.edu</a>  <a href="mailto:fdmanrique@gmail.com">fdmanrique@gmail.com</a></td>
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A Note on How I Determine Grades:

Many students have asked me to describe how I come up with grades. If I had my choice, I wouldn't assign a grade to creative work at all, but because we don't operate on a pass/fail basis, I have to assign grades and try to be as fair-minded and objective as I can be. While it's difficult to quantify how I decide grades for creative writing—the differences between quantitative and qualitative measures essentially being immeasurable—I've been writing and grading creative writing for thirty years and I know that a C tends to cover averages (as much as we all hate being called average) and anything above that shows a writer who's beginning to take her work seriously. Please use this rubric as a guideline only, and remember: I always grade on leaps in a student's writing, from wherever she is from the first day of class till the last, always doing my best to give her the benefit of a doubt, and the only averages I really consider are those that add up at the end of the semester.

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### A Grading Rubric for Screenwriting

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1. The writer moves beyond character type and stereotype, showing a growing mastery of deep characterization: the character's motivations are clear, subtle yet surprising, showing a strong insight into the mystery of human motive and behavior.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. The writer has a growing mastery of showing and telling, integrating sharp, surprising details into summarized sections with a strong understanding of how and when to write dramatic scenes, trusting readers to be smart enough to get it on their own.</td>
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<td>3. The writer has a gift for dramatic or comic writing, moving the reader deeply, making the reader laugh out loud, or both.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. The writer has a growing mastery of significant detail—detail that shows and tells—using little or no static description, making quick strokes of surprising detail in as few words as possible, showing a distinctive view of the world and uncanny insight into individual characters and places.</td>
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<td>5. The writer has a strong, distinctive voice, not a voice that just imitates a favorite writer.</td>
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<td>6. The writer writes from within character, not imitations of plot he's seen on TV or movies, understanding that genuine plot reversals are about changes within characters.</td>
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<td>7. The writer has strong, distinctive narrative authority, not just because she has confidence (many of the best writers have little or no confidence at all) but because she has worked hard to make her work readable, interesting, even beautiful, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph.</td>
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<td>8. The writer uses few if any grammatical or sentence errors, and when she uses them—fragments for effect, for example—she does so consciously as a part of her craft.</td>
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<td>9. The writer has a strong grasp of narrative conventions, how to write paragraphs, dialogue and so on with correct indentation and punctuation.</td>
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<td>10. The writer has few or no misspelled words, especially commonly misspelled words like yeah, all right, and so on.</td>
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<td>11. The writer uses no unnecessary adverbs, realizing that they almost always tell rather than show.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. The writer uses few if any wordy “is” verbs, especially the passive voice, using instead strong, active verbs that make for vigorous sentences that move the reader through the story without hiccups that awaken us from the fictional dream.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. The writer uses no clichés, in sentence or character situation.</td>
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</table>
14. The writer knows how to write a strong balance of simple and complex sentences for effect, avoiding run-on sentences, fused sentences and comma splices.
15. The writer knows how to use apostrophes for contractions and possessive adjectives and doesn't overcorrect (the contraction it's for the possessive its; their or there for they're, and so on).
16. The writer writes with a strong ear for spoken language, recognizing that dialogue is poetry and isn't necessarily the way people speak, using syntax rather than phonetic spellings or misspellings to capture dialect, trusting that even the most uneducated speaker can speak with great elegance and insight, even if that speaker is poor and inarticulate.
17. The writer uses few if any value judgments, generalizations or abstractions, unless they're so insightful and surprising that we have to stop reading for a few moments, smiling or frowning, to understand their depth and complexity.
18. The writer uses strong, surprising figurative language (metaphors and similes) appropriate for her voice, her story, her character and the world her character lives in, helping to make her writing vivid and utterly unique.
19. Rather than simply relying on her innate and unique gifts, the writer has a passion for craft and rewriting, obsessed with making her story as close to right as possible without being a stodgy, self-punishing perfectionist.
20. Not writing to impress but to express—overwriting or understating, using flowery language, Latinate or multisyllabic words from the thesaurus—the writer uses plain English, inventing her own distinctive and subtle lyricism, understating when others might rely on melodrama and florid, purple prose.

B

Includes at least 10 of the elements listed above.

C or lower

1. The writer mostly tells rather than shows through value judgments, generalizations, abstractions and clichés, forgetting that writing is not simply about ideas and emotions but about surprise and reproducing the experience of ideas and emotions by creating what John Gardner calls a “vivid and continuous dream.”
2. When the writer does write scenes, he tends to write about undramatic situations, his characters tend to use exposition through dialogue, or they simply natter on about the weather or the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.
3. The writer mostly dwells on the superficial or the obvious or writes in prose so convoluted and abstract that no one—not even the writer himself—knows what he's talking about.
4. The writer wants to write about a universal character in a universal place, but because he doesn't write about unique individuals, he's really just writing stereotypes.
5. The writer may have a strong sense of story and character, but he consistently misspells words and creates numerous grammatical and sentence errors, not realizing that the rules of grammar are an important part of his craft, helping in readability and clarity of expression, and that when he writes without proofreading he's calling more attention to himself than to his story.
6. The writer thinks that grammar should be creative, too, man, and he thinks he should be able to punctuate sentences and spell words as he wishes, feeling that craft and rewriting are for sissies, resenting the man for inhibiting his creativity, dude.
7. The writer spends little or no time proofreading, expecting his girlfriend or wife to do it for him, writing his story the night before workshop while he's drunk or stoned, his iPod blaring Metallica through his earphones, the TV blasting in the background.
8. The writer tends to write from clichéd plots, and when he can't decide on how to end his story he decides to kill off his main character through suicide, a bus accident, a giant explosion or some coincidence having to do with frogs falling from the sky.
9. The writer doesn't read much and never has and shouldn't have to, man, and would rather watch Survivor: Tasmania or Donald Trump or get to level ten on Grand Theft Auto IV.
10. The writer's idea of conflict is car chases, light sabers, ninjas kicking ass and zombies eating their mamas.
11. The writer's idea of sentiment is written in doggerel on the inside of a Hallmark card.
A Note on My Workshop Philosophy:

Only one rule applies to the critique of manuscripts in this class: Kindness is the only wisdom. The principal task of this workshop is to create a safe place for writers to be honest and authentic in their discussions and their work. Some writers may be struggling to find the courage to write stories of traumatic events that have occurred to them personally, or to people they know. The last thing we need to do as a class is to make the discussion of these stories traumatic, too; doing so may cause writers to withdraw and stop taking risks for fear of making mistakes or being emotionally honest. There are no mistakes in this workshop, only opportunities to see, understand, change and revise—and sometimes we have to revise ourselves before we can revise our stories.

If a writer has troubles with his or her story, try to find a way to deliver that information in a non-personal, non-judgmental way, with empathy and compassion and, if possible, without undo sarcasm. (Irony, sarcasm's more subtle and sophisticated sister, is, of course, what we're trying to use in our stories to great effect.) One approach is simply to describe how you read the story, what it meant to you, focusing on one or two fictional techniques (irony or sarcasm, for example) the author has used that have contributed to that effect. Focus on what poet John Ciardi says is most important: not just what a story means but how it means, specific techniques we've discussed in class which help us as writers make readers fall into the fictional dream, or awaken from it in a new way.

The more I teach writing workshops, the less faith I have in giving advice, especially the whole notion that a story is something to find problems with and “fix.” If the author discovers that she has been misinterpreted in a descriptive analysis, then it follows that she will have to revise. But if a student feels bullied by anyone, including the teacher, whose prescriptive critiques advise her to write her story in a certain way other than she intends, a story she doesn't want to write, she has the right to ignore such comments and to focus only on those that she finds most helpful, those that help her most to fulfill her own distinctive voice and vision.

Please avoid using such subjective judgments as good or bad or I really like/dislike this story. Each of us reads a story differently, and that's what makes workshop such effective places to discuss our work. Take what you can use and forget the rest. We all have a right to tell our own stories in our own ways, and we all have a right to our own interpretations of others' stories so long as there's evidence from the text to support our views. We may interpret the image of a child's flying saucer toy lying upended in a bathtub as a hint that a story is about alien abduction, but if there's nothing else in the story to support that point then perhaps the story may be about something else, the death of a child, say, or the grief of a father.

We show our work to others to help us when we're too close to it to trust our instincts completely about whether what we've written does what we'd intended, whether what's in our head has gotten onto the page. Workshops should be both honest and supportive, writers telling other writers not necessarily what they want to hear but what they might need to hear to make their stories work better, meanwhile helping them through the sometimes painful task of revision: re-seeing their own stories clearly with some—but not too much—dispassionate distance, finding their stories in the process of rewriting them, making the unconscious more conscious. Workshops should also be open, generous, productive and tremendously fun, everyone feeling free to laugh a great deal—and not at others' expense—meanwhile recognizing that criticism must never be equated with cruelty or preoccupations with who's up or down but always with the shared difficulty of the work itself, always balancing a commitment to honesty about the work's effectiveness with mutual respect for those who create it and their individual creative processes and aesthetics.