UGFTV | NYU LA (IFMTV-UT 1084 LA1)
SCRIPT ANALYSIS: INDUSTRY FOCUS
Instruction Mode: Remote Synchronous
DAY/TIME: Tuesday 6:15-9:00 PT

INSTRUCTOR: Jane Goldenring
EMAIL:
OFFICE/HOURS:
(Please email for appointments)
LINK:

SPRING 2021
We know that you may be taking courses at multiple locations this semester. If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for this course site, please make sure that you’ve completed the online academic orientation via NYU Classes so you are aware of site-specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact the site academic staff (Lena Parodi, lp1245@nyu.edu) if you have trouble accessing the NYU Classes site.

OVERVIEW | OBJECTIVE

The goal of Script Analysis at NYU LA is two-fold:

1.) To understand how a screenplay works. This will be achieved by analyzing narrative structure and other important elements that contribute to the success of a film, such as character and plot development, sense of place, dialogue, use of a particular genre, tone and uniqueness.

2.) To evaluate completed scripts prior to their production and provide Coverage and Analysis of scripts as potential properties from the perspective of buyers and other interested parties (eg., producers, production companies, talent, agencies, etc.)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Understand and apply different act structures (Three Act to Five Act).
- Understand and apply a number of different narrative structural templates.
- Understand and apply act breaks, turning points and reversals.
- Understand and apply specific scene functions (e.g., exposition, emotional or physical turning point).
- Understand and apply plot and character dynamics: backstory, defining moments/weaknesses and strengths, goals and/or dreams.
- Understand the characteristics of major and hybrid genres.
- Understand the functions of dialogue.
• Learn to intelligently and constructively evaluate TV and feature screenplays with an eye toward balanced criticism.

Additionally:

• Students will synopsize, criticize and complete coverage for at least 3 screenplays.
• Students will write a set of notes describing one possible direction for a re-write of a screenplay applying the ideas discussed in class.

NOTE: WEEKS 1-4 will focus on narrative fundamentals, tools of analysis and structural conceits and the basics of writing coverage. WEEKS 5-14 will be devoted to putting analysis and understanding into practice by writing professional-grade coverage and notes for the writer.

METHODOLOGY

Each class will be divided up into lecture, discussion, in-class student presentations, and clips that will highlight scenes and sequences from a range of media including shorts, features, and TV and streaming. We will also have guest speakers who will talk about story, the writer’s process and the producer’s and executive’s role in development.

REQUIRED READING

● The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers – Chris Vogler
● Save The Cat! – Blake Snyder
● Hero With a Thousand Faces – Joseph Campbell

● Assigned scripts from the BLACKLIST and other sources
● Assigned produced scripts/pilots that will cover a range of genres including drama, comedy and romcoms, horror, sci-fi and thrillers.
● Excerpts from Robert McKee’s “Story”

RECOMMENDED READING

● Save the Cat Goes To The Movies -- Blake Snyder

NOTE: Students are expected to read the assigned texts and screenplays in full and be able to discuss in a meaningful way during class sessions. Please plan your schedule accordingly.

HANDOUTS

Samples of Professional Coverage from agencies and producers
Coverage and Note guidelines and tips

GRADING POLICY

Assessment criteria
1. Professionalism: punctuality and ability to meet deadlines – 10%.

2. Class participation – 20%.

3. Coverage/Analysis assignments – 50%. Your final is 20% of your “Coverage” grade

4. Pitching/role-playing assignments – 20%

**WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION/WHAT MAKES A GREAT MOVIE OR TV SHOW? – February 2nd, 2021**

Come to class prepared to introduce yourself and discuss your favorite popcorn movies and TV shows (ones you can’t resist seeing when they’re on); a film or TV show we might be surprised you like; your least favorite movie or TV shows; and the first TV show or film that inspired you. We want to hear how your life has influenced your taste in what you watch and why you have an interest in being involved in entertainment.

What are the common elements of merit worthy stories? Where do great ideas come from: Novels, Graphic Novels, Podcasts, plays, documentaries, Webisodes, Original Content, etc. How do you know what’s a good idea? And once you start developing the script, how can you best assess and develop a project to bring it from page to screen?

We will discuss the “log-line” and its importance, not just to coverage, but also to the basic art of pitching. And we will go over the basic elements of coverage.

There will be an overview of the class and a general discussion of story analysis and development – why it’s so important and how critical it is no matter what position you hold in the industry.

**Reading/Viewing Assignments for Week 2:**

Vogler, McKee and Snyder excerpts  
*The Kinetic Log-Line by Bill Broyles*  
*Blake Snyder beat sheet*

MOVIE to watch for Week #2 class: THE MARTIAN

**WEEK 2: THE HERO’S JOURNEY – WHAT IS THE QUEST AND WHO IS DRIVING THE STORY**  
**February 9th, 2021**

Discuss the Hero’s Journey as a guiding principle of storytelling – an amalgam of common elements that are most easily discernable in myths, fairytales and our favorite stories. Knowing those elements is an essential part of story analysis and development. Discuss assigned movie in this context. What is the monomyth – the quest taken by the hero? What is the story engine? What are the wants and needs of the protagonist(s)? What are the key flaws of the main characters that will potentially interfere with the objective? What are the major obstacles?
We will discuss the Hero’s Journey through the prism of THE MARTIAN and also break down the key elements for coverage, with a focus on constructing the log-line. Break down log-lines using *The Kinetic LogLine* method.

Break-out sessions to discuss major turning points in THE MARTIAN.

**Reading/Viewing Assignments for Week 3:**

Vogler and McKee excerpts
Reading: TV pilot and Film Script
Coverage samples
Viewing: Pilot and feature produced from two scripts

**Graded Assignment #1A due Feb 16th:** Write log-line, key character profiles, and a paragraph describing the story for each script.

Previous Speaker for Wk 3 – Ryan Lipscomb

**WEEK 3 – CREATING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS, CHARACTER ARCS AND AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHARACTERS**

February 16th, 2021

Protagonists and antagonists have journeys where some kind of change is usually inevitable. The exception to that rule is the antagonist as juggernaut. The reader/viewer should be invested in the characters’ journeys and the way to do that is to give them arcs so we can be involved in their struggle.

Examples of memorable villains and why they are fascinating. Types of villains, the obstacles that are created and how they apply to film and TV projects. Can they sustain interest for a series or limited series?

**In Class:** Discuss character development in assigned scripts and viewing and log-lines for the scripts.
Break down assigned scripts/viewing examples using the Blake Snyder Beat Sheet.
Discuss what you liked and didn’t like about the scripts and produced movie and pilot and the differences between what was scripted and what appeared on screen.

**Reading Assignments for Week 4:**

McKee & Vogler chapters
*Save the Cat* excerpt

**Assignment #1B due February 23rd:** 2nd half of Assignment 1.

**WEEK 4 – ACT STRUCTURE FOR FILMS AND TV**

February 23rd, 2021

What are the basic elements for structuring a screenplay and a pilot: act breaks, turning points, reveals, etc. What are typical plotting pitfalls to look out for?
What is the hook? What is the inciting incident? What are the major turning points and/or choices? Act 1: revelation, midpoint set piece, Act 2 Crisis, Act 3 climax & resolution. Defining cause and effect. McKee – Have rules so that you can break them.

**In Class:** Review script structure as it relates to scripts for the first graded assignment.

**In Class Assignment for Week #5:** Pitch article or internet story as a movie or TV show

**WEEK 5: COVERAGE FOR FILM, TV/STREAMING AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF IP**

March 2nd, 2021

In-depth look at coverage: what it’s used for, who uses it, why it’s so important. Focus on how to distill the script’s most important beats into a one-page synopsis. What to think about before you start writing your synopsis and your comments. How to compose and organize comments.

Discuss differences between assessing Film and TV projects, documentaries, novels, plays, podcasts, etc. Talk about TV script structure and the different parameters for judging the potential for on-going storytelling in series and limited series formats.

**In Class:** Pitch article or internet story as a movie or TV show

Guest Speaker: Writer who will discuss pitching stories and story structure from the writer’s POV. Previous Speaker – Gregg McBride

**Graded Assignment #2 due March 9th:** Full coverage on TV or Movie script TBD

**WEEK 6: ASSESSING SCRIPTS – MAKING YOUR COMMENTS COUNT**

March 9th, 2021

More about what to keep in mind when doing when doing comments. The main points to cover, the art of constructive criticism, taking a stand, being articulate about your POV. Discuss the art of pitching.

**In Class:** Review Coverage Assignment #2 script and major elements -- major plot turns, character arcs, strengths and flaws -- for coverage/comments.

Students will do role playing to discuss scripts they covered with their “bosses.”

**Reading/Viewing for Week 7:** TBD

**WEEK 7 – THE INVALUABLE INVISIBLE: SUBTEXT, SUPER-OBJECTIVES, THEME**

– March 16th, 2021

Themes are a way to connect with the audience on a deeper level and often provide the “take-away” at the end of the movie: catharsis, fulfillment, indignation, and a host of other emotions. We will discuss theme and how it threads through a narrative. We will also discuss what is between the lines – the unspoken elements that give stories narrative heft and gravitas.
In Class: Review and discuss assigned reading and viewing in terms of thematic content and subtext.

**Guest Speaker:** Studio Exec or Producer to discuss pitching projects.  Previous speaker – Mika Pryce

**Reading and viewing assignments for Week 8:** TBD

**Graded Assignment #3 due March 23rd:** Students write full coverage on an assigned script.

**WEEK 8 – ROLE OF GENRE & TARGET AUDIENCE**

March 23rd, 2021

We will explore the variety of genres and the important part they play in targeting the right project for the right buyer and the right audience.  The differences between studio and indie mandates: studio, streaming, cable and network needs.  The rollercoaster of audience and buyer interest in different genres.

**In Class:** Discuss how movies could work in a different genre.  Break into groups and come up with different narrative scenarios.

**Reading and Viewing Assignment for Week 9:** TBD

**WEEK 9: STORY NOTES – THE GIVE AND TAKE**

March 30th, 2021

A primer on how to write and give notes.  Tips on verbiage, how to be diplomatic and persuasive, and how to put yourself in the writer’s shoes.  How to work with writers: when to check in, how to help, how to nudge, what to sweat, when to let it go.  Writing is rewriting.

**Guest Speaker:** Writer or Producer TBD.  Previous speaker – Leah Keith

**In Class:** Students discuss notes they would give to writers on assigned scripts.

**Graded Assignment #4 due April 6th:** Story notes on a feature script TBD

**WEEK 10: STORY DEVELOPMENT & PACKAGING**

April 6th, 2021

Discuss the process of development for film and TV and streaming – how they are similar and different; who is involved as the project goes through different stages; how you can avoid pitfalls.

**In Class:** Role playing to deliver notes on assigned scripts.

**Speaker:** Agent/manager to discuss developing scripts with clients and packaging them for sale.  Previous speaker – Ava Jamshidi
Assignment due April 13th: Development Notes on Script

Reading/Viewing Assignment: TBD

WEEK 11: TV/STREAMING SHOW DEVELOPMENT
April 13th, 2021

Discuss the TV Writer’s Room and the many people and entities involved in developing TV and Streaming shows.

Speaker: TV writer or exec.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT Instructions: Discuss scripts to pick for final assignment. You will have a choice between a feature script or a TV pilot.

Your final assignment should be seen as an expansion of your coverage assignments. Using an industry template, it should include a log-line; a one page synopsis of the script you have chosen, and comments that provide a detailed overview of the script’s strengths and weaknesses, in terms of act structure and plotting, genre and tone, characterization, and thematic intent. For TV there should be an assessment of whether the characters and idea can sustain over time. The genre commentary should explore how closely the script follows its genre characteristics – see *Save the Cat Goes to the Movies* – whether it mixes various genres, and how it distinguishes itself from other scripts in the genre. The characterization commentary should focus on believability, character complexity and growth, and the *charisma* and *identification* factors: why we want to spend two hours/numerous episodes with this character (or characters)? Or, conversely, in the case of *unlikable characters* – why would we even want to spend ten minutes with them. The act structure is about how well the turning points and main story events are executed. Is there a hook or surprises? What is the inciting incident? What are the obstacles? And finally: there is thematic intent. All scripts, even the most escapist, mindless, and formulaic, are about *something*. The great screenplays grapple with themes that concern us all. What themes drive your script of choice?

After your thorough and complete analysis, work up a set of notes for the writer that provides a CLEAR PATH FORWARD for the next draft, applying all you have learned in the class. This is an expansion of the “Comments” section you would normally do for coverage and are more geared toward development notes.

WEEK 12 – DEVELOPMENT & NOTE GIVING FOR TV/STREAMING AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT
April 20th, 2021

Discussion of how development differs for different types of media and buyers/producers.

WEEK 13 – NOTES EXERCISE FOR FINALS
April 27th, 2021

Groups split up into those giving and receiving comments.
WEEK 14 – FINAL CLASS ROUND UP AND WRAP UP
May 4th, 2021

INDUSTRY SPEAKER – where this new skill-set can take you and how to break in.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

STORY TEMPLATES – Journey of the Hero (The Hero with a Thousand Faces)

Breakdown of THE MONOMYTH

SEPARATION (the venturing out from common day)
- Ordinary World
- Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the Call
- Supernatural Aid
- Crossing the Threshold
- The Belly of the Whale

INITIATION (the battle with fabulous forces)
- The Road of Trials
- Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father
- Apotheosis
- The Ultimate Boon

RETURN
- Refusal of the Return
- The Magic Flight
- Rescue from Without

SAVE THE CAT
- The Blake Snyder Beat Sheet
1. Opening image
2. Theme stated
3. Set-Up
4. Catalyst
5. Debate
6. Break into Two
7. B Story
8. Fun and Games
9. Midpoint
10. Bad Guys Close In
11. All is Lost
12. Dark Night of the Soul
13. Break Into Three
14. Finale
15. Final Image

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance and Tardiness**

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers or online through NYU Classes if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Unexcused absences will affect students' semester participation grade. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to discuss where at the Academic Center the remote course can be taken** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.
Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. This means they should initiate email and/or office hour discussions to address any missed lectures and assignments and arrange a timeline for submitting missed work.

**Classroom Etiquette/Expectations**

Things to consider:

- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary)
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (ie COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class. Consider using the chat function or “raise hand” function in order to add your voice to class discussions especially if leaving the video on presents challenges.

**Final Exams**

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between final exams, please bring it to the attention of the site Academic representative as soon as this is known to facilitate alternate arrangements. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

**Late Assignments**

1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.
2) Late work should be emailed to the faculty as soon as it is completed.
3) Late work will be reduced for a fraction of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for every day it is late, including weekends.
4) Written work during the semester that is submitted 5 days after the submission date (including weekends) without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.
5) Students who arrive to class late for an exam do not have automatic approval to take extra time to complete the exam.
6) Students who miss an exam (including the final) without previously arranged permission will receive a zero on that exam.
7) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.

**Incomplete Grade Policy**

An “incomplete” is a temporary grade that indicates that the student has, for good reason, not completed all of the course work. This grade is not awarded automatically nor is it guaranteed; rather, the student must ask the instructor for a grade of “incomplete,” present documented evidence of illness, an emergency, or other compelling circumstances, and clarify the remaining course requirements with the instructor.

In order for a grade of “incomplete” to be registered on the transcript, the student must fill out a form, in collaboration with the course instructor and the academic administration at the site; it should then be submitted to the site’s academic office. The submitted form must include a deadline by which the missing work will be completed. This deadline may not be later than the end of the following semester.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

As the University's policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

NYU X takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the lecturer. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism,
examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines

NYU Library Guides

Religious Observances

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.

Students must notify their professor and the local Academics team in writing via email at least 7 days before being absent for this purpose.

Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU LA, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

• fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and

• promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through the site sponsoring the class once you request it.

About Your Instructor

Jane Goldenring is a film and TV producer with over 30 years of experience. She started out producing documentaries for Turner Broadcasting, then worked as an executive for 12 years at Walt Disney Pictures, supervising over 40 films including THE ROCKETEER, WHITE FANG, and PHENOMENON. She has produced several independent features and numerous TV movies for Disney Channel, Lifetime, Hallmark,
and Freeform and has developed pilots for Warner Bros., A&E, SyFy, and Fox TV. Recently, she set up the fantasy YA project THE GRIMM LEGACY for Disney+, and she has several films in development. Goldenring is co-head of the Independent Film Committee of the Producers Guild of America, a member of the Television Academy, and a former board member of Women In Film. She was an adjunct professor for eight years at USC Cinematic Arts, and currently teaches a writing workshop at AFI. She is a graduate of Wesleyan University. Before coming to Los Angeles, she worked for 5 years as a Legislative Assistant to Senator Chris Dodd.