Universidad de Navarra

Introduction to screenwriting

Teaching guide 2026-27

OVERVIEW

- **Degree**: Comunicación Audiovisual + Screen Studies
- **Module/Area**: Module 3 (Screenwriting), Area 1 (Introduction)
- **ECTS**: 6
- **Year/Semester**: 2nd year, 2nd semester (Winter-Spring)
- **Type**: Mandatory
- **Instructor**: Pablo Castrillo (Associate Professor) (pcastrillo@unav.es)
- **Language**: English
- **Class Hours**:
  - Lecture: Tuesdays, 3.30-5.15pm (classroom 12)
  - Lecture: Thursdays 3.30-5.15pm (classroom 2)
  - Workshops: Select Fridays (see Course Calendar), 10-11.45am (room 1550)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

COURSE OUTCOMES

1. Students will understand the nature and form of dramatic writing.
2. Students will become familiarized with the professional standards of script format.
3. Students will learn how to use the essential tools and structures of audiovisual storytelling.
4. Students will understand the different phases of the screenwriting process, as well as the role that a script plays in the film and television industry.

DEGREE COMPETENCIES

1. Skills

- RA10 - Students should learn how to apply their acquired knowledge to their job or work vocation in a professional manner, and make use of the skills usually demonstrated by elaborating and defending authorized arguments as well as by solving problems within their area of study.
- RA12 - To correctly express their acquired knowledge and ideas in the field of audio-visual communication, both in oral and written form.
- RA16 - To identify and apply the elements that are specific to the construction of the screenplay.

2. Competencies

- RA19 - Students will acquire the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to make judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific, or ethical issues.

SYLLABUS

0. Introduction: What is screenwriting?

I. Visual Writing

1. Screen prose

2. Script format

II. Dramatic Design

3. Conflict

4. Character

5. Structure

6. Seriality

III. Script Architecture

7. Exposition

8. Dramatic tension

9. Planting and payoff

10. Dramatic irony

11. Dialogue and subtext

12. Special sequences

IV. Screenwriting Career & Business

13. An introduction to adaptation

14. Pitching and the script development process

15. A writer's guide to the entertainment industry

V. Applied Screenwriting

16. The screenwriting process

17. Writing the short film

18. An introduction to documentary writing

COURSEWORK

Lectures: 50 hours	Screenwriting theory, film and TV case-studies, in-class creative exercises
Workshops: 14 hours	Discussion of assignments, exercise reviews
Writing exercises: 45 hours	Writing exercises assigned on the workshops; final assignment
Personal study: 40 hours	Mandatory readings, lecture notes, assigned viewings and screenplays
Tutoring: 1 hours	Office hours

(TOTAL: 150 hours)

GRADING

MAY SESSION (ORDINARY)

Attendance and participation Attendance to all lectures and workshops is mandatory. Active engagement in class discussions will be taken into consideration. • Attendance will be tracked through short in-class exercises assigned at random times • Absences must be justified in advance	10%
Practice Writing assignments (see '**Workshops**' section of the course website.) * Writing proficiency: each error (grammar, spelling) or typo will be penalized with -0,1 point.	40%
Theory Final exam based on assigned readings, class notes and materials, and viewings analyses. • **Please, note**: a passing grade must be achieved in the final exam to receive grading in the Final project.	50%

JUNE SESSION (RETAKE)

Students who fail the course in the ordinary session in May will have to take a final exam for the entirety of their grade in the June session.

A note on academic honesty and School regulations

Plagiarism (including unsuitable use of A.I. tools) and unauthorized copy constitute academic misconduct, which is punishable according to University regulations. Penalties may include the loss of both examination opportunities and suspension of student status for a period ranging from one week to three months.

A.I. Policy

Students may be allowed to employ generative A.I. tools in specific exercises when instructed so, always under the following conditions:

- All creative writing —including concept, dramatic design, and final text—, must be original of each student.
- A.I. tools may be used only for assistance with research, brainstorming, or proofreading.
- If an A.I. tool is actually used, **a live link to the chat** must be appended.
- It is never allowed to feed your draft to any A.I. tool to request feedback.
- The use of AI tools when not permitted, or their improper use, will be considered academic misconduct (plagiarism).

In each exercise, a specific **"usage level"** will be indicated along the following scale:

Level 1: Proofreader

You may use an AI tool only as dictionary, thesaurus, or proofreader.

Level 2: Researcher

You may resort to an AI tool to ask questions about professional, technical, scientific, or other fields in order to strengthen verisimilitude in your writing.

Level 3: Sounding Board

You may use an AI tool as "brainstorming buddy" for developing, testing, and refining your original ideas. This usage level must maintain a ***conversational style***, that is, you may not present queries covering the entire scope of your exercise or requesting revisions/feedback of your drafts.

Level 4: Character Interview

Once you have created your character and its general description, you may feed it to an AI tool to then ask questions which it must respond ***in character.***

Level 5: Prompt Generator

You may feed elements of dramatic design, such as characters, settings, or themes, to an AI tool and ask it for prompts, which you may then use to create your own scene. (Thereafter, you must write the scene on your own, only with Level 1 assistance if needed.)

OFFICE HOURS

By appointment, via e-mail: pcastrillo@unav.es

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mandatory Readings

1. Texts assigned each week constitute the mandatory readings of the course. These will be posted on the course website (please refer to the "**Readings**" section.)
2. Screenplay excerpts read in class or assigned for reading are also mandatory study material.
3. Assigned films for script analysis sessions, as well as their corresponding screenplays, are also required.

Recommended Bibliography

Balló, J., Pérez, X. (1997). *La semilla inmortal : los argumentos universales del cine*. Barcelona: Anagrama. Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version

Eszterhas, J. (2006). *The Devil's Guide to Hollywood: the screenwriter as God!* New York: St. Martin's Press. Find it in the Library

De Rosendo, T. & Gatell, J. (2015). *Objetivo Writers' Room: las aventuras de dos guionistas españoles en Hollywood*. Barcelona: Alba. Find it in the Library Printed and electronic version

Field, S. (1979). *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. New York: Delta Book. Find it in the Library

Forsyth, M. (2013). *The Elements of Eloquence. How to Turn the Perfect English Phrase*. London: Icon. Find it in the Library

Goldman, W. (1985). *Adventures in The Screen Trade: a personal view of Hollywood and screenwriting*. New York: Warner Books. Find it in the Library

Gulino, P. (2004). *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach*. New York: Continuum.Find it in the Library

Iglesias, K. (2005). *Writing for Emotional Impact: advanced dramatic techniques to attract, engage, and fascinate the reader from beginning to end*. Livermore, CA: WingSpan Press. Find it in the Library

Kleon, A. (2012). *Steal like an Artist : 10 Things Nobody Told You about Being Creative*. New York: Workman Pub. Co.Find it in the Library

Mackendrick, A. (2005). *On Film-making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*. Edited and with an introduction by Paul Cronin. Faber & Faber. Find it in the Library

McKee, R. (1999). *Story : Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. New York: Regan Books.Find it in the Library

Norman, M. (2007). *What Happens Next: A history of American Screenwriting*. New York: Harmony Books. Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version

Palmer, S. (2008). *Good in a Room: How to Sell Yourself (and Your Ideas) and Win Over Any Audience*. New York: Crown Business. Find it in the Library

Pressfield, S. (2012). *The War of Art: break through the blocks and win your inner creative battles* . New York: Black Irish Entertainment. Find it in the Library

Riley, C. (2009). *The Hollywood Standard: the complete and authoritative guide to script format and style*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions. Find it in the LIbrary

Russin, R. & Downs, W.M. (2000). *Screenplay: Writing the picture*. Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers. Find it in the Library

Sánchez-Escalonilla, A. (2014). *Estrategias de guión cinematográfico: el proceso de creación de una historia*. Barcelona: Ariel. Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version

Snyder, B. (2005). *Save The Cat!: the last book on screenwriting you'll ever need*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions. Find it in the LIbrary

Storr, W. (2020). *The Science of Storytelling*. London: William Collins Find it in the LIbrary

Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (1979). *The Elements of Style.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version

Yorke, John (2014). *Into the Woods: How Stories Work and Why We Tell Them*. London: Penguin. Find it in the LIbrary

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Screenwriting Software

Proper formatting is a minimum requirement of this course. The choice of one software or another falls under your responsibility (feel free to use open-code suites, Microsoft Word... anything as long as you deliver a professionally formatted script).

However, it is generally advisable to use a specialized screenwriting software. There are a number of free (or *freemium*) options available, each with their own pros and cons. The free license of **Fade In** has delivered functional results in this course. Another option with full features at no cost —albeit less user-friendly— is **Trelby**.

Screenwriting Websites

Go Into The Story http://gointothestory.blcklst.com/

John August http://johnaugust.com/

Screenwriting.io https://screenwriting.io/

Writers Guild of America West (WGAW) http://www.wga.org/

Script Magazine https://scriptmag.com/

Screenwriting Services & Competitions

Academy Nicholl Fellowships http://www.oscars.org/nicholl

American Zoetrope Screenplay Contest https://www.zoetrope.com/contests/

Austin Film Festival Screenplay Competition https://austinfilmfestival.com/submit/screenplay-and-teleplay-submissions/

The Black List https://blcklst.com/

Screenplay Databases

Script Slug https://www.scriptslug.com/

Go Into the Story – Screenplays https://gointothestory.blcklst.com/tagged/screenplays

The Internet Movie Script Database (IMSDBb) http://www.imsdb.com/

Screenplays for You https://sfy.ru/