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Screenwriting

Santa Maria Joint Union High School District

Basic Course Information

School(s) Offering This Course:

School Name	Course Learning Environment	Transcript Code(s)	
Ernest Righetti High School (053303)	Classroom Based	Abbreviation	Course Code
		Screenwrtng 1A	VP6710
		Screenwrtng 1B	VP6711

Title:	Screenwriting
Length of course:	Full Year
Subject area:	Visual & Performing Arts ("f") / Visual Arts
UC honors designation?	No
Prerequisites:	None (Recommended)
Co-requisites:	None (Recommended)
Integrated (Academics / CTE)?	Yes
Grade levels:	10th, 11th, 12th

Course Description

Course overview:

Screenwriting is an intensive writing and reading, theory based course aimed at enriching the experience of aesthetic cinematic storytelling concepts through the visual medium of film. The students begin to understand film narrative by researching periods of major story evolutions with film history and looking at many of the films that defined those periods. Narrative theory form “Save the Cat” and “The Writer’s Journey” will help students understand how narrative and characters work in all literature, not just film.

Course content:

The Hero's Journey

Students will examine mythological structure developed by mythologist, Joseph Campbell, and the major storytelling structure utilized in Hollywood screenplays. Examples of this structure will be reviewed by students through such films as “7 Samurai”, “12 Angry Men”, “Star Wars”, “Marathon Man”, and “We were Soldiers”.

Students will write an analysis of how Joseph Campbell’s “The Hero’s Journey” plays a role in modern cinematic storytelling. They will reference the films mentioned.

Unit Assignment(s):

Students will write an analysis of how Joseph Campbell’s “The Hero’s Journey” plays a role in modern cinematic storytelling. They will reference the films mentioned.

Examining Screenwriting Genres

Through analysis, students will explore the ramifications of comedy, action-adventure, and drama within cinema beyond character and story. Examples of these screenwriting genres the students will review, will include, but not necessarily be limited to, “The Lord of the Rings-Fellowship of the Ring”, “E.T.”, “Rear Window”, “Raiders of the Last Ark”.

Students will also refer to sub-genres such as Monster in the house, Golden Fleece, Out of the Bottle, Dude with a Problem, Rites of Passage, Buddy Love, Whydunit, Fool Triumphant, Institutionalized, Superhero.

☐ Unit Assignment(s):

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Screenwriting Fundamentals:

Through analysis of the textbook, Save the Cat, students learn the fundamental parts of typical Hollywood screenplay.

Students using various screenplays as examples to display their understanding of a typical script “Beat Sheet”.

☐ Unit Assignment(s):

Through analysis of the textbook, Save the Cat, students learn the fundamental parts of typical Hollywood screenplay.

Students using various screenplays as examples to display their understanding of a typical script “Beat Sheet”.

The importance of “The Treatment”

Students will produce a Treatment for their story idea. This is a synopsis of their story and is used to sell the idea to producers. Various samples of treatments will be studied in preparation of the students doing their own.

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Character Development:

Students will create the characters that are to be in their stories. They will give their characters life by giving them backgrounds such as a family, economic status, education level, personalities.

Unit Assignment(s):

Students will create the characters that are to be in their stories. They will give their characters life by giving them backgrounds such as a family, economic status, education level, personalities.

Final Draft Screenwriting program:

Students will produce a Treatment for their story idea. This is a synopsis of their story and is used to sell the idea to producers. Various samples of treatments will be studied in preparation of the students doing their own.

Unit Assignment(s):

Students will produce a Treatment for their story idea. This is a synopsis of their story and is used to sell the idea to producers. Various samples of treatments will be studied in preparation of the students doing their own.

Students will create a screenplay logline

Common problems with plot and character.

Prior to writing, students analyze common problems with plot and character. They analyze well-known scripts such as "the Shawshank Redemption", "Stand by Me", "Hacksaw Ridge", "Star Trek Into Darkness", to discover how professional screenwriters create scripts that are produced into films.

Developing a logline:

Students study movie posters/loglines from featured movies.

Developing a "Beat Sheet" (outline)

They focus on plot/character development, dramatic/comedy, conflict resolution.

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The Importance of the First Ten Pages

Students write their first ten (10) pages then take time to critique each other's work. They examine how to establish theme, character and conflicts.

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Reviewing the importance of structure

2nd Semester:

With the start of the new semester, we will review the "Hero's Journey and the "Save the Cat: structure before returning their focus to their own writing.

Unit Assignment(s):

Students write their first ten (10) pages then take time to critique each other's work. They examine how to establish theme, character and conflicts.

The Catalyst

Based on th typical Hollywood structure, students create a catalyst and develop the remainder of their Act one. They utilize successful scripts such as "Harry Potter", "Star Wars", and "Rear Window" to discover how screen writers include catalysts in their scripts.

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Break into Two

Students develop B Story and further develop plot and character as they move their screenplays into Act Two. They review class love interests/sidekick characters in films such as "Rear Window", "National Treasure", And "Lord of the Rings".

Unit Assignment(s):

Based on the typical Hollywood structure, students create a catalyst and develop the remainder of their Act one. They utilize successful scripts such as "Harry Potter", "Star Wars", and "Rear Window" to discover how screen writers include catalysts in their scripts.

Fun and Games

Students explore comical or dramatic opportunities during the heart of Act Two. Students review the power of montages, humor and dramatic transitions. They write the "Fun and Games" section of their screenplay

Unit Assignment(s):

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The Dark Night of the Soul

nearing the end of Act Two, Students develop preicaments for protagonists prior to the end of Act Two. Students examine "E>T>, "Guardians of the Galazy", and "Star Wars, Revenge of the Sith".

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Break into three

Students work on creating a powerful conclusion to their screenplays. They analyze "The Dark Knight", "The Shawshank Redemption", "Star Wars", "Hacksaw Ridge", among others.

Unit Assignment(s):

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Finished Screenplah. Now What?

Students learn about seeking agency representation and possible sale of their screenplay. They review and develop ow to write successful query letters. Guest speakers from the Hollywood industry deliver presentation/advice.

Students will research film festivals, screenwriting conventions, and agency lists to develop a marketing plan for their screenplay.

Unit Assignment(s):

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Course Materials

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	Edition	Website	Primary
Save the Cat	Blake Snyder	Michael Wise Productions	2005	[empty]	Yes

Title	Author	Publisher	Edition	Website	Primary
Low Hunters Screenwriting 434	Low Hunter	Tarcher Perigree	2004 edition	[empty]	No

Websites

Title	Author(s)/Editor(s)/Compiler(s)	Affiliated Institution or Organization	URL
IMDb	[empty]	IMDb	www.imdb.com
Box Office Mojo	[empty]	Box Office Mojo	www.boxofficemojo.com
Rotten Tomatoes	[empty]	Rotten Tomatoes	www.rottentomatoes.com

Multimedia

Title	Author	Director	Name of video series	Date	Website	Medium of Publication
Various Films, TV Shows	[empty]	[empty]	[empty]	[empty]	[empty]	Videos

Other

Title	Authors	Date	Course material type	Website
The Writer's Journey	Christopher Volger	Michael Wise Productions	secondary text	2006 edition

