



## Preparing the Screenplay

### Class code

FMTV-UT 9019 – 001

### Instructor Details

Allen Palmer

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0423 653 756 (for use in emergency)

Consultation by Appointment

Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

### Class Details

**Fall 2015**

#### Preparing the Screenplay

Thursday 9:00 – 12:00pm

3 September – 10 December

Room 202

NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Science House: 157-161 Gloucester Street, The Rocks 2000

### Prerequisites

FMTV-UT0033 Fundamentals of Dramatic and Visual Writing

### Class Description

This course is a one-semester screenwriting class designed to guide and assist students through the essential preparatory work that precedes the writing of a feature length screenplay or long form television script.

Students will be required to develop a memorable concept for an original or adapted work. They will also be expected to undertake research in order to strengthen the concept, characters and story. Students will further be required to recognize and apply the essential elements of a professional logline, step outline, synopsis and treatment. The main focus of the course is on the development of a successful treatment. In the process, students will exercise their critical and creative skills by providing feedback on the various works in progress.

At the end of the course all students will have completed, to a professional standard, a treatment for a feature length screenplay or long form television drama. Students will also be expected to have written the first 15 pages of their screenplays. In the final session students will pitch their projects to a panel of industry producers.

**Desired  
Outcomes**

At the completion of this course, all students should be able to:

1. Originate a compelling idea for a feature film or TV series
2. Develop an idea into a compelling screen story through analysis, research, the interpretation of feedback and creative problem solving.
3. Demonstrate the potential of a film or TV series by delivering a pitch to industry expectations.

**Assessment  
Components**

The course will begin with a study of the essential dramaturgical elements of a feature length screenplay. The special qualities of a professional logline, step outline, synopsis and treatment will also be studied. Lectures, readings, screenings and exercises will be devoted to the process of character development, the principles of storytelling and the art of the pitch. Students will be expected to develop their projects, conduct research and to write in their own time in preparation for a series of deadlines when they present their work for constructive feedback in class.

In this course you are not required to submit hard copies of your work. All written work (i.e. excluding the pitch) must be submitted to NYU Classes by 9am on Tuesday in the week that it is due. Feedback on your work will be provided in class on that Thursday.

The deadlines for delivery of work are as follows:

Wk 3 (Sept 15)	Concepts (10%)
Wk 8 (Oct 27)	Step Outlines (20%)
Wk 11 (Nov 17)	Treatment (40%)
Wk 12 (Nov 24)	First 15 pages (20%)
Wk 14 (Dec 10)	Pitch projects to Industry Practitioner (10%)

*Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class.*

**Assessment  
Expectations**

**Grade A:** Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; work is highly accomplished in form, content and technique.

**Grade B:** Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; the potential for excellent work is visible and skills and knowledge have been grasped but are not fully realised or developed.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory performance that demonstrates an understanding of the course on a basic level. Students performance reflects a lack of insight into aspects of the course's topics.

**Grade D:** Passable performance showing a superficial and limited understanding of the course's topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or skills.

**Grade F:** Unsatisfactory performance in assessed criteria. The minimum requirements for the

course have not been met.

#### **Grade Conversions**

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100	C+ = 77-79
A- = 90-93	C = 74-76
	C- = 70-73
B+ = 87-89	
B = 84-86	D+ = 67-69
B- = 80-83	D = 65-66
	F = below 65

#### **Submission of Work**

*Should work be submitted as a hard copy, or electronically?*

Unless otherwise specified, all written work must be submitted as a hard copy. The majority of written assignments must also be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. All in-class presentations must be completed during class time.

*Who may submit a student's work?*

Each student's assigned work must be handed in personally by that student. The student may not nominate another person to act on his/her behalf.

*When and where should the work be submitted?*

The hard copy of any written work must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of class on the date the work is due. If the assignment due date falls outside of class time, work must be submitted to the Staff Member on duty in Room 2.04 during prescribed Office Hours (11:30am-12:30pm and 2:30-3:30pm Mon-Thu), or by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work received in Room 2.04 will be date and time stamped in the presence of the student. Work submitted in Room 2.04 will not be considered "received" unless formally stamped.

*What is the Process for Late Submission of Work?*

After the due date, work may only be submitted under the following conditions:

- Late work, even if an extension has been granted, must be submitted in person by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work must be date and time stamped in order to be considered "received".
- Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Written work submitted beyond five weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work.

- Because failure to submit or fulfil any required course component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to submit every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero. Early departure from the program therefore places the student at risk of failing the course.

#### **Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University's plagiarism policy. 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.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU's various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school's academic resources.

#### **Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres 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 centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

#### **Classroom Expectations**

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates' desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.

- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

#### **Religious Observance**

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 Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

#### **Provisions to students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](#).

#### **Required Texts**

There are no required texts for this course.

#### **Supplemental Texts (Available in NYUS Library)**

- Campbell, J. & Moyes, W., *The Power of Myth*, 1988 Doubleday
- Sawyer, K., *Zig Zag: The Surprising Path of Greater Creativity*, 2013 Jossey-Bass
- Vogler, C., *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2007 Michael Wiese Productions

#### **Session 1 The Essential Elements of Long-Form Screen Storytelling**

##### **Thursday September 3**

- Introduction to course goals and objectives
- The essential elements of Long-Form screen storytelling: Concept, Character, Goal, Conflict, Stakes, Theme
- The essentials elements of Creative Practice

##### ***Exercise: Idea Generation Exercise***

## Session 2 Character Arcs & Screenwriting Development Tools

Thursday September 10

- Character Arcs: The story within the story
- Screenwriting Development Tools: Loglines, Oral Storytelling, Step Outlines, Treatments.

**Assignment: Deliver loglines for 10 film and/or TV ideas**

## Session 3 Concept Feedback

Thursday September 17

- Assignment: Present Concepts for 10 film and/or TV ideas
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

**Exercise: Idea Generation Exercise (TBA)**

## Session 4 How to engage and intensify: Character, Throughlines, Sequences & Subplots

Thursday September 24

- How to engage with Character
- How to intensify engagement with Throughlines, Sequences & Subplots

**Exercise: Prepare a five-minute (max) oral version of your story for presentation to the group**

## Session 5 The Story so Far

Thursday October 1

- Exercise: Present 5-minute (max) oral version of your story
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

**Exercise: Prepare an oral presentation of your story based around 12 images (photos, sketches)**

**FALL BREAK: October 5-9**

## Session 6 The Story in 12 images

Thursday October 15

- Exercise: Present an oral version of your story that is supported by 12 images (photos, sketches)

**Exercise: Prepare and rehearse a pitch of your draft step outline**

## Session 7 Draft Step Outline Feedback

## **Thursday October 22**

- Exercise: Pitch draft Step Outline
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

***Assignment: Prepare and rehearse a pitch for your Step Outlines***

## **Session 8 Step Outline Feedback**

### **Thursday October 29**

- Assignment: Pitch Step Outline
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

***Exercise: Write a Key Scene from the First Act of your film or TV project***

## **Session 9 First Key Act Scenes**

### **Thursday November 5**

- Read out Key First Act Scenes with roles assigned to class members
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

***Exercise: Write a draft 3-page treatment***

## **Session 10 Draft Treatment Feedback**

### **Thursday November 12**

- Pitch Draft Treatment
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback

***Assignment: Write a 3-page treatment***

## **Session 11 3 Page Treatment**

### **Thursday November 19**

- Pitch based on your 3-page treatment
- Receive Feedback and give peer feedback

***Assignment: Write the first 15 pages***

## **Session 12 How to Pitch & The First Fifteen Pages (Pt 1 of 2)**

### **Thursday November 26**

- How to pitch your story in 2 minutes

- Read First Fifteen pages (half-class)
- Receive feedback & give peer feedback

***Assignment: Prepare and rehearse two-minute pitch]***

### **Session 13 How to Pitch & The First Fifteen Pages (Pt 2 of 2)**

**Thursday December 3**

- Exercise: Deliver practice 2-minute pitch
- Receive feedback and give peer feedback
- Read First Fifteen Pages (other half of class)

***Exercise: Revise and rehearse 2-minute pitch***

### **Session 14 Pitching to the Industry**

**Thursday December 10**

***Assignment: Present a two-minute pitch for your project to an industry practitioner and respond professionally to their questions***

### **Your Instructor**

Australian born and bred, Allen Palmer studied screenwriting in LA before working as a story analyst for Granada Film, the Script Factory and the UK Film Council in London. For 5 years, he ran the Graduate Certificate in Screenwriting program at AFTRS, Australia's national film school and one of the top 15 screen institutions in the world. He has had film and TV projects in development with the BBC, Working Title, Film4 and Dreamworks Animation, and his feature, *Falling for Figaro*, will shoot in the UK in the summer of 2016. He is the founder of the screenwriting blog, [CrackingYarns.com.au](http://CrackingYarns.com.au).