LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
1. To gain understanding of the fundamentals of screenwriting including elements of premise, plot, character, conflict, dialogue and scene construction.
2. To explore different genres, structure and research in screenwriting.
3. To encourage creative expression and critical analysis of one’s own work.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is an exploration into storytelling, the basis of narrative production. We will examine the structural requirements of screenplay writing, as well as the creative experience of conceiving, constructing and writing a screenplay. In addition to the required text, students will examine screenplays, and will delve into research. They will work individually on their own creative and analytical work, will evaluate the work of their classmates, and will finish the semester with the first thirty pages, Act One, of their feature-length script.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
As this is an online course with both synchronous (via Zoom conferences) and asynchronous (on your own time) components, it will be incumbent upon you to have the discipline to stay on schedule with your assignments, readings, pages and peer evaluations. You will be required to hand in pages on the specified dates; late work will not be accepted. Missed assignments will be averaged into your grade as 0. Makeup assignments will only be given in documented cases of illness or emergency.

Assignments, pages and peer evaluations will be submitted through Blackboard, and will be submitted to me via email as PDFs. Pages will be posted for review from your peers. The class will be broken into groups of three or four, and each student will evaluate the other students in their group.

Students are required to use screenwriting software. There are many free versions (some have limited projects, so be careful if you save multiple versions of your script), such as Celtx, Fade-In, Writer Duet, etc. You may also use industry standard software, such as Final Draft or Movie Magic. Scripts must be submitted as PDF files and must be properly formatted, or you will not receive credit for the submission. All forms of screenwriting software allow you to export a PDF.

A screenplay format guide can be found at http://www.storysense.com/format.htm, as well as in your textbook.

REQUIRED TEXT:
Screenplay: Writing the Picture
Robin U. Russin & William Missouri Downs
Silman-James Press
ISBN-10: 1935247069
Recommended Texts:
The Writer's Journey - Christopher Vogler
The Art of Dramatic Writing – Lajos Egri
Poetics – Aristotle
Screenplay: Writing the Picture – Robin Russin & William Missouri Downs
The Screenwriter Within – D.B. Gilles
How Not to Write a Screenplay – Denny Martin Flynn
Zen and the Art of Screenwriting – William Froug
Screenwriting 434 – Lew Hunter
Story – Robert McKee
Independent Feature Film Production – Goodell
Film Art – Bordwell, Thompson
A History of Narrative Film – David Cook
The Film Encyclopedia – Katz
The Films In My Life –Truffaut
Spike, Mike, Slackers and Dykes – Pierson
Adventures in the Screen Trade – Goldman
Shooting to Kill – Christine Vachon
Killer Instinct – Jane Hamsher
The Script is Finished, Now What Do I Do? – Callan
Anything by Neil Postman
Anything by Carl Sagan

OUTSIDE READINGS
Additional readings and other assignments will be given in class, either through handouts posted in Blackboard or on-line. Students are particularly encouraged to read additional works on their own. Suggestions will be given throughout the semester.

Students are particularly encouraged to read additional screenplays on their own. There are many screenplay databases online. I suggest www.script-o-rama.com, as it is comprehensive and organized well. Other online sites include www.simplyscripts.com, www.dailyscript.com, and you can do a google search to find others. When you read a screenplay online, please make sure that it is a correctly formatted feature film script, and not a transcript. On the script-o-rama website, you will see that the pages are organized by topic: film scripts, television scripts, transcripts, etc. Please select from film scripts. On the right-hand side, you will see a notation for which draft of the screenplay you are selecting. Please do not select a "shooting script", as those include camera directions, which are not included in first drafts of screenplays (which is what you are writing).

GRADING POLICY:
All assignments will be graded on a scale of A-F.
The grade breakdown is as follows:
A = 100-95%    A- = 90-94%
B+ = 89-87%    B = 86-84%
B- = 83-80%    C+ = 79-77%
C = 76-74%    C- = 73-70%
D+ = 69-67%  D = 66-64%
D- = 63-60%  F = 59-0%

55% of your grade will be based on your creative work – each ten pages and the revised thirty pages (meets learning objectives 1-3)
30% of your grade will be based on the written assignments and critical analysis (meets learning objectives 1-3)
15% of your grade will be based on peer evaluations (meets learning objective 3)

Critical Paper - At the end of the second week of classes, the mid-point of the semester, your critical paper is due. This is a paper comparing a film of your choice with the screenplay on which it is based, using the elements discussed and analyzed in class. Please read weekly module detail for readings and choose a properly formatted screenplay to read. You can choose an older or modern film/script to compare and analyze. The paper should be 4-6 pages, typed, double-spaced and will be posted to Blackboard.

Creative Work (Treatment, 1st 10 pages, 2nd 10 pages, 3rd 10 pages, Full revised 30 pages) Will be uploaded to Blackboard AND emailed to me as a PDF. All screenwriting software allows for PDF exports. Please do not post or email other formats, or they may not be able to read.

Peer Evaluations should also be posted to Blackboard in their respective threads.

PLEASE NOTE – You will be using the discussion boards in Blackboard a great deal in this course. There will be separate threads for each of your main creative assignments – Treatment, First Ten Pages, Second Ten Pages and Third Ten Pages. You will post both your own assignment, as well as the peer evaluations for your classmates, for each of these, in their respective threads. The threads will be clearly labeled, so please make sure to post in the accurate threads. Your final Full Thirty Pages will be uploaded as a separate assignment file, which will also be clearly labeled, but will not be in the discussion boards.

WRITING ABILITY: The focus of this class is furthering your knowledge of communication. While some writing – particularly format – instruction will occur, the course will focus on communication topics rather than instruction on spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style. All students in this course are expected to be able to write in standard American English at a level of complexity appropriate to the class. All written assignments will be graded accordingly. If you are having difficulty with basic spelling, grammar, and style issues you are encouraged to seek out a writing assistance at the Writing Center.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MATERIAL NOT TAUGHT IN THIS COURSE: It is the student's responsibility to be thoroughly familiar with all materials taught in prerequisites to this course that apply to the current course activities. It is also the student's responsibility to familiarize him/herself with any technology or materials not taught in the course, but that s/he chooses to use as a part of the course. Failure to do so will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing work by deadline.

TEXTBOOK AND OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS: It is the student's responsibility to obtain the edition of the course textbook(s) specified in the syllabus and also to obtain all other materials
required for the course that are identified in the syllabus as well as any assignment instructions. It is also the student’s responsibility to bring the textbook(s) and all other necessary materials to any in-class or lab meetings and to labs. Failure to do so may result in a penalty to the student’s grade.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Plagiarism—when an individual attempts to pass another person’s work as his/her own—is viewed as a serious and punishable offense. The minimum penalty is an "F" on the task in which plagiarism is involved. More common in CMCN is an "F" in the course. In the communication professions, another form of plagiarism is the theft of copyrighted materials, often punishable by termination-of-employment, fines, lawsuits and/or jail. Similarly, falsification of interviews (including in survey questionnaires) and/or falsification of data or quotations is treated as being equally serious. Any student’s duplication of copyrighted software from the computers in any computer lab will be viewed as another form of academic dishonesty.

DOUBLE DIPPING POLICY: "Double dipping" is a form of academic dishonesty that occurs when a student seeks course credit for doing essentially the same work for multiple classes without advising the professor(s) in advance. This is also considered "self-plagiarism," and is a serious offense. It occurs when a student submits all or a substantial part of any report, term paper, recording, production to fulfill a course requirement, even though that work also has been submitted to satisfy the requirements for another course. It can only be viewed as acceptable in special circumstances (resume portfolios, for example) if the instructors in both courses are informed by the student in advance of the double submission, and have both agreed to this arrangement. The penalty for academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, making up information, furnishing false information and so forth) is a minimum of “F” for the relevant assignment, but may also require a higher penalty including an “F” in the course or suspension from the university.

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized, however, when people acknowledge the sources of ideas or works that are not their own. Therefore, students must maintain the highest standards with regards to honesty, effort and performance. As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Fordham is committed to ensuring that all members of the academic community strive not only for excellence in scholarship but also for integrity of character. In the pursuit of knowledge and personal development, it is imperative that students present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique and eventual reformulation. As part of this process, each student must acknowledge the intellectual contribution of others.... Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and destruction of library materials. For further details, consult the Standards of Academic Integrity on the University website http://www.fordham.edu/academics/handbooks__publicati/undergraduate_academ/index.asp

HUMAN DIVERSITY: Fordham University respects human diversity in its many and varied forms. This course will include a component or components dealing with the role and impact of human diversity in the communication processes – both interpersonal and mass. The diversity component(s) will include such groups as women, minorities, members of alternative lifestyles, the disabled, and other cultural and special-need groups, nationally and internationally.
EQUAL EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS: The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps to ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all members of our community. In the Jesuit tradition of cura personalis, members of the ODS staff work individually with each student to understand his or her strengths and limitations in order to develop their most effective and comprehensive accommodation plan. Fordham will offer reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services, and facilities once students meet with ODS for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students seeking accommodation(s) should contact Erin Koch, Assistant Director of Disability Services, (212) 636-6282 or disabilityservices@fordham.edu.

Please Note: Accommodations will not be made retroactively. In order to obtain special consideration on assignment and/or exam formats, students must provide in ADVANCE of the assignment or test. Official documentation of the disability as well as an individual specific request for accommodation must be made for all assignments and tests for which you would like consideration.

ZOOM CONFERENCES
This course will include Zoom conference meetings for the synchronous portions of the semester. Ahead of the first class meeting, I will email you the Zoom link. If you have not used Zoom before, please make sure to log in (it’s free) and test your system BEFORE the first class meeting time.

EMAIL – As this is an online course, checking your Fordham email is VITAL. Please make sure to check at least once a day. This is the only way for me to reach you, and vice-versa. I will email announcements to the class, as well as post on Blackboard, but it’s still a good idea to check Blackboard frequently, as well.

SOCIAL MEDIA & WEB RESOURCES
Please "like" and ‘follow’ our departmental Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FordhamCMS, and/or follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/FordhamCMS to receive departmental news, notices of jobs, internship opportunities, etc. You can also view website at www.fordham.edu/cms for information on our new Undergraduate and Graduate programs. The CMS Department's blog is also a great resource for announcements.

WEEKLY MODULES/SCHEDULE
Module 1 Week 5/26 – 5/31
Zoom Conference online class meetings T, W, R (5/26 – 5/28) 9:00 – 11:00am
TOPIC:
Introduction to Screenwriting, Objective vs. Subjective Criticism, Genre, “Writing the Picture”, Structure, Setting, Genre, Character & Meaning, Research
Writing Exercises
READING:
Read Ch. 1-6
ASSIGNMENT:
Treatment Due Friday, 5/29 by 12:00 pm
Peer Evaluations on Treatment Due Sunday, 5/31 by 6:00pm
Module 2 Week 6/1 – 6/7
Zoom Conference online class meetings T, W, R (6/2 – 6/4) 9:00 – 11:00am
TOPIC:
Treatment, Structure Substance of Story, Inciting Incident, Character – Protagonist/Antagonist, Secondary Characters, Levels, Subplots, Conflict, The Ticking Clock, Story Issues/Problems, Dialogue
The Character Game
Scene Cards
READING:
Read Ch. 7-13
ASSIGNMENT:
First Ten Pages Due Friday, 6/5 by 12:00 pm
Critical Paper Due Friday, 6/5 by 12:00 pm
Peer Evaluations on First Ten Pages Due Sunday, 6/7 by 6:00 pm

Module 3 Week 6/8 - 6/14
Zoom Conference online class meetings T, W, R (6/9 – 6/11) 9:00 – 11:00am
TOPIC:
Antagonism & Exposition, Right Brain Creative Issues, Surprises, Character, More with Format, Review, Act Two, Revisions, Keeping on Track, Polishing your script, Putting the Meat on the Bones
READING:
Read Ch. 14-19
ASSIGNMENT:
Second Ten Pages Due Friday, 6/12 by 12:00 pm
Peer Evaluations on Second Ten Pages Due Sunday, 6/14 by 6:00 pm

Module 4 Week 6/15 – 6/21
Zoom Conference online class meetings T, W, R (6/16 – 6/18) 9:00 – 11:00am
TOPIC:
Writing Workshop
ASSIGNMENT:
Third Ten Pages Due Friday, 6/19 by 12:00 pm
Peer Evaluations on Third Ten Pages Due Sunday, 6/21 by 6:00 pm

Module 5 Week 6/22 – 6/25
Zoom Conference online class meetings T, W, R (6/23 – 6/25) 9:00 – 11:00am
Revisions Week
FULL REVISED THIRTY PAGES DUE Thursday 6/25 by 1:00 pm