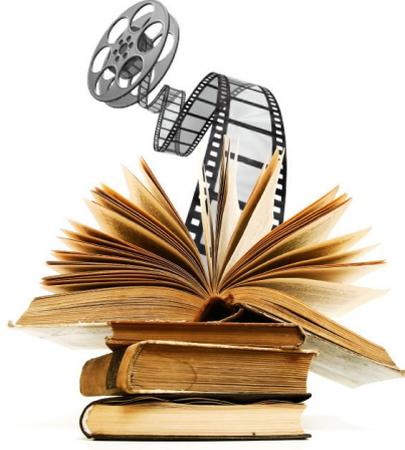




CREATIVE SCREENWRITING: ADAPTING LITERATURE TO FILM

Department of Western Languages and Literatures

LIT 480.01



Semester:	Fall 2025-2026
Instructor:	Kerem Deren and Çisil Hazal Tenim
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Class times:	TBA
Classroom:	TBA
Office hours:	TBA

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Overview and Goals

This is a unique course designed to guide the student into the world of screenwriting while exploring and challenging the universe of literature. The course shares principles with our other classes while maintaining a clearly distinct goal and curriculum.

By using literary works as a foundation and the art of adaptation as our principal tool, we will explore screenwriting as an established form of creative writing.

Over thirteen weeks, each student will adapt a literary work into a feature film or TV series project. By the end of the course, each participant will have completed a **Project Bible** and written the **Opening Sequence** of a screenplay.

The classes follow a dialectic structure: we will lay down the core principles of the craft, both theoretically and practically, while also investigating innovative, convention-defying trends. This duality enables students to master the basics without feeling creatively constrained.

Upon completion of the course, students will not only command the language and techniques of screenwriting, but also understand their individual strengths and interests, having formed their own unique perspectives on the art of adaptation and storytelling.

what is a Project Bible?

A **Project Bible** is a comprehensive creative dossier that presents the full vision for a film or television project. It serves both as a professional pitching document and a creative blueprint.

In this course, the Project Bible will be based on the adaptation of a literary work and will include: a project logline and synopsis, detailed character breakdowns, world-building elements, tone and style notes, act or episode outlines (as applicable), and the Opening Sequence of the screenplay, written in industry-standard format.

Course Structure and Requirements

workshop and lectures:

Each class will guide students through the next stage of building an industry-level **Project Bible**, from initial idea through full project presentation.

Weekly film viewings will illustrate the course topics in practice. Alongside the Bible development, students will also learn the fundamentals of scriptwriting, including industry-standard formatting, culminating in the creation of an **Opening Sequence** for their screenplay, which will be included in the final presentation.

The course encourages lively interaction, spontaneous discussion, and active participation at every level.

practical module: Inside the Writer's Room

As working professional screenwriters, the instructors will dedicate twenty minutes weekly to discuss their current projects, share professional insights, and answer student questions about the realities of contemporary writing life.

guest lectures

Guest lecturers—prominent figures from the fields of acting, producing, and/or directing—will offer additional professional perspectives and take student questions.

assignments

Students will complete weekly written steps toward the development of their Project Bible. These submissions will be presented and discussed in class.

In addition, every other week will feature a separate assignment aligned with that week's lecture topics.

The **Character Breakdown and Universe** sections of the Bible will serve as the **Midterm Assignment**.

The delivery of the completed **Project Bible**, including the **Opening Sequence** of the screenplay, will serve as the **Final Exam** for the course.

Grading

graded work

Bi-weekly course assignments: These assignments will be short, creative in essence, and designed to induce a familiarity with screenwriting. They are given to guide the students into the world of the cinema.	50 points
Weekly assignments for the completion of the Bible: These are building blocks of the course.	120 points
Mid-term: A detailed Character Breakdown and Universe written in complete accordance with industry standards, as part of your presentation.	60 points
Final assignment (final draft of the short film screenplay): The culmination of all our work. An industry standard feature film or TV series Project Bible.	120 points
Participation: Participation in class discussions, raising relevant questions, being involved at all levels of the course is highly advised and rewarded. The value students bring to the class is both appreciated and evaluated.	50 points
Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Anyone who misses 2 classes without official excuse will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically fail. Contacting the instructor prior to missing a class is highly advised.	40 points

Grading Scale:

AA	400+ Points
BA	360 - 399 Points
BB	320 - 359 Points
CB	280 - 319 Points
CC	240 - 279 Points
DC	200 - 239 Points
DD	160 - 199 Points
F	0 - 159 Points
P	pass

Guidelines:

All written assignments must be typed, converted to PDF with their hard copies ready.

All work must be saved with back-ups.

All students are expected to be inside the classroom before the beginning of the class. Late arrivals need the instructor's approval for entry.

Plagiarism on assignments results in students failing the class. You will be briefed on the use of AI for your assignments and all unauthorized AI use will be viewed as plagiarism.

The active use of cell phones is prohibited in the class.

Peer discussion and critique is encouraged in an articulate, constructive and respectful manner.

Due to limited class time, only some of the students will get an in-class review of their assignments. For more feedback, please arrange for office hours.

Classroom etiquette is to be upheld to a high degree. The classroom is a safe, responsible, creatively boisterous and intellectually stimulating environment. All of us are together responsible to keep this special place special.

A Brief Word to the Students :

“This course is for you. It is for you to find a safe haven in. It is for you to be excited about, to learn in and fight with.

Here, you will not just learn about rules and theories. This place is where you will freely imagine, make as many mistakes as you want, try out ideas in your head, search and pursue your passions.

Whatever your walk of life will later be, every time you enter this class you are invited into a shared sanctuary. With very simple rules:

Respect. Dare. Immerse. Imagine. Next class, Repeat.”

Course Materials

(all works below are guidelines for your own cinematic journey, the library will have a number of these books)

literary sources for adapted movies and series

Chiang, Ted. *Story of Your Life*, in *Stories of Your Life and Others*. Tor Books, 2002.
Collins, Suzanne. *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. Scholastic Press, 2020.
Ferrante, Elena. *The Lost Daughter*. Europa Editions, 2006.
García Márquez, Gabriel. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Harper & Row, 1970.
Rooney, Sally. *Normal People*. Faber & Faber, 2018.
Toews, Miriam. *Women Talking*. Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2018.

advised reading

Walter, Richard. *The Essentials of Screenwriting: The Art, Craft, and Business of Screenwriting*. Plume Press, 2010.
Bauer, Irv, and Vimi Bauer. *Screenwriting Fundamentals: The Art and Craft of Visual Writing*. Focal Press, 2016.
Aronson, Linda. *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*. Allen & Unwin, 2010.
Garland, Alex. *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film*.
Douglas, Pamela. *Writing the TV Drama Series*. University Press, 3rd Edition.
Dancyger, Ken, and Jeff Rush. *Alternative Scriptwriting: Beyond the Hollywood Formula*. Focal Press, 2013.
Freeman, Matthew, and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. Routledge, 2018.
Jenner, Mareike. *Transmedia/Genre: Rethinking Genre in a Multiplatform Culture*. Springer, 2020.
Klastrup, Lisbeth, and Susana Tosca. *Interactive Narratives and Transmedia Storytelling: Creating Immersive Stories Across New Media Platforms*. Routledge, 2019.
Lake, Diane. *The Screenwriter's Path: From Idea to Script to Sale*. Michael Wiese Productions, 2015.
Myers, Scott. *The Protagonist's Journey: An Introduction to Character-Driven Screenwriting and Storytelling*. Routledge, 2021.
Ryan, Marie-Laure, and Jan-Noël Thon, eds. *Transmedial Narratology and Transmedia Storytelling*. Springer, 2020.
Seger, Linda. *Making a Good Script Great*. Silman-James Press, 2010.
Vogler, Christopher. *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*. Michael Wiese Productions, 2007.

course watching list

8½. Directed by Federico Fellini, 1963.
American History X. Directed by Tony Kaye, 1998.
Blade Runner. Directed by Ridley Scott, 1982.
Blade Runner 2049. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, 2017.
Children of Men. Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, 2006.
A Clockwork Orange. Directed by Stanley Kubrick, 1971.
Devs. Created by Alex Garland, 2020.
Donnie Darko. Directed by Richard Kelly, 2001.
Everything Everywhere All at Once. Directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, 2022.
Get Out. Directed by Jordan Peele, 2017.
I'm Thinking of Ending Things. Directed by Charlie Kaufman, 2020.
Pan's Labyrinth. Directed by Guillermo del Toro, 2006.

Prey. Directed by Dan Trachtenberg, 2022.
Scavengers Reign. Created by Joseph Bennett and Charles Huettner, 2023.
Sex Education. Created by Laurie Nunn, 2019–2023.
Shiva Baby. Directed by Emma Seligman, 2020.
The Sopranos. Created by David Chase, 1999–2007.
Squid Game. Created by Hwang Dong-hyuk, 2021.
The Terror. Developed by David Kajganich, 2018.
Trainspotting. Directed by Danny Boyle, 1996.
Unorthodox. Created by Anna Winger, 2020.
Kaos. Created by Charlie Covell, 2024.
Kinds of Kindness. Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, 2024.
Oppenheimer. Directed by Christopher Nolan, 2023.
Perfect Days. Directed by Wim Wenders, 2023.
The Lost Daughter. Directed by Maggie Gyllenhaal, 2021.
Women Talking. Directed by Sarah Polley, 2022.
Arrival. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, 2016.
Station Eleven. Created by Patrick Somerville, 2021.
Normal People. Based on the novel by Sally Rooney, 2020.
One Hundred Years of Solitude. Based on the novel by Gabriel García Márquez, Netflix, 2024.
The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes. Directed by Francis Lawrence, 2023.

Special Focus: Dracula — Literature and Adaptation

required reading

Senf, Carol A. *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*. Twayne Publishers, 1998.
Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Archibald Constable and Company, 1897.

required watching

Nosferatu. Directed by F. W. Murnau, 1922.
Dracula. Directed by Tod Browning, 1931.
Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, 1992.
Nosferatu. Directed by Robert Eggers, 2024.
Dracula. Created by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, 2020.
Castlevania. Developed by Adi Shankar, Netflix, 2017–2021.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Each week will feature a video segment from the viewing material. Every other week will contain a 'capsule class' and a 'practical module' session.)

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION: from IDEA to ART

This first session will begin with introductions, individual inclinations, and ambitions. We will cover the ground rules of the course. We will be viewing a range of visual arts and discussing them as a springboard for what a story is. The class will end with initial ideas for adaptations and introduce a methodology for beginning creative work.

WEEK 2

FROM LITERATURE to VISUAL: ADAPTATIONS

Initial adaptation ideas will be discussed. Story structure will be introduced. We will explore the concepts of story, character, setting, and themes in practical context. We will discuss what works well as written word and what works well as moving pictures, using examples. By the next week, students will have chosen their works to be adapted.

WEEK 3

PROJECT BIBLE: THE WORK BEGINS

Using examples from adapted feature films, we will examine the parts of a Project Bible: Research, Logline and Synopsis, Characters, Universe, Story, Mood and Tone, and Opening Sequence. Students will begin constructing their own Project Bibles.

WEEK 4

RESEARCH

How do we conduct research for creative work in general? How do we research for an adaptation specifically? This class explores rituals, methods, and possibilities involved in the creative preparation process.

WEEK 5

CASE STUDY 1: DRACULA

A full class devoted to Dracula and its world of adaptation through time. Special emphasis will be placed on character building: what we keep, what we change, and what we create.

WEEK 6

CHARACTER

This class will delve into the realm of fictional characters. We will discuss memorable film and TV characters and begin to dissect character traits.

The interaction between character and story will be explored. Character arcs and relationship arcs will be analysed. We will discuss how to adapt characters based on literary works: what we keep, what we change, and what we create.

Work will begin on writing the Character Breakdown.

WEEK 7

UNIVERSE

We will explore the fictional universe of the project. A fictional universe is much more than a “space”—it carries connections, possibilities, and responsibilities. We will investigate the differences between the world of a literary work and the cinematic universe of an adaptation. Written work on the Universe section of the Project Bible will begin.

WEEK 8

FROM UNIVERSE to STORY

Continuing from last week, we will complete our exploration of fictional universes. Ready for the midterms.

WEEK 9

CASE STUDY 2

Final case study of an adapted TV series. Special emphasis will be given to adapted story structure.

WEEK 10

STORY STRUCTURE, FILM STRUCTURE

An investigation of dramatic structure—the foundation of fiction. We will compare traditional theories of dramatic structure with new approaches. Differences between literary works and screenplays will be explored. The basic story structure of each adapted project will begin to take shape.

WEEK 11

SHAPING THE GENERAL STORY

We will study story flow in movies and TV series. What makes a compelling storyline, and how can we avoid common pitfalls? We will analyse character arcs, relationship arcs, plot points, and plot twists. Comparison between source stories and their adaptations will be emphasized.

WEEK 12

THE FORMAT

This class will be dedicated to screenplay formatting. Using Final Draft as our guide, we will learn all aspects of proper screenwriting format. We will explore how format connects organically to production and storytelling, and how formatting supports scene construction.

WEEK 13

WRITING SCENES

We will examine the structure of scenes. Students will work on writing drafts for the Opening Sequence of their feature film or pilot episode.

FINAL MEETING

IT'S A WRAP

We will now combine all our coursework and finalize the Project Bible. Our projects are ready to come out into the world.

Time to celebrate!

WRITTEN and DIRECTED by
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