"The cat sat on the mat' is not the beginning of a story; but 'the cat sat on the dog's mat' IS."

John Le Carre, author

"...clarify each character arc and...sprinkle the story with the small details that bring a script to life."

Michael Arndt, screenwriter

You can do this! The goal of this course is to hone your understanding of dramatic structure and send you to your computer to write a first draft screenplay. Do the hard thinking now, put in the effort, and you just may find you love writing your script... You must make a commitment to yourself to reserve several hours a week to write. If you cannot do so, then this course may not be for you, at least not now. Good writing is fueled by momentum; strive to write EVERY SINGLE DAY.

A look at our schedule should make clear that sitting at your computer on a regular basis will result in a finished first draft!.

Welcome. Let's get busy...
9/07 WEEK 1. **Discussion:** Why go to the movies? The “movie moment”. What makes a good screenplay (an ongoing discussion)?

**Screening:** *Adaptation.*

**Reading assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing The Picture* by Robin R. Russin & William Missouri Downs (chapters 1,3,4) AND *Adaptation* by Charles Kaufman.

**Writing assignment (due next week):** 3 POSSIBLE SCREENPLAY IDEAS—A PARAGRAPH OR TWO EACH...MAIN CHARACTER...DRAMATIC NEED...SETTING/WORLD...POSSIBLE 3 ACT STRUCTURE...DO YOU KNOW THE ENDING?

9/14 WEEK 2. **Discussion:** Screenplays are structure. Preliminary discussion of your story ideas.

**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing The Picture* (chapters 5, 6, 7, 9).

**Writing Assignment (due next week):** REFINING OR REPLACE YOUR STORY IDEAS. WHAT SECONDARY CHARACTERS AND SUBPLOTS SUPPORT YOUR THEME/ILLUMINATE YOUR PROTAGONIST’S JOURNEY?

9/21 WEEK 3. **Discussion:** How to stepsheet. In-class reading and analysis of Little Miss Sunshine.

**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Ordinary People* screenplay adaptation by Alvin Sargent AND *Screenplay: Writing The Picture* (chapters 8, 9, 10).

**Writing Assignment (due next week):** Step sheet the first act of your story to plot point one.


**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing The Picture* (chapter 11).

**Writing Assignment (due next class):** FINISH YOUR STEPSHEET.

10/05 WEEK 5. **Discussion:** Workshop step sheets. Any questions about format?

**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing the Picture* (chapter 2).

**Writing Assignment (due next week):** THE FIRST 10PP (AT LEAST) OF YOUR SCREENPLAY.

10/12 WEEK 6. **Discussion:** Workshop opening pages of your scripts.

**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing the Picture* (chapter 12).

**Writing Assignment (due next week):** WRITE THE FIRST ACT (AT LEAST) OF YOUR SCREENPLAY.

10/19 WEEK 7. **Discussion:** Workshop First Acts.

**Reading Assignment for next week:** *Screenplay: Writing the Picture* (chapter 13).

**Writing Assignment (due next week):** WRITE! (TRY TO GET TO THE HOUR BREAK/MIDPOINT).
Writing Assignment (due next week): FINISH WRITING YOUR SECOND ACT.

11/02 WEEK 9. Discussion: Let’s hear more pages...
Writing Assignment: START WRITING YOUR THIRD ACT!

**11/09 WEEK 10. Class Will NOT Meet. Optional Individual Story Conferences By Appointment.. Use this time wisely to write, write, write.
Writing Assignment (due 11/17): FINISH YOUR THIRD ACT!**

Reading Assignment for next week: Screenplay: Writing the Picture (Chapter 14).
Writing Assignment (due next week): Look over your pages for as clear and coherent a FIRST DRAFT as humanly possible.

11/23 WEEK 12 Discussion: Workshop new pages. IF YOU’VE FINISHED YOUR FIRST DRAFT, TAKE A WELL-EARNED BREAK OVER THANKSGIVING, SO YOU CAN RETURN TO IT FRESH. IF YOU HAVEN’T FINISHED, PLEASE USE THIS TIME TO DO SO.

11/30 WEEK 13 Discussion: Workshop new pages. GET CRACKING ON THE SECOND DRAFT...?

12/07 WEEK 14 Discussion: Workshop new pages CONGRATULATIONS, YOU WROTE A SCREENPLAY!

GRADING:
30% ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
20% STEP SHEET
50% first draft script

Achievement “above and beyond” will be lauded—as will hard work, intelligence, and a helpful attitude toward your fellow students (i.e. the people with whom you may later work professionally).

TEXTS:
Screenplay: Writing the Picture by Robin U. Russin & William Missouri Downs (Beverly Hills: Silman-James Press)