

SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY
College of Communication Arts

DCC2304 SCRIPT WRITING

TEACHING MATERIAL

WEEK 1

FROM STORY TO SCREENPLAY

Developed Story → Dramatic Scene → Screenplay

A screenplay does not merely describe a story. It organizes a story as dramatic, visible, and audible events for the screen.

Bachelor of Communication Arts Program in Cinematic Arts and Creative Media (International Program)
Academic Year 2569 (2026)

Lecturer: Dr. Tonphon Sapnirund
Teaching Time: 4 hours (2 hours lecture + 2 hours workshop)

1. Session Overview

This first session introduces the conceptual shift from having a story to writing for the screen. Students are assumed to have prior experience with basic narrative concepts from earlier coursework. The purpose of the session is therefore not to reteach narrative from the beginning, but to establish a new question: how can an already-developed story become a dramatic and audiovisual event?

The course treats screenwriting as both creative practice and critical inquiry. Screenwriting is a professional craft, but in a university context it also benefits from theoretical understanding, research, reflection, and the ability to justify creative decisions. Batty and Waldeback (2008) explicitly connect creative and critical approaches to writing for the screen, while Price (2010) argues that the screenplay should be taken seriously as a textual form rather than viewed only as a temporary technical document.

Core progression of the course

Developed Story → Dramatic Situation → Dramatic Scene → Scene Sequence → Screenplay → Rewriting. Research, theory, visual thinking, and critical reflection support every stage of this progression.

1.1 Learning Outcomes for Week 1

1. Explain the differences among story, plot, narrative, and screenplay.
2. Explain the screenplay as an audiovisual and production-oriented form.
3. Analyze how narrative information can be transformed into dramatic action.
4. Distinguish between abstract/internal information and observable cinematic information.
5. Identify character objective, obstacle, stakes, beats, and change within a dramatic scene.
6. Transform a developed story situation into a short cinematic scene.
7. Apply basic principles of visual writing and screenplay presentation.

1.2 Why This Transition Matters

A story can exist as an idea, memory, anecdote, newspaper report, historical event, synopsis, treatment, short story, novel, or oral account. A screenplay begins when the writer starts making choices about what can happen in front of an audience through image, sound, behavior, space, action, and dialogue. This transformation is central to cinematic storytelling because viewers do not receive an author's explanatory narration in the same way that readers of prose fiction do. Instead, viewers construct meaning from the patterned presentation of events, causal relations, temporal order, space, performance, image, and sound (Bordwell et al., 2023).

A developed story gives the writer possibilities. A screenplay turns those possibilities into events that can be experienced on screen.

2. Story, Plot, Narrative, and Screenplay

The terms story, plot, narrative, and screenplay are closely connected, but treating them as synonyms makes it difficult to diagnose writing problems. The distinctions below are not the only definitions used in scholarship, but they provide a practical vocabulary for this course.

2.1 Story: The Larger Chain of Events

For the purposes of this course, a story can be understood as the larger chain of characters, situations, events, causes, and consequences that an audience constructs. Bordwell et al. (2023) distinguish between the story inferred by viewers and the events directly presented by the film. This distinction helps screenwriters recognize that a film does not need to show every event that belongs to the fictional world.

Example – story proposition

A university student discovers that her father has secretly sold the family home. She attempts to stop the transaction before the family is forced to move.

This proposition already contains a protagonist, a situation, a goal, an obstacle, potential stakes, and thematic possibilities. Yet it is not a screenplay because the writer has not decided where the film begins, what the audience sees first, what information is withheld, how the conflict becomes embodied in scenes, or how the action unfolds in time and space.

2.2 Plot: The Patterning of Events

Plot concerns the way events are selected, ordered, delayed, repeated, omitted, and presented. Bordwell et al. (2023) describe narrative cinema as organizing events through causal, temporal, and spatial relations. For a screenwriter, plot therefore involves decisions about information and timing, not merely a list of events.

Possible Opening	Audience Effect
Three days before a husband disappears	The audience may observe warning signs and anticipate the disappearance.
The morning his wife realizes he is missing	The audience discovers the mystery with the protagonist.
Police discover an unidentified body	The audience may know more than the protagonist, creating dramatic irony.
Years later, the wife receives a letter	The plot begins after the apparent ending and reconstructs the past.

The underlying story may remain similar, but each plot design produces a different experience of suspense, mystery, knowledge, and expectation.

2.3 Narrative: Organizing Audience Experience

Narrative concerns how events, characters, causality, time, space, and information are organized so that audiences can construct meaning. Narrative is therefore not only about what happens. It also concerns how the audience experiences what happens. A writer should ask: Who knows what? When does the audience learn it? What does the audience expect? What information is withheld? Which event causes the next? (Bordwell et al., 2023).

Diagnostic narrative questions

What caused this event? What does this event cause next? Who knows about it? What does the audience know? What is being withheld? What expectation is being created?

2.4 Screenplay: Narrative Organized for Audiovisual Realization

A screenplay transforms narrative possibilities into a structured text intended for audiovisual realization. It organizes scenes, characters, actions, locations, behavior, dialogue, sounds, objects, entrances and exits, and temporal progression. Price (2010) emphasizes the screenplay as an important textual object in its own right, while professional screenwriting practice also treats it as a document that will be interpreted collaboratively during production.

3. Why Study Screenwriting at University?

Professional screenwriting courses often emphasize format, dramatic structure, dialogue, and market expectations. Those skills remain important, but an academic course should also develop the ability to research, theorize, critique, and reflect. The student should be able to explain not only what was written, but why a particular creative choice was made and what alternative choices might have produced different effects.

Batty and Waldeback (2008) propose a creative-critical approach in which writing practice is strengthened by conceptual understanding and reflection. For this course, theory functions as a vocabulary for analyzing and solving creative problems, while research provides specific knowledge about characters, environments, occupations, institutions, histories, and cultures.

Dimension	Question for the Writer	Example
Creative	What story am I trying to create?	Premise, character, scene, dialogue
Theoretical	How can I understand the problem?	Causality, point of view, dramatic action
Research	What do I actually know?	Observation, interview, subject research
Critical	What assumptions shape this choice?	Representation, stereotype, genre expectation
Reflective	What changed through revision?	Draft comparison and justification

4. What Is a Screenplay?

A screenplay is neither simply a novel with shorter sentences nor a list of camera instructions. It occupies a distinctive position between narrative design and production. It must be specific enough to communicate what happens, yet open enough to allow interpretation by directors, performers, cinematographers, production designers, editors, and sound designers.

4.1 The Screenplay as a Creative Text

As a creative text, a screenplay constructs characters, conflict, narrative information, rhythm, scene order, dialogue, and thematic patterns. It can be read and critically analyzed, and it has stylistic qualities of its own (Price, 2010).

4.2 The Screenplay as a Production-Oriented Text

At the same time, the screenplay provides a basis for collaborative realization. Field (2005) describes the screenplay as a story told with pictures, dialogue, and description, placed within a dramatic structure. Although this formulation comes from a particular tradition of professional screenwriting, it highlights the practical necessity of writing events that can be realized through image and sound.

Screenplay Element	Primary Function
Scene	Creates a dramatic unit in a specific time and place.
Character	Provides agency, desire, decision, and action.
Action	Makes narrative events happen.
Behavior	Reveals character indirectly.
Dialogue	Creates communication, conflict, concealment, and subtext.
Sound / Silence	Extends storytelling beyond visible action.

4.3 Specific and Incomplete

The screenplay is “specific” because the dramatic event must be clear, but “incomplete” because it does not determine every aspect of the finished film. A line such as “Nita enters the abandoned classroom. Twenty empty desks face the blackboard. One desk is occupied” establishes a situation, but the director and cinematographer still determine lens, framing, blocking, light, movement, and coverage. This is why the screenwriter should learn to visualize the event without automatically directing every shot.

5. Screenwriting Is Not Novel Writing

Prose fiction can directly enter consciousness, summarize years of experience, or explain a character’s psychological condition. Screenwriting can also represent memory, imagination, subjectivity, and inner life,

but it normally needs to translate those ideas into audiovisual strategies. This difference is not a limitation; it is a creative condition of the medium.

Prose statement

Arun suddenly understands that he has spent his adult life trying to become someone his father would respect.

The sentence is meaningful in prose because the narrator gives us direct access to Arun's realization. A screenplay must decide what the audience can encounter that allows a comparable meaning to emerge.

INT. ARUN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Arun opens an old wooden box.

Inside: school certificates, medals, photographs.

Every certificate carries the same signature: FATHER.

Arun removes a photograph.

Twelve-year-old Arun holds a trophy. Beside him, his father looks away.

Arun studies the photograph. He puts the medal back.

The screenplay does not state the character's realization directly. Instead, it creates a structure of objects, images, selection, and behavior from which the audience may infer a relationship between achievement and paternal approval. This is a basic example of cinematic inference.

5.1 The Fundamental Screenwriting Question

What can the audience SEE or HEAR?

This question should not be treated as a simplistic ban on interiority. Cinema can represent dreams, memory, subjective sound, voice-over, hallucination, fantasy, and abstract states. The question is valuable because it forces the writer to consider how an idea enters the audiovisual field rather than remaining an explanation in the writer's head.

6. Visual Writing: Turning Meaning into Cinematic Evidence

Visual writing does not mean adding more description. It means selecting visible and audible details that carry narrative and dramatic information. Batty and Waldeback (2008) emphasize writing that is appropriate to the screen medium; in practice, this requires writers to think in actions, environments, objects, sounds, behavior, and relationships rather than relying primarily on explanatory prose.

6.1 From Abstract Description to Observable Behavior

Abstract

She is nervous.

Observable

She checks the clock. Unlocks her phone. No messages. Locks it. Three seconds later, she checks again.

The observable version does not prove a single psychological interpretation, but it gives an actor something playable and gives the audience evidence from which to infer nervousness.

6.2 Behavior Is Story Information

Character is revealed not only through backstory or profile information, but through behavior under pressure. McKee (1997) emphasizes the importance of choices under pressure in revealing character. Egri (2009) likewise places strong emphasis on motivated characters whose actions emerge from their psychological and social contradictions.

Dialogue is not enough

Two characters can say exactly the same words – “I’m fine” – while behavior produces different meanings. One smiles and returns to work. Another removes a wedding ring while saying the line.

6.3 The Elements of Visual Writing

Element	Screenwriting Question	Possible Function
Action	What physically happens?	Creates event and consequence.
Behavior	What does the character do under pressure?	Reveals character indirectly.
Space	Where are characters in relation to one another?	Communicates power, intimacy, distance.
Environment	What does the setting tell us?	Provides world, mood, social information.
Object	Which object carries information?	Creates evidence, memory, threat, motif.
Movement	Who approaches, withdraws, enters, or exits?	Changes relationships and energy.
Sound	What can be heard beyond dialogue?	Creates information, expectation, subjectivity.
Silence	What becomes meaningful because it is not said?	Creates tension and subtext.

6.4 Selectivity: Do Not Describe Everything

A screenwriter does not need to reproduce the entire visible world. Effective description selects details that matter dramatically.

Over-description

The room contains a brown wooden table, four chairs, a white refrigerator, several shelves, three windows, a ceiling fan, two lamps, and a framed photograph.

Selective description

The apartment is almost empty. One chair. One suitcase. A wedding photograph still hangs on the wall.

The second version selects three details that may all contribute to story meaning. Screenwriting is therefore partly the art of designing attention: deciding what the reader – and eventually the audience – should notice.

7. From Story Information to Dramatic Action

A developed story may contain rich characters and themes but still fail as a screenplay if nothing is happening dramatically. The concept of action is therefore central. Aristotle’s Poetics, although written

about Greek tragedy, remains influential because it treats plot as the organization of action and discusses concepts such as complication, reversal, recognition, and resolution (Aristotle, 1996). Contemporary screenwriting theory adapts these ideas in different ways rather than reproducing ancient dramatic form literally.

7.1 Description vs. Dramatic Possibility

Description

Kwan hates her father.

Dramatic possibility

Her father asks her to sign documents transferring the family property into his name.

The first sentence describes a relationship. The second creates a situation requiring choice. This is one reason dramatic writing often becomes more powerful when it moves from states of being toward actions, decisions, obstacles, and consequences.

7.2 A Practical Model of Dramatic Action

GOAL → ACTION → OBSTACLE → RESPONSE → ESCALATION → CHANGE

The model should not be treated as a universal formula. It is a diagnostic tool for asking whether a scene contains active pursuit and resistance. McKee (1997) similarly treats scenes as dynamic units in which values and circumstances change through action and reaction.

8. Character Objective, Obstacle, Stakes, and Change

8.1 Scene Objective: What Does the Character Want Right Now?

A character may have a life goal such as independence, love, recognition, or security. A dramatic scene usually benefits from a more immediate objective: get the keys, obtain an answer, stop someone leaving, hide evidence, gain approval, recover an object, delay an announcement, or force a confession. The objective gives direction to behavior and dialogue.

Immediate Objective	Possible Dramatic Action
Obtain information	Question, pressure, trick, observe
Hide information	Distract, lie, change topic
Gain approval	Perform, impress, flatter
Stop someone leaving	Persuade, block, threaten
Escape	Deceive, delay, run
Recover an object	Negotiate, steal, exchange
Protect someone	Conceal, intervene, take blame
Gain power	Expose, intimidate, withhold

8.2 Obstacle: What Prevents the Goal?

If a character immediately receives what they want, dramatic development may be limited. An obstacle produces resistance and forces the character to change strategy. Obstacles may be another person, an institution, physical conditions, social rules, lack of information, time pressure, or the character's own fear and contradiction.

Example

Nina wants a deadline extension. The professor refuses because he believes she has been irresponsible. Nina also refuses to reveal the real reason she missed the deadline. The scene now contains both external resistance and internal pressure.

8.3 Stakes: Why Does This Matter?

Stakes refer to what may be gained, lost, damaged, exposed, or protected. High stakes do not require physical danger. A quiet scene may carry enormous emotional or moral stakes. A son asking an estranged father to attend his graduation may involve no physical threat, but the answer can reshape the relationship.

- Physical stakes: safety, injury, survival.
- Economic stakes: money, employment, housing, debt.
- Relationship stakes: trust, intimacy, family, friendship.
- Social stakes: status, reputation, belonging.
- Psychological stakes: identity, dignity, fear, grief.
- Moral stakes: responsibility, guilt, justice, complicity.

8.4 Change: What Is Different at the End?

A useful diagnostic question is: what is different at the end of the scene? McKee (1997) treats meaningful change as central to scene design. The change may be external or internal, large or small: trust becomes suspicion; power shifts from one character to another; a secret becomes exposed; a decision is reversed; a new problem appears.

Beginning of Scene	End of Scene
A trusts B.	A suspects B.
She plans to leave.	She decides to stay.
He controls the conversation.	He loses control.
The secret remains hidden.	The secret is exposed.

9. Beats: How a Scene Changes Moment by Moment

A scene is rarely one unchanging emotional state. It can be divided into smaller shifts in action, strategy, information, power, or emotion. McKee (1997) uses the term “beat” for exchanges of behavior in action and reaction. For beginning writers, beat analysis is useful because it reveals whether a scene develops or simply repeats the same information.

Example beat progression

1) Daughter casually asks about the suitcase. 2) Mother lies. 3) Daughter reveals that she found a boarding pass. 4) Mother attacks the daughter’s behavior. 5) Daughter changes strategy. 6) Mother loses control and reveals part of the truth.

Each beat changes the interaction. Dialogue becomes dramatic not because the lines sound realistic, but because each line and action participates in a strategy, resistance, revelation, or change.

10. Causality and Narrative Momentum

Narrative cinema often gains momentum when events are causally connected. Bordwell et al. (2023) describe causality as a central principle through which viewers connect narrative events. For screenwriters, a practical way to diagnose causality is to compare “and then” structure with “therefore” structure.

Weak chain

He steals the money. And then his brother comes home. And then they have dinner. And then someone calls.

Causal chain

He steals the money. Therefore his brother discovers the account is empty. Therefore the brother confronts him. Therefore he lies. Therefore another relationship is damaged.

Not every film needs classical cause-and-effect construction. Episodic, observational, nonlinear, and experimental forms may organize events differently. The purpose of causal analysis is to make the writer conscious of how one event creates pressure for another, not to prescribe a single correct structure.

11. Screenwriting Is Audiovisual, Not Only Visual

The phrase “visual writing” can accidentally suggest that cinema is only image. Screenwriters also write for sound, speech, silence, music, ambience, and off-screen space. Sound may reveal information that is not visible, establish environment, create expectation, or express subjective experience.

INT. CLINIC – DAY

The doctor continues speaking.

But his voice disappears under the TICKING WALL CLOCK.

Maya watches his mouth move.

TICK. TICK. TICK.

The example uses sound perspective to suggest that Maya is no longer processing the doctor’s words. The script still communicates an audiovisual event rather than directly writing “Maya is overwhelmed.”

12. The Language of Screenplay Action

12.1 Present-Tense Action

Screenplay action is conventionally written in the present tense because it describes actions as if they are occurring now. Field (2005) presents the screenplay as a form organized around scenes, action, and dramatic movement rather than literary narration.

Past-tense summary

She had been waiting for three hours.

Present-tense evidence

Three empty coffee cups surround her laptop. She checks the clock: 2:47 A.M.

12.2 Strong Verbs and Concrete Actions

Screenplay description often becomes clearer when it uses concrete nouns, active verbs, and specific detail. This is not a rule requiring every sentence to be short; rather, the language should help the reader imagine action and movement efficiently.

Less Precise	More Playable / Visual
He begins to move quickly and angrily toward Peter.	He charges at Peter.

Less Precise	More Playable / Visual
She looks at him in a way that suggests disbelief.	She studies him.
He appears to be hesitant about opening the door.	His hand stops on the doorknob.

13. Basic Screenplay Components

Week 1 introduces only the fundamental components of screenplay presentation. Formatting will be practiced throughout the semester, but students should understand that formatting supports readability and production communication rather than replacing dramatic writing.

13.1 Scene Heading / Slugline

INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE – DAY

A scene heading normally identifies interior/exterior, location, and general time of day.

13.2 Action Description

Mali enters carrying three folders.
Professor Vichai continues typing.

Action description communicates visible or audible events and relevant environment.

13.3 Character and Dialogue

MALI
I sent the report yesterday.

13.4 Parenthetical

MALI
(quietly)
I sent the report yesterday.

Parentheticals can clarify necessary delivery or action, but should be used selectively. Overuse can attempt to direct performance on the page rather than allowing context, action, and dialogue to generate meaning.

14. Visualization Without Storyboarding

Because DCC2304 follows earlier narrative study and exists within a cinematic-arts curriculum, visualization remains important. However, visualization in screenwriting is not identical to storyboarding. The screenwriter should imagine the cinematic event clearly enough to describe what happens, where it happens, who is present, what can be seen and heard, and what changes. The writer normally does not need to specify every lens, angle, or camera movement.

The screenwriter visualizes the EVENT. The storyboard visualizes the SHOT.

Role / Stage	Primary Question
Narrative Development	What is the story and how is it organized?
Screenwriting	What happens dramatically and audiovisually?
Storyboarding	How might the action be organized into images and shots?
Directing	How should this screenplay become performance and cinema?
Cinematography	How should the cinematic image be created through framing, lens, light, and movement?

14.1 Avoid Directing Every Shot

Beginning writers often rely heavily on terms such as CLOSE UP, PAN, CUT TO, or CAMERA MOVES. Such directions are not forbidden, but unnecessary camera instruction can interrupt dramatic reading and restrict interpretation. Often the writer can guide attention through the action itself.

Camera-directed

CLOSE UP on the passport. CAMERA PANS to her hand.

Event-focused

A passport sticks out beneath the clothes. Her hand freezes above it.

15. Extended Case Study: Developed Story → Dramatic Scene

15.1 Developed Story

Story situation

A university student discovers that his roommate plans to secretly leave Thailand without paying six months of shared rent.

Story Element	Development
Protagonist	Ton, a final-year university student.
Goal	Recover the unpaid rent before the roommate leaves.
Conflict	Nat intends to leave without admitting what he is doing.
Stakes	Ton cannot pay the landlord and may lose his deposit.
Theme possibility	Friendship versus responsibility; trust and economic pressure.

15.2 Turning the Story into a Scene

The story now needs a location, evidence, objectives, resistance, and a moment of change.

- Location: the shared apartment.
- Ton's scene objective: force Nat to admit he is leaving and pay the money.
- Nat's scene objective: leave without confrontation.
- Physical evidence: an airline itinerary and an unusually empty wardrobe.
- Obstacle: Nat refuses to admit anything.
- Time pressure: the landlord arrives tomorrow.
- Scene change: Ton moves from suspicion to certainty.

15.3 Non-Cinematic Summary

Summary

Ton was extremely angry because he realized that Nat planned to leave Thailand without paying him. He remembered all the times he had lent money to Nat and realized that his friend had betrayed him.

The information is understandable, but much of it exists as explanation. The audience is told what Ton thinks rather than given a dramatic process through which discovery occurs.

15.4 Cinematic Scene

INT. APARTMENT – NIGHT

Ton opens Nat's wardrobe.

Half empty.

Two empty hangers swing slowly.

Ton looks toward the front door.

Something catches his eye in the trash.

A torn airline itinerary.

BANGKOK → TOKYO

ONE WAY

07:10 TOMORROW

Keys scrape against the lock.

Ton folds the paper and slips it into his pocket.

Nat enters.

NAT

You're home early.

Ton looks at him.

TON

So are you.

Example created for this teaching material.

15.5 Why the Scene Is More Cinematic

Technique	Effect
Evidence	The wardrobe and itinerary communicate story information.
Behavior	Ton hides the ticket instead of immediately explaining what he knows.
Audience knowledge	The audience understands that Ton has discovered the plan.
Dramatic irony	Nat may not know that Ton knows.
Subtext	“So are you” means more than its literal wording.
Conflict	Both characters enter the interaction with incompatible objectives.
Key transformation Narrative information becomes dramatic information. The audience discovers the story by watching evidence, behavior, concealment, and interaction.	

16. Theory Is a Tool, Not a Formula

The course will introduce theoretical frameworks associated with narrative causality, dramatic action, character motivation, scene design, beats, structural models, point of view, and genre. These frameworks should be used to ask better questions, not to force every screenplay into an identical shape.

Aristotle (1996) remains useful because his discussion of action, plot, reversal, recognition, and resolution provides a historical foundation for thinking about dramatic organization. Field (2005) provides a highly influential professional model of screenplay structure. McKee (1997) provides extensive discussion of scene design, genre, crisis, climax, and alternative structural possibilities. Truby (2007) proposes a story-development approach centered on character, desire, opposition, and moral argument. These authors often disagree in emphasis. Their value lies partly in allowing students to compare models and make conscious creative choices.

Theory helps us diagnose and develop the story. Theory should not write the story for us.

16.1 Creative-Critical Practice

A useful university screenwriting cycle is: Create → Analyze → Test → Revise. The writer produces a scene, studies what the scene is doing, tests it through reading or critique, and revises. This aligns with the creative-critical orientation described by Batty and Waldeback (2008), in which practical writing and critical understanding inform one another.

- What does my protagonist want in this scene?
- What resists the protagonist?
- Where does the scene change?
- What information am I explaining unnecessarily?
- What can become visible or audible?
- What does the audience know at each moment?
- What does each character know?
- Which details come from research and which are assumptions?
- What did revision improve — and what new problem did it create?

17. In-Class Workshop Activities

Activity 1: Can We Film It?

Purpose: To distinguish abstract psychological description from observable or audible cinematic information.

Rewrite each statement so the audience can infer the condition through action, behavior, space, object, sound, or interaction. Do not solve the exercise simply by having a character state the emotion in dialogue.

8. She regrets marrying him.
9. He is jealous of his younger brother.
10. Nobody remembered her birthday.
11. He is terrified of losing his job.
12. She no longer trusts her best friend.

Discussion question

Which solution gives us the most specific information about the character, rather than simply representing the emotion generically?

Activity 2: Five Ways to Visualize One Emotion

Starting statement: "He feels lonely." Create five different cinematic expressions. Each version should imply a different kind of person or life situation.

Version	Cinematic Expression
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Possible examples for discussion: preparing dinner for two and removing one plate; leaving the television on while sleeping; having dozens of contacts but calling nobody; sitting in a crowded restaurant without looking up; sending a message that is read but unanswered.

Activity 3: Developed Story → Dramatic Scene

Students work in groups of 3–4. Prompt: "A character discovers that someone close to them is hiding something important."

Development Question	Group Notes
Who is the protagonist?	
What is being hidden?	
What does the protagonist want?	
What does the other character want?	
Where does the scene happen?	
What physical evidence exists?	
What is the obstacle?	
What are the stakes?	
What changes by the end?	

Output: approximately one screenplay page. The group should be able to explain what the audience understands through action and evidence rather than exposition.

17.1 Peer Critique Framework

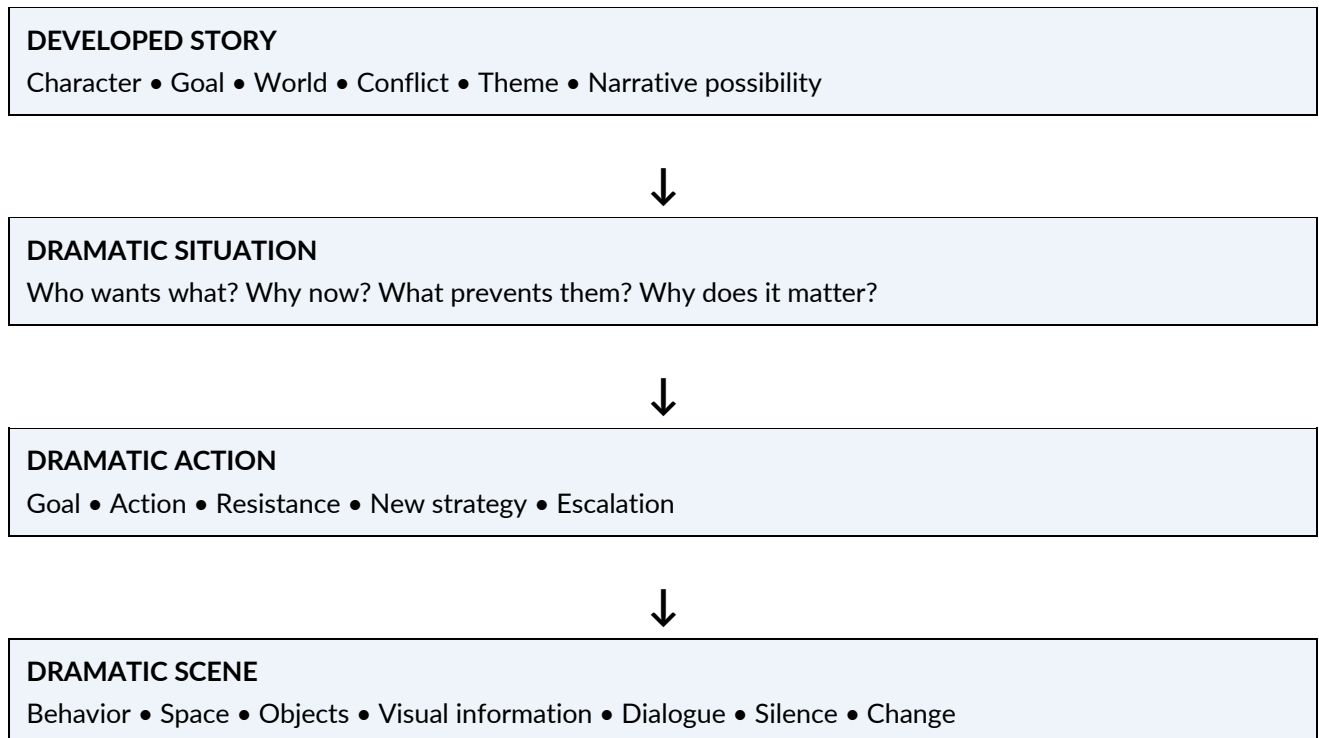
13. What do we understand without being told?
14. What can we actually see or hear?
15. What does each character want?
16. What changes during the scene?

These four questions should become recurring critique tools throughout the semester.

18. Common Problems in Beginning Screenplays

Problem	Typical Symptom	Development Question
Explaining emotion	"He feels angry."	What does anger make him do?
Characters explain the plot	"As you know, our father died five years ago..."	Would these characters realistically say this now?
No objective	Characters simply talk.	What does each person want?
No obstacle	Information is received immediately.	Who or what resists?
No stakes	The result does not matter.	What can be lost, damaged, or exposed?
No change	The scene ends where it began.	What becomes different?
Over-description	Every detail of the room is listed.	Which detail matters dramatically?
Over-directing	Camera instructions dominate the page.	Can attention be guided through action instead?

19. Week 1 Conceptual Model



SCREENPLAY

Scenes • Sequences • Causality • Character action • Visual writing • Sound • Dialogue



AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

What do we see? What do we hear? What do we know? What do we expect? What do we feel?

20. Key Takeaways

A story tells us what can happen. A dramatic scene makes something happen. A screenplay writes that event so an audience can see and hear it.

17. Story, plot, narrative, and screenplay describe different levels of narrative organization.
18. Screenwriting converts narrative information into actions, behavior, space, objects, sound, dialogue, and dramatic interaction.
19. The screenwriter should repeatedly ask what the audience can see and hear.
20. Visual writing is selective; it uses meaningful detail rather than exhaustive description.
21. Character objectives, obstacles, stakes, beats, and change help transform conversation into dramatic action.
22. Visualization in screenwriting concerns the event; storyboarding concerns the organization of shots.
23. Theory is a diagnostic and developmental tool rather than a compulsory formula.
24. Screenwriting at university should integrate creative practice, critical thinking, research, and revision.

22. Preparation for Week 2: Research for Screenwriting

Each student prepares one possible story to develop during the semester. The purpose is not to submit a finished story, but to identify what the writer knows and what still needs to be investigated.

22.1 Required Preparation

- Tentative title
- Logline (1–2 sentences)
- Protagonist
- Central conflict
- Story world / setting
- Synopsis (approximately 150–250 words)
- At least five questions beginning with: “What do I not know yet?”

22.2 Example Research Questions

If a story concerns an emergency-room nurse, the writer might ask: What does a normal shift look like? How is authority organized? What kinds of decisions can nurses make independently? What language is actually used in the workplace? What ethical conflicts occur? What sensory details define the environment? What emotional pressures emerge over time?

Research turns assumption into knowledge, and knowledge creates more specific story possibilities.

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Suggested Further Reading

- Read one produced screenplay alongside the finished film and identify what changed between script and screen.
- Compare two screenwriting models rather than treating one model as a universal formula.
- Keep a research notebook that separates verified information, observation, interpretation, and invention.
- Practice rewriting abstract psychological statements as concrete dramatic behavior.