

PERFORMING ARTS STORYTELLING (PAST)

PAST 120 Fundamentals of Storytelling (3 credits)

This course is an introduction to the foundational principles of Western narrative construction and how they've changed over time. Studying Aristotelian theory and traditional structures like myth, fairy tale, the hero's journey, and conventional comedic tropes, as well as more recent departures from standard narrative strategies, the student will deconstruct and examine the elements of Western narrative that lie at the heart of today's theater, film, TV, and the media storytelling. In addition to analyzing readings, film, theater and TC scripts, and video games, the student engages in creative writing and performance exercises that both demonstrate and push against traditional Western storytelling conventions. This is a prerequisite to Playwriting or Screenwriting I.

Course Rotation: NY: Fall

PAST 180 Theatre History I for Writers (3 credits)

This course offers a survey of dramatic literature, dramatic theory, and theater criticism in a historical context, from ancient Greece through the late seventeenth century. In observing the dramatic literature and theory of each era, we will attempt to unearth the complex linkages between performance, culture, technology, and historical moment that gave rise to it and perhaps by doing so shed new light on the theater of today.

PAST 210 Playwriting I for Theater and Media (2 credits)

Powerful playwriting is a synthesis of hyper-conscious craftwork and subconscious impulse. In this workshop the student will generate new writing for performance through study of nuts-and bolts construction as well as exploration of pure possibility. Students will read and discuss a variety of plays, dismantling their engines to see what makes them run. They will engage in exercises designed to shake loose their limitations and work their dramatic muscles. Students will also help each other mold and shape original works of drama. During the first half of the course, students will discuss plays, write short pieces, and lay the groundwork for an original one-act play of the students' own devising. In the second half of the course, the students will workshop their one-acts.

PAST 220 Dramaturgy & Script Analysis (3 credits)

Using the familiar elements of Aristotle's Poetics and various contemporary texts as a springboard, the student will confront several different approaches to grappling with and metabolizing scripts. There is no master key that unlocks all scripts, so the course addresses a range of analytical perspectives, examining work of various 21st Century genres. The first half of the course focuses on dramaturgy of play scripts; the second, on script analysis of film, TV, and video games. Students will take apart scripts from each genre, analyzing relationships between form and content as well as identifying the techniques and devices writers use to make their scripts sing.

PAST 230 Screenwriting I for Writing for Theater and Media (2 credits)

This course is an intensive study of the screenplay format for the feature film, screenplay structure, and screenwriting, including a workshop of student pitches, treatments, screenplays, and synopses. Students will be required to write a short (minimum thirty-minute/maximum forty-five minute) script but may also write the first half of a feature-length (ninety-120 minute) script. Attention is paid to the differences between theater as a live performance-based form and film as a highly visual genre, and what this means for the cross-genre writer.

PAST 240 Writing Comedy for TV (2 credits)

This course introduces students to writing for the world of TV comedy: late night, sketch, episode, and 30-minute serial comedy. Students begin with a study of the basic principles and devices of comedy and how they function in these different genres. Next, they explore various forms of TV/web comedy, learning the structures and key elements of the 30-minute TV episodic show, the comedic episode, and late-night/sketch comedy. In addition to analyzing examples of these, students choose from all comedic TV/web forms covered and write 25-30 pages of comedic material suitable for broadcast media. Collaborative writing in pairs or teams is encouraged.

PAST 252 The History of Diversity and Equity in American Entertainment (3 credits)

This course examines numerous movements in the struggle for diversity and equality in both theater and film. It examines racial/ethnic history and dynamics, politics, and marketplace reality and perception, as well as other factors influencing diversity and equity.

Course Rotation: NYC: Fall

PAST 280 History of Diversity and Equity in Media Arts (3 credits)

Within a matter of decades, information technology and media interaction have become the most intuitive ways in which human beings communicate with each other and know their world. As dominating sources of entertainment in the 21st century, the media arts may also become the leading method of artistic expression within the next few decades. In order to meet this shifting landscape with creativity and savvy, one must explore the causes and conditions of media arts' development and both its barriers and welcoming doors to people of color and other diverse voices. This course explores the origins and history of diverse writers and directors in media arts, from film to the video game. Special attention will be paid to the impact of diverse writers in the developing "writers room."

PAST 310 Playwriting II for Writing for Theater and Media (2 credits)

Having developed a strong understanding of Aristotelian narrative and the short play form from Playwriting I, the student will now tackle the full-length play and explore alternative structures. Along with shorter, experimental pieces written in response to unconventional texts, the student's work will culminate in the first draft of a full-length play (60-100 pages). Students will continue to develop dramaturgy skills in this workshop-based course by helping each other mold and shape these brand-new, original full-length works. Works from this course, Screenwriting II, or Writing the TV Drama may be submitted to the BA directors for possible selection as a Senior Directing Showcase project.

PAST 330 Screenwriting II for Writing for Theater and Media (2 credits)

Having mastered the basics of plot structure, dialogue, character, research and outlining in Screenwriting I, the student will write a first draft of a full-length screenplay—an adaptation of a short story, novel, myth, or traditional tale (source material must be approved by the instructor). Along the way, students will adhere to strict writing deadlines in addition to the firm structural imperatives that screenwriting demands, and engage in productive critique of each other's work. Works from this course, Playwriting II or Writing the TV Drama may be submitted to the BA directors for possible selection as a Senior Directing Showcase project.

PAST 340 Writing the TV Drama (2 credits)

In this course, students will view and read examples of some of the best written recent hour-long dramas. The student will analyze structure of episodes and scenes, how characterization is layered, how dialogue becomes effective, and the way TV series convey meaning, and then apply that knowledge to the creation of a one-hour TV drama script. Students will write a "spec script," outline and write an original show, completing the semester with a pilot for an hour-long TV drama. During the course specific conventions of show subgenres are explored—medical dramas, police procedurals, event dramas, etc., and how to approach these highly structured forms with freshness and creativity.

PAST 420 Diversity & Equity in the Business of TV, Film, and Theater Writing (2 credits)

This class is designed to prepare students for the business side of writing for the theater, film, TV, and video game industries by ensuring that they understand the journey/path of success and hardship stories of lack of diversity and equity in the business. This area is so underrepresented in published literature, that much of the reading material will come through on line articles. It will be led by a faculty member, but will also include visits from leading industry professionals of color including literary agents, experienced TV- and screenwriters, TV and film producers, self-producing playwrights, leading theater artistic directors, literary managers, video game writers, etc. Guests will be chosen according to the class' specific interests and needs.

Course Rotation: NYC: Fall & Spring

PAST 430 Senior Writer's Workshop II (2 credits)

Senior Writer's Workshop II is the last half of a year-long workshop for advanced writers. In Senior Writer's Workshop I the student will have chosen a genre and created the first half of an original work (or series of works, in the case of some media). In this course, that work will be finished, rewritten, polished, and readied to pitch or send out by the end of the year. Students will use the shared, cross genre vocabulary and experience they have developed together to rigorously workshop each other's work, actively participating in each piece's growth through critique, research recommendations, co-editing, in-class performance of the work, etc. The course may also include periodic visits from professionals writing in the genres chosen by the seniors.