

**Course Materials for
'Understanding Screenwriting'**

**FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003**

Evan Wm. Cameron

**Professor Emeritus
Senior Scholar in Screenwriting**

**Graduate Programmes,
Film & Video and Philosophy**

York University

[Overview, Outline, Readings and Guidelines (for students) with the Schedule of Lectures and Screenings (for private use of EWC) for an extraordinary double-weighted full-year course for advanced students of screenwriting, meeting for six hours weekly with each term of work constituting a full six-credit course, that the author was permitted to teach with the Graduate Programme of the Department of Film and Video, York University during the academic years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 – the most enlightening experience with respect to designing movies that he was ever permitted to share with students.]

Overview for Graduate Students
[Preliminary Announcement of Course]

Understanding Screenwriting

FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003

FA/FILM 4501 A 6.0 & FA/FILM 4501 B 6.0

Understanding Screenwriting: the Studio and Post-Studio Eras

Fall/Winter, 2002-2003

Tuesdays & Thursdays, Room 108

9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Evan William Cameron

We shall retrace within these courses the historical 'devolution' of screenwriting, as Robert Towne described it, providing advanced students of writing with the uncommon opportunity to deepen their understanding of the prior achievement of other writers, and to ponder without illusion the nature of the extraordinary task that lies before them should they decide to devote a part of their life to pursuing it.

During the fall term we shall examine how a dozen or so writers wrote within the studio system before it collapsed in the late 1950s, including a sustained look at the work of Preston Sturges. We shall then within the winter term examine the work of an additional dozen or so writers of the post-studio era, including a sustained look at the works of Bergman, Foote and Jhabvala, concluding with a quick glance at some achievements of the past decade. Over 80 films will be screened in-class, nominally in historical order, permitting an exceptional overview of how and why screenwriting has 'devolved' – for better or worse – over the past 75 years.

Each term of FA/FM4501 will constitute a full six-credit course (the first prerequisite to the second). Weekly submission of entries into a 'writer's notebook', analysing and integrating the films screened in class, the lectures and the readings, will constitute a significant portion of the workload for each course. The remainder of the work will consist of a major project examining the work of a major writer or writers (with the option winter term of submitting a treatment modelled upon the work of a major writer or writers), supplemented by a critique of the project of another student.

Cautionary note! We shall be attending almost exclusively in these courses to the *writers* who designed the films rather than to the *directors* who realised those designs, concentrating both in-class and within the projects upon screenwriters who wrote as well successful novels, short-stories or plays, or wrote significant screenplays directed by others, or both. (Students misled by the 'Politique des auteurs' might therefore prefer other courses.)

Graduate students of screenwriting, and undergraduate students who have completed FA/FILM 3120 or and are concurrently enrolled within it, are welcome to enrol in the courses. Others may do so only with permission of the instructor.

Course Outline

Understanding Screenwriting

**FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003**

FA/FILM 4501 12.0 (Fall & Winter Terms)
Understanding Screenwriting

Fall/Winter, 2002-2003

Evan William Cameron

With the coming of synchronisation, screenwriters became, as Philip Dunne insisted, the architects of feature filmmaking, for the shape of the films that garnered world-wide admiration thereafter were in larger part their achievement. The pattern of integrated creation within the studios that made their achievement possible, however, diverted attention from it. Only much later, after the studios as filmmaking factories had collapsed, destroying the schooling of writers that constituted their institutional core, was the scope and nature of the foundational contribution of the writers to be recognised for what it had been – but by then it was too late. Screenwriting was to become, for almost all sensitive aspirants, a solitary and hence rarely successful endeavour, dependent upon the chancy and seldom repeatable matching to a massive audience, through a global marketing machine, of their limited individual interests and skills.

We shall retrace in this course the historical "devolution" of screenwriting, as Robert Towne described it, providing students of writing with the uncommon opportunity to deepen their understanding of aspects of the prior achievement of other writers that may serve to sharpen their own habits of writing, and to ponder without illusion the nature of the extraordinary task that lies before them should they decide to devote a part of their life to pursuing it.

The course will encompass seven segments, the fall term consisting of an introduction followed by three sections devoted to writing within the studio system, the winter term of three sections on writing in the post-studio era.

1. During the first four weeks (eight sessions), we shall summarise how the constraints upon screenwriting were uncovered historically (structure, sequencing, proportioning, characterisation, uses of sound, etc.), and then introduce the two central problems of the course through two representative case studies: Writing *after* Others (or: Adaptation I): Francis Goodrich [b. 1890], Albert Hackett [b. 1900] and thereafter Nora Ephron [b. 1941]: Adapting Samson Raphaelson's Adaptations [b. 1903]; and Writing *for* Others (or: Adaptation II): Robert Riskin [b. 1897], Francis Goodrich, Albert Hackett [b. 1900], and thereafter Arnold Schulman [b. 1925]: Working with Capra (and Freed).
2. In the following three weeks (six sessions), we shall ponder at least two exemplary films to which each of the following studio writers (or writing teams) contributed: Raymond Chandler [b. 1888], Howard Koch [b. 1902], Casey Robinson [b. 1903], John Huston [b. 1906], Alan Scott [b. 1907], Philip Dunne [b. 1908], James Agee [b. 1909] and Leigh Brackett [b. 1915]
3. We shall then concentrate for two weeks (four sessions) upon eight films of Preston Sturges [b. 1898], perhaps the most successful writer/director to have worked within the studio system.
4. To conclude the fall term, we shall compare several films written in Italy in the decade after WWII by Cesare Zavattini [b. 1902] with a selection of works written concurrently within the United States by James Agee [b. 1909], Daniel Taradash [b. 1913], Leigh Brackett [b. 1915] and others, pondering the challenge being mounted in Europe to very idea of the studio system, and the place of the writer within it, as it crumbled worldwide. The trajectory of the decline of the 'western', evident in four successive films, will be pondered as exemplary.

5. During the first four weeks (eight sessions) of the Winter term, we shall then compare a sampling of the films of six writers who produced significant work as the studio system collapsed, three working in Europe and three in the United States: Tonino Guerra [born. 1920], Jay Preston Allen [b. 1922], Claude Sautet [b. 1924]; Franco Solinas [b. 1927], Joan Tewksbury [b.?] and Woody Allen [b. 1935].

6. We shall then concentrate for five weeks (ten sessions) upon five films of two writers, and four of another, who managed to write successfully and without significant interruption from the end of the studio system (or soon thereafter) to the present day (or almost): Ingmar Bergman [born. 1918], Horton Foote [b. 1916] and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala [b. 1927].

7. The course will then conclude with a look at some films written during the past fifteen years by eight writers (or writing teams) doing their best to produce viable work within a global industry, dominated by market interests, having little systematic concern for the training or development of writers or writing: William Goldman [born 1931], Nora Ephron [b. 1941], Joe Eszterhas [b. 1944], Krystof Piesiewicz [b. 1945], Terrence Davies [b. 1945]; Gloria Demers (NFB Team), Whit Stillman [b. 1952] and Richard Curtis [b. 1956].

Prerequisites: graduate students, and undergraduate students who have completed FM3120, or are concurrently enrolled within it, are welcome to take the course. Others may do so with permission of the instructor.

Meetings & Office Hours: The class will meet from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday mornings in Room 108 CFT. Lecture topics and screenings will be announced the week beforehand and readings assigned. Tuesday sessions will normally consist of a lecture followed by a screening of a feature-length film, with the following session on Thursday consisting of a question period followed by the screening of two additional films (enabling us to attend to over 75 feature-length films over the course of the year, generally three per week). A short break will occur near the middle of each class session.

I shall generally be available in my office in the CFT, Room 216, on Thursday afternoons from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. and at other times by appointment. (It would be prudent, however, to confirm meetings with me before or after class.) I can also be reached by e-mail at ewc@yorku.ca.

Readings: An anthology of readings, and a paperback edition of E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, are now available for purchase from the York Bookstore. An additional paperback volume of interviews with contemporary screenwriters will be ordered for purchase at the commencement of the winter term. Other readings may occasionally be assigned from the Book Reserve service of the Scott Library.

Requirements & Grading: Students must complete each term a notebook and *either* a test upon the lectures, films, discussions and readings, or a project and a critique. Two grading scales will accordingly be used to evaluate work done for the course depending upon deeply a student wishes to become involved in it.

Students wishing to attend the class, pondering the lectures, films, readings and discussions but doing only minimal outside work for the course, may simply contribute weekly to a notebook and write the

test given at the end of each term. The maximum course grade each term for anyone having fulfilled only these limited assignments will be a B with the notebook determining 60% and the test 40% of it.

Students wishing to strive for a grade above B, on the other hand, will be obliged to complete each term, in addition to their notebook, a significant research essay on an approved aspect of the evolution or practice of screenwriting (or, in the winter term, a treatment based upon their research in the fall term) and to critique the essay (or treatment) submitted by another student. The project will determine 50% of the course grade, the critique 15% and the notebook 35%.

The requirements for the notebook (a work-in-progress throughout the course), and the dates and nature of the tests to be given at the end of the terms, will be described in class. The two projects must consist either of pair of research essays or a research essay in the fall term followed by a master-scene treatment for a film of feature length in the winter term.

Each of the two essays, comprising minimally 6250 words for graduate students or 5000 words for undergraduate students, exclusive of notes and appendices, must address a persistent problem of screenwriting (adaptation, characterisation, scene construction and ordering, use and construction of dialogue, narration, etc.) arising from a close examination of the work and achievement of one or another of the screenwriters whose films we shall be sampling (or another approved by me) and must respectively be submitted to me *on or before noon on Wednesday, 13 November 2002 and Wednesday, 19 March 2003*. (To receive full credit for work done, topics, preliminary bibliographies, research materials (e.g., representative note cards, etc.) must be presented to me for approval at least a month beforehand.)

Alternatively, the master-scene treatment, approximately 30 pages in length and matching the format given in class, must be for a film that would exemplify, in whole or part, the style of the screenwriter(s) whose work was examined within the research essay previously submitted, and must be accompanied by a 3-5 page explanation of how it does so and by a copy of the original research essay. The treatment, with accompanying materials, must be submitted to me *on or before Wednesday, 19 March 2003*.

On Thursday, 14 November 2002 and again on Thursday, 20 March 2003 you will be given the project of another student to critique. The critiques, each comprising 2500 words for graduate students or 2000 words for undergraduate students, must respectively be submitted to me *before noon on Wednesday, 20 November 2002 and before noon on Wednesday, 26 March 2003*.

Note Carefully!

All notebooks, projects or critiques must be submitted in hard copy *and* on an accompanying computer disc (preferably in Word format). Notebooks, projects or critiques that fail to meet the terms of the assignment (*including late submission for any reason other than bereavement or medical emergency*) will neither be read nor commented upon but will receive a grade of 'F' as if no item had been submitted. Keep a copy of all work submitted for the course(!) as a hostage against ill fortune, for your work will pass through other hands, sometimes slippery, before being returned to you.

Aspects of this outline may be modified during the progress of the course should extraordinary circumstances arise that require it. If so, modifications will be made only after consultation with the members of the class, and written confirmation of them will be provided in writing.

An Understanding

I have read and understood the course outline for *FA/FILM 4501 6.0 (A&B): Understanding Screenwriting* to be offered at York University during the Fall-Winter terms of 2002-2003 under the direction of Dr. Evan Wm. Cameron. I understand that through the lectures, discussions, readings, essays and examinations encompassed by the course I may be required to attend to works and ideas of others with which I may be unfamiliar and which I may find uncongenial or even abhorrent, and that I may be compelled, as well, to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of them to complete the requirements of the course.

In return, I understand that I shall be given the opportunity at or near the end of the course to evaluate the conduct of Professor Cameron with respect to the course, and the content of the course itself, on a form permitting me to append whatever comments I wish to make without signing my name or in any other way infringing on the confidentiality of the assessment. I understand, as well, that Professor Cameron will request that my confidential assessment, including comments, be incorporated in any future evaluation of his performance as a professor by the university.

Having been given the opportunity by Professor Cameron to question him with respect to the content, structure and requirements of the course, I agree to participate in it in accordance with the terms and conditions of the course outline and this understanding.

(name: please print)

(student ID #)

(date)

(signature)

Readings

[Anthology to be Purchased]

Understanding Screenwriting

FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003

Table of Contents & Sources

FA/FILM 4501 12.0: Understanding Screenwriting Fall–Winter, 2002–2003

The readings in this anthology encompass essays, interviews with screenwriters and excerpts from novels, plays and screenplays. The essays are ordered alphabetically by author; the interviews and excerpts by screenwriter. The provenance and date of the *original* publication of the material are given in brackets if otherwise unobvious from the text.

Essays

Michelangelo Antonioni. "Introduction", translated by Roger J. Moore, to *Screenplays of Michelangelo Antonioni* (New York, New York: Orion Press, 1963), pp. vii–xviii

Ingmar Bergman. "Bergman Discusses Film-making". "Introduction" to *Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman*, translated by Lars Malmstrom and David Kushner (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. xiii–xxii

"The Snakeskin" [written for the presentation of the Erasmus Prize in Amsterdam, 1965]. Preface to *Bergman: Persona and Shame – the Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman*, translated by Keith Bradfield (New York, New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), pp. 11–15.

George Bluestone. "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film". Chapter 1 of *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1961 [1957], pp. 1–64.

Elizabeth Bowen. "Miss Bowen Sums Up". From Chapter 12, "The Telling of the Novel", from *Writers on Writing*, selected and introduced by Walter Allen (Boston, Massachusetts: The Writers, Inc., 1948), pp. 177–192. [Published originally as "Notes on the Novel", *Orion II*.]

Bertold Brecht. "A Short Organum for the Theatre", translated by John Willet and edited by Eric Bentley. From *Playwrights on Playwriting*, edited by Toby Cole with an Introduction by John Gassner (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 1961 [1960], pp. 72–105. [Published originally as "Kleines Organon für das Theater", *Versuche*, 12 (Frankfurt–am–Main, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1953).

Frank Capra. Excerpts from *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971).

Philip Dunne. "In the Beginning was the Word", "Life on the Assembly Line", "The High but Not So Mighty" and "On Writing for the Screen". Chapters 4, 6 through 8 and 23 of *Take Two: A Life in Movies and Politics* (New York, New York: McGraw–Hill Book Company, 1980), pp. 42–47, 54–70 and 236–246.

E. M. Forster. Excerpts from "The Story" and "People", "People (Continued)", and excerpts from "The Plot". From Chapters Two and Three, Chapter Four, and from Chapter Five of *Aspects of the Novel* (New York, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1954). [Originally delivered in the spring of 1927 as the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, England].

Brian Henderson. "Introduction". *Five Screenplays by Preston Sturges*, edited with an introduction by Brian Henderson (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 1–30.

Andrew Horton. "Introduction". *Three More Screenplays by Preston Sturges*, edited and introduced by Andre Horton (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 1-20.

Howard Koch. "Twilight of the Gods: Script to Screen with *Max Ophuls*". From *The Hollywood Screenwriters: A Film Comment Book*, edited by Richard Corliss (New York, New York: Avon Books, 1972 [1970], pp. 125–132.

"The Making of Casablanca: Conceived in Sin and Born in Travail" and "In Conclusion: What Happened to Story in the Contemporary Film?". From *Casablanca: Script and Legend* (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1973) [script copyright 1943], pp.15–27 and 207–223.

Percy Lubbock. Chapter V of *The Craft of Fiction* (London, England: Jonathan Cape, 1921), pp. 59–76.

Patrick McGilligan. "Introduction". *Six Screenplays by Robert Riskin*, edited and introduced by Pat McGilligan (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), pp. xiii–lxvii.

Edwin Muir. "Time And Space". Chapter III of *The Structure of the Novel* (London, England: the Hogarth Press, 1928), pp. 62-87.

Dudley Nichols. "The Writer and the Film", Part I. From the "Preface" to *Great Film Plays* (New York, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1959), pp. ix–xiv.

Allardyce Nicoll. Excerpts from *Film & Theatre* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1936).

Gerald C. Wood. From the "Introduction" to the uncorrected page proofs of *Selected One-Act Plays of Horton Foote*, edited by Wood (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1989), pp. xiii–xx.

Excerpts from "Place and Identity", "Belief, Courage and the Female Spirit", and excerpts from "Personal Writing and Collaborative Art". From Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and from Chapter 9 of *Horton Foote and the Theater of Intimacy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

Cesare Zavattini. "Some Ideas on the Cinema". From *Film: A Montage of Theories*, edited by Richard Dyer MacCann (New York, New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 216–228. [Published originally in *Sight and Sound*, October, 1953.]

Interviews

Jay Pressen Allen, interviewed by Patrick McGilligan. "Jay Presson Allen: Writer by Default". *Backstory 3: Interviews with Screenwriters of the 1960s* [hereafter called *Backstory 3*], edited by Patrick McGilligan (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 15–42. [A portion of the interview, in different form, appeared in McGilligan's biography of *George Cukor: A Double Life* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

Leigh Brackett, interviewed by Steve Swires. "Leigh Brackett: Journeyman Plumber". *Backstory 2: Interviews with Screenwriters of the 1940s and 1950s* [hereafter called *Backstory 2*], edited by Patrick McGilligan (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 15–26.

Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett, interviewed by Mark Rowland. "Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett: Perfectionists". *Backstory 1*, pp. 196–211.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.

Excerpts from an interview, conducted in 1995, by Susan Bullington Katz, published in Ms. Katz's *Conversations with Screenwriters* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2000).

Interviewed by Philip Horne. "'It works diagonally': A Conversation with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala on THE GOLDEN BOWL and the Art of Adaptation". *The Guardian*, Friday, 27 October 2000. [Reproduced from <http://www.merchantivory.com/goldenbowl/ruth.html> on 4 March 2002.]

Interviewed by Philip Williams. "Rewriting Literature: A Conversation with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala". *MovieMaker Magazine*, HOP Archives: Vol. 1, Issue #4. [Reproduced from <http://www.moviemaker.com/hop/04/screenwriting.html> on 25 July 2002]

Casey Robinson, interviewed by Joel Greenberg. "Casey Robinson: Master Adaptor". *Backstory 1*, pp. 290–310.

Arnold Schulman, interviewed by Patrick McGilligan. "Arnold Schulman: Nothing but Regrets". *Backstory 3*, pp. 298–327.

Allan Scott, interviewed by Patrick McGilligan. "Allan Scott: A Nice Life". *Backstory 1*, pp. 311–333.

Daniel Taradash, interviewed by David Thompson. "Daniel Taradash: Triumph and Chaos". *Backstory 2*, pp. 309–329.

Excerpts from Novels, Plays and Screenplays

Ingmar Bergman. Excerpt from *The Seventh Seal* [screenplay, circa 1957]. Transcribed from *Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman*, translated by Lars Malmstrom and David Kushner (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), pp. 102–109.

Sections 5–10 of *Persona* [screenplay, circa 1966]. Transcribed from *Bergman: Persona and Shame – the Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman*, translated by Keith Bradfield (New York, New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), pp. 28–42..

Horton Foote. An excerpt from *The Trip to Bountiful* [play, 1953]. Transcribed *Horton Foote, Vol. II: Collected Plays* (Lyme, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 1996), pp. 34–44.

E. M. Forster. "Lying to George", "Lying to Cecil", "Lying to Mr. Emerson" and "The End of the Middle Ages". Chapters 16, 17, 19 and 20 (the conclusion) from Part II of *A Room with a View* [novel, 1908]. Transcribed from *E. M. Forster: Three Complete Novels – Where Angels Fear to Tread; A Room with a View; Howards End* (Avernel, New Jersey: Gramercy Books, 1993), pp. 228–223, 234–238, 249–259 and 260–263.

Chapter 44 (the conclusion) of *Howard's End* [novel, 1910]. Transcribed from pp. 98–503, *Ibid*.

Robert Riskin. Part One of *It Happened One Night* [screenplay, 1933–34; revised for publication by the author, 1943]. Transcribed from pages 207–216 of *Six Screenplays by Robert Riskin*, edited and introduced by Pat McGilligan (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997).

Preston Sturges. An excerpt from Section A of *The Palm Beach Story* [screenplay, 1941]. Transcribed from *Four More Screenplays by Preston Sturges*, edited with introductions by Brian Henderson (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995)], pp. 92–96.

An excerpt from Sections C and D of *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* [screenplay, 1942]. Transcribed from pp. 626–637, *Ibid*.

Guidelines for Projects

Understanding Screenwriting

**FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003**

**Guidelines for Projects:
Understanding Screenwriting
Fall-Winter, 2002-2003**

Evan Cameron

05 November 2002

To assist you in completing your projects adequately, let me remind you of the aims of the course and the nature of the assignment, and then offer some suggestions on how you might begin to work.

We are trying in this course to learn from the work of screenwriters who wrote during the studio era how better to design films. To do this, we must come to understand better the questions they were trying to answer as they designed their films, and how they answered them by designing their films as they did. Some understanding can be gained by pondering larger questions of context arising from an encounter with the many films, readings and lectures for the course. A deeper understanding, however, can only be attained by pondering *how* a particular screenwriter, or group of them, managed to design a film, or films, of persistent interest to many B pondering, that is, fully and exactly, the *sequence* of events that constitute the film(s), the screenplay(s) and their source(s).

A key constraint must therefore guide the work you undertake for the course:

Your investigations must begin with the task of constructing accurate accounts of the *sequential structure* of the works being pondered (what was done in what order to what effect), for no useful answer can otherwise be given to the fundamental question of *how* the creators achieved the effects they did, for better or worse.

Since almost every notable film of the studio era was adapted from a written source (a novel, short story, screenplay, newspaper article, etc.), one must be able to compare the structure of the source to that of the film to begin to understand how the screenwriter(s) answered the questions they asked; and, if the screenplay has been published, one must for the same reason be able to compare it's design to that of both the source and the film.

A successful project for this course, therefore, will require at least two things of each of you:

(1) A thorough understanding, from a screenwriter's perspective, of the *sequential structure* of every film, screenplay, novel, etc., upon which you choose to concentrate. A sequence list for the *entire work* must be reconstructed with adequate descriptions of who does what to whom within each sequence, how long each sequence runs, etc. (even if one is inferring, from the events of a film made from it, the structure of a screenplay that remains unpublished or otherwise unavailable). The sequence list should be appended to the end of the essay, before the bibliographies and footnotes, so that you can use it as a reference when writing your commentary (e.g., 'See scene 24'; 'See Chapter 15'), and so that I, and your class critic, can later refer to it when pondering

what you say about how it managed to do what it did, for better or worse, by permitting us to encounter exactly those events in that order.

(2) A thoughtful and considered attempt, in the body of your essay, to use the understanding of sequential effect gained from your lists to understand better the problems the screenwriters were facing when designing the films, how they tried to solve them by designing the films as they did, and what can be learned from it about how screenplays can and ought to be written, with sufficient respect shown for the strengths and weaknesses of the screenwriter(s), the other filmmakers and yourself to make your assessment worth reading by others.

As suggested in class, you may begin anywhere you like (by pondering a favourite film, screenplay or novel; or a screenwriter, or group of them; or an actor or director with whom a screenwriter, or group of them, worked; etc.).

The goal, however, is to have grappled in your essay with the kind of working questions and answers about *sequencing events* with which screenwriters were concerned during the studio era (what is happening, in what order, why and how; what might be happening, in what order, why and how), and to have done so with some precision.

Guide to Writing a Critique

Understanding Screenwriting

**FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003**

FA/FM4501 6.0 A
Understanding Screenwriting
Fall-Winter, 2002-2003

Guide to Writing a Critique

You have been given an essay by another student to critique. Your review, circa 2000 words (7 pages) if you are an undergraduate student or 2500 words (10 pages) if you are a graduate student, is due on or before Thursday, 21 November 2002, a week from now.

Treat the essay and any accompanying materials given you with care. *Do not write upon them.* Confine your comments to your typewritten critique, and return both your critique and the essay to me in the envelope given you.

Keep in mind, as you assess the essay, that this is a course on coming to understand better how writers wrote during the studio era. As we have stressed in class, such understanding comes only from trying to put oneself in the place of those writers – determining what problems they faced, and why the screenplays they produced were thought to be answers to those problems. Only then can one begin to address the question: what better answers might have been given?

When assessing the project, therefore, the fundamental question to answer is whether the project is founded upon a thorough and determined attempt by the student to imagine what it would have been like to be working in the company of the writers of whatever relevant *original texts* are examined. Would those writers, in short, facing the problems they faced, have deemed the student's remarks to be interesting and important?

Formally, however, your assessment should address at least the following four questions in order:

1. Does the essay meet the minimal requirements of the assignment with respect to subject, length, format and documentation? The essay, as specified in the Course Outline, was to be an examination of at least "6250 words for graduate students or 5000 words for undergraduate students, exclusive of notes and appendices, must address a persistent problem of screenwriting (adaptation, characterisation, scene construction and ordering, use and construction of dialogue, narration, etc.) arising from a close examination of the work and achievement of one or another of the screenwriters whose films we shall be sampling (or another approved by me)". Are adequate sequence lists of the original works appended to the text? Etc.. Unless I have indicated otherwise to you, the essay given you should conform reasonably to the above requirements. Format and documentation should be of university standard.
2. What are the strengths of the paper? What are its weaknesses?
3. What, on balance, do you think of the *theses* of the paper? Were you persuaded by the author? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. What suggestions would you make to the author for further study (e.g., other relevant theorists or texts)?

Strive to be as fair, cautious, helpful and yet critically focussed as you can be, remembering that the grade given to the essay you are helping to assess will constitute 50% of some other student's grade for the course, that your critique will constitute 15% of your own grade for the course, and that one of your peers will be reviewing your work as well.

Course Schedule

Understanding Screenwriting

FA/FILM 4501 12.0
Fall and Winter Terms
2002-2003

[For private use of EWC.]

Understanding Screenwriting:

The Studio Era:
FA/FILM 4501 6.0 A (Fall Term)

The Post-Studio Era:
FA/FILM 4501 6.0 B (Winter Term)

Fall-Winter, 2002-2003

The Studio Era (Fall Term)

An Historical Introduction to the Three Facets
of Screenwriting within the Studio System (and Afterwards)

- I. Rewriting *after* Others: Francis Goodrich [b. 1890] and Albert Hackett [b. 1900] and thereafter Nora Ephron [b. 1941]: Adapting an Adaptation of Samson Raphaelson [b. 1903];
 - II. Rewriting *for* Others: Robert Riskin [b. 1897], Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett, and Arnold Schulman [b. 1925]: Working for Capra & Freed; and
 - III. Rewriting *around* Others: Allan Scott [b. 1907] and Casey Robinson [b. 1903]: Representing 'Stars' of Variable Density.
- And the Moral: How to Put It All Together: Philip Dunne [b. 1908] and Billy Wilder [b. 1906].

[Six Weeks]

10 Sept. Introduction

TROUBLE IN PARADISE, 1932, 83m (Samson Raphaelson [b. 1894] with Aladar László [b. 1899] (play) and Grover Jones [b. 1888] (adaptation); dir. Ernst Lubitsch); SHOP AROUND THE CORNER, 1940, 97m (Samson Raphaelson with Miklós László [b. 1903] (play) and Ben Hecht [b. 1894] (uncredited); dir. Ernst Lubitsch)

12 Sept.	[Discussion]	IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME, 1949, 102m (Frances Goodrich [b. 1890] & Albert Hackett [b. 1900], w/Ivan Tors; dir. Robert Z. Leonard); YOU'VE GOT MAIL, 1998, 119m (Nora Ephron [b. 1941], w/Delia Ephron; dir. Nora Ephron).
17 Sept.	Lecture: Problem 1, Rewriting <i>after</i> Others – the Structure of the Studio System.	SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE, 1993, 105m (Nora Ephron [b. 1941], David S. Ward [b. 1945] and Jeff Arch [b. ?]; dir. Ephron).
19 Sept.	[Discussion of Notebooks, Projects, etc.]	IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, 1934, 110m (Robert Riskin [b. 1897]; dir. Frank Capra); MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN, 1936, 115m (Robert Riskin, with Clarence Budington Kelland [b. 1881] (story); dir. Capra).
24 Sept.	Lecture: Implementing the Precepts of a Comedic (Reactive) Art [or: the legacy of Griffith and Pudovkin]	YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU, 1938, 126m (Robert Riskin, after George S. Kaufman [b. 1889] and Moss Hart [b. 1904] (play); dir. Frank Capra).
26 Sept.	[Screenings alone! Meet 10 minutes early!]	MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON, 1939, 125m (Sidney Buchman [b. 1902] with Lewis R. Foster [b. 1898] (story); dir. Frank Capra; MEET JOHN DOE, 1941, 122m [reissue; original: 132m] (Robert Riskin [b. 1897]; dir. Frank Capra);
01 Oct.	[Discussion]	THE THIN MAN, 1934, 93m (Frances Goodrich [b. 1890] & Albert Hackett [b. 1900]; dir. W. S. Van Dyke); IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, 1946, 129m (Goodrich and Hackett, with Frank Capra [b. 1897] and Jo Swerling [b. 1893] (additional scenes); dir. Frank Capra).
03 Oct.	Lecture: Problem 2: Rewriting <i>for</i> Others – the Case of Capra, Riskin and the Hacketts (with a Summary of Studio Maxims of Revision)	DON'T LOOK NOW, 1973, 110m (Chris Bryant [b. ?] and Allan Scott II [b. 1941]; dir. Nicholas Roeg).
08 Oct.	Commentary: Problem 3: Rewriting <i>around</i> Others: Credibility, Musicals and a Structural Defect, Obvious by Studio Standards, within DON'T LOOK NOW	TOP HAT, 1935, 99m (Allan Scott [b. 1907], Károly Nóti (b. 1892) and Dwight Taylor [b. 1902]; dir. Mark Sandrich); SWING TIME, 1936, 103m (Allan Scott, Howard Lindsay [b. 1889] and Dorothy Yost [b. ?]; dir. George Stevens). Read Casey Robinson.
10 Oct.	[Screenings only]	DARK VICTORY, 1939, 105m (Casey Robinson [b. 1903]; dir. Edmund Goulding); NOW, VOYAGER, 1942, 118m (Casey Robinson; dir. Irving Rapper). Read Philip Dunne.
15 Oct.	Lecture: Putting it Together: Philip Dunne's Commentary upon the 'Rules' of Adaptation	HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY, 1941, 118m (Philip Dunne [b. 1908]; dir. John Ford)
17 Oct.	[Discussion w/commentary on Ford's 'Grace Notes' and the Proper Function of Directing]	NINOTCHKA, 1939, 100m (Billy Wilder [b. 1906], with Charles Brackett [b. 1892], Walter Reisch [b. 1903] and Melchior Lengyel [b. 1880] (story); dir. Ernst Lubitsch); DOUBLE INDEMNITY, 1944, 107m (Raymond Chandler [b. 1888] and Billy Wilder [b. 1906]; dir. Wilder)

A Case Study: Preston Sturges [b. 1898],
a Writer who Wrote (Atypically) without Assistance,
and Wrote Funny Films at that

[Two Weeks]

22 Oct.	Sturges 1: Introductory Lecture – the Trajectory of his Career, and the Extraordinary Aspects of It Worth Pondering	THE GREAT MCGINTY, 1940, 81m (Preston Sturges [b. 1898]: dir. Sturges); CHRISTMAS IN JULY, 1940, 67m (Sturges; dir. Sturges)
24 Oct.	[Discussion]	THE LADY EVE, 1941, 94m (Sturges: dir. Sturges); SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS, 1941, 91m (Sturges: dir. Sturges)
29 Oct.	Sturges 2: The Danger Signs of SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS	PALM BEACH STORY, 1942, 90m (Sturges: dir. Sturges); THE GREAT MOMENT, 1942(44), 87m (Sturges; dir. Sturges)
31 Oct.	[Discussion]	THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK, 1944, 99m (Sturges: dir. Sturges); HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO, 1944, 101m (Sturges: dir. Sturges); 'Suicide' scene from UNFAITHFULLY YOURS, 1948, 105m (Sturges; dir. Sturges)

The Decline and Fall of the Studio System, and
the Incipient Challenge of European Writing
(Encompassing a Four-Film Case Study of the 'Decline of the Western')

Robert Sherwood [b. 1896], Jules Furthman [b. 1888] with Leigh Brackett [b. 1915], Howard Koch [b. 1902], Cesare Zavattini [b. 1902], Philip Dunne [b. 1908] revisited, Daniel Taradash [b. 1913], and Others

[Four Weeks]

05 Nov.	Lecture: the Decline and Fall of the Studio System: the Multiple and Integrated Forces that Tore It Apart.	CASABLANCA, 1942, 102m (Howard Koch [b. 1902], Julius and Phillip Epstein [b. 1909] and Carey Robinson [b. 1903] [uncredited]; dir. Michael Curtiz); LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN, 1948, 90m (Howard Koch [b. 1902]; dir. Max Ophüls)
07 Nov.	{Screenings only}	THE BIG SLEEP, 1946, 114m (Raymond Chandler [b. 1888] (novel), Leigh Brackett [b. 1915], Jules Furthman [b. 1888], William Faulkner [b. 1897]; dir. Howard Hawks); THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR, 1947, 104m (Philip Dunne [b. 1908], R. A. Dick [b. ?] (novel); dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz); excerpt from THE EGYPTIAN, 1954, 139m (Carey Robinson [b. 1903], Philip Dunne [b. 1908], Michael Waltari [b. 1908] (novel); dir. Michael Curtiz [b. 1886])

12 Nov.	[Screenings only]	FROM HERE TO ETERNITY, 1953, 118m (Daniel Taradash [b. 1913]: dir. Frederick Zinnemann); PICNIC, 1955, 115m (Daniel Taradash: dir. Joshua Logan)
14 Nov.	Lecture: The Decline and Fall of the Studio System (cont.). [Projects returned to students to be critiqued; discussion of Requirements for Critiques]	MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, 1946, 97m (Samuel G. Engel [b. 1904], Winston Miller [b. 1910], Sam Hellman [b. 1885] (story), Stuart N. Lake [b. 1889] (novel); dir. John Ford)
19 Nov.	[Commentary upon selected notebook comments]	THE GUNFIGHTER, 1950, 85m (William Bowers [b. 1916] (and story), William Sellers [b. 1917], Nunnally Johnson [b. 1897] (uncredited), André De Toth [b. 1912] (story); dir. Henry King); SHANE, 1952, 117m (A. B. Guthrie, Jr. [b. 1901]; dir. George Stevens).
21 Nov.	[Return of projects with Critiques]	RIO BRAVO, 1958, 141m (Leigh Brackett [b. 1915], Jules Furthman [b. 1888], B. H. McCampbell [b. ?] (story): dir. Howard Hawks); NIGHT OF THE HUNTER 1955, 92m (James Agee; dir. Charles Laughton).
26 Nov.	Lecture: Summary of the 'Attested Tools' of the Studio Writers; Introduction to Zavattini and the Promises of the European Alternative	BICYCLE THIEF, 1949, 93m (Cesare Zavattini [b. 1902] (story), with six others (screenplay); dir. Vittorio De Sica); MIRACLE IN MILAN 1951, 95m (Cesare Zavattini (and story) with four others; dir. Vittorio De Sica).
28 Nov.	Lecture: Conclusion of Zavattini ...; discussion of forthcoming term.	UMBERTO D, 1952, 88m (Cesare Zavattini (story) with Vittorio De Sica: dir. De Sica); THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI- CONTINIS, 1970, 94m (Cesare Zavattini (uncredited) with Giorgio Bassani [b. 1916] (novel), Vittorio Bonicelli [b. ?], Ugo Pirro [b. 1920] and five others (uncredited).

The Post-Studio Era (Winter Term)

Seven Writers of the Interregnum:

Tonino Guerra [b. 1920], Jay Preston Allen [b. 1922], Claude Sautet [b. 1924];
 Franco Solinas [b. 1927], Joan Tewkesbury [b. ?], Woody Allen [b. 1935];
 William Goldman [b. 1931],

[Four Weeks]

07 Jan.	Lecture: the European Way (1): the Interregnum between American Dominations	BATTLE OF ALGIERS, 1965, 123m (Franco Solinas [b. 1927] w/Gillo Ponte-Corvo; dir. Ponte-Corvo)
09 Jan.	[Discussion]	BURN!, 1969, 112m (132 in Italy!) (Franco Solinas and Giorgio Arlorio, with Gillo Ponte-Corvo (uncredited); dir. Ponte-Corvo); THE RED DESERT, 1964, 120m (Tonino Guerra [b. 1920] and Michelangelo Antonioni [b. 1912]; dir. Antonioni)
14 Jan.	Lecture: the European Way 2: Solinas, Guerra & the Virtues (and Dangers) of Limited Input	AMARCORD, 1974, 127m (Tonino Guerra and Federico Fellini [b. 1920]; dir. Fellini)
16 Jan.	[Discussion]	PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE, 1969, 116m (Jay Presson Allen [b. 1922]; dir. Ronald Neame); CABARET, 1972, 124m (Jay Presson Allen; dir. Bob Fosse)
21 Jan.	Lecture: the Problems of Dramatic Adaptation (intro.): How Dialogue is Heard by Means of Film, Contra Theatre	PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM, 1972, 87m (Woody Allen [b. 1935]; dir. Allen); ANNIE HALL, Allen) 1977, 94m (Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman [b. 1941]; dir. Allen)
23 Jan.	[Discussion]	BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, 1969, 110m (William Goldman [b. 1931]; dir. George Roy Hill); THIEVES LIKE US, 1974. 123m (Joan Tewkesbury [b. ?] and Calder Willingham [b. 1922], Robert Altman [b. 1925] and Edward Anderson [b. ?] (novel): dir. Robert Altman)
28 Jan.	Lecture: Dialogue & Environment (1): Brechtian Alienation and the 'Test'	NASHVILLE, 1975, 160m (Joan Tewkesbury [b. ?]; dir. Robert Altman)
30 Jan.	Lecture: Dialogue & Environment (2): Complicating the 'Test'	LES CHOSES DE LA VIE, 1970, 82m (Claude Sautet [b. 1935], Jean-Loup Dabadie [b. 1938] and Paul Guimard [b. ?]; dir. Sautet); UN COEUR EN HIVER, 1992, 105m (Claude Sautet [b. 1924], Jacques Fieschi [b. ?] and Jérôme Tonnerre [b. ?]; dir. Sautet)

Case Studies of Three Screenwriters
who Managed to Write Without Interruption from the End
of the Studio System to the End of the Century (or Nearly So):

Ingmar Bergman [b. 1918], Horton Foote [b. 1916] and
Ruth Praver Jhabvala [b. 1927] (and Judith Guest [b. 1936])

[Five Weeks]

04 Feb.	Lecture: the Distinctiveness of Bergman's Achievement (1)	THE SEVENTH SEAL, 1956, 92m (Ingmar Bergman [b. 1918]; dir. Bergman); WINTER LIGHT, 1963, 81m (Ingmar Bergman; dir. Bergman)
06 Feb.	Lecture: the Distinctiveness of Bergman's Achievement (2)	HOUR OF THE WOLF, 1968, 88m (Ingmar Bergman; dir. Bergman); SHAME (Bergman, 1968, 103m (Ingmar Bergman, d/Bergman)
11 Feb.	[Discussion: Film & Drama]]	CRIES AND WHISPERS, 1972, 91m (Ingmar Bergman; dir. Bergman); AUTUMN SONATA, 1978, 92m (Ingmar Bergman; dir. Bergman)
13 Feb.	[Screenings only]	TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, 1962, 129m (Horton Foote [b. 1916] and Harper Lee [b. 1926] (novel); dir. Robert Mulligan); TOMORROW, 1972, 103m (Foote and William Faulkner [b. 1897] (novel); dir. Joseph Anthony);
[17-21 February: Reading Week]		
25 Feb.	[Screenings only]	TENDER MERCIES, 1983, 93m (Foote; dir. Bruce Beresford); TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL, 1985, 107m (Foote; dir. Peter Masterson)
27 Feb.	Lecture: Horton Foote: Monologues & Environments	OF MICE AND MEN, 1992, 110m (Foote and John Steinbeck [b. 1902] (novel); dir. Gary Sinise)
04 Mar.	Lecture: Adapting Novels 1: Measuring Novels (Lubbock, Forster & Muir)	THE EUROPEANS, 1979, 90m (Ruth Praver Jhabvala [b. 1927]; dir. James Ivory); QUARTETTE, 1981, 101m (Jhabvala and Jean Rhys [b.?] (novel); dir. James Ivory)
06 Mar.	[Discussion]	A ROOM WITH A VIEW, 1986, 117m (Jhabvala and E. M. Forster [b. 1879] (novel); dir. Ivory); MR. & MRS. BRIDGE, 1990, 127m (Jhabvala and Evan S. Connell [b. 1924](novels); dir. Ivory)
11 Mar.	Lecture: Adapting Novels 2: Measuring Novels (cont.)	HOWARDS END, 1992, 142m (Jhabvala and E. M. Forster (novel); dir. Ivory)
13 Mar.	Lecture: Adapting Novels 3: Some Lessons from Ruth Praver Jhabvala	REMAINS OF THE DAY, 1993, 138m (Jhabvala and Kazuo Ishiguro [b. 1954] (novel); dir. Ivory)

A Sampling:
Twenty or So Writers Doing their Best
within a Chilly Climate

Claude Sautet [b. 1924] with Jacques Fieschi [b. ?] and Yves Ulmann [b. ?],
Frances Veber [b. 1937], Nora Ephron [b. 1941] with David Ward [b. 1945]
and Jeff Arch [b. ?], Joe Eszterhas [b. 1944], Krzysztof Piesiewicz [b. 1945] and Krzysztof
Kieslowski [b. 1941], Terrence Davies [b. 1945], Patrice Laconte [b. 1947]
and Patrick Dewolf [b. ?], Gloria Demers (with NFB Team), Lasse Glomm and
Berit Nesheim [b. ?], Einar Gudmundsson [b. ?] and Fridrik Thor Fridriksson [b. 1953], Richard
Curtis [b. 1956]

[Three Weeks]

18 Mar.	[Discussion]	DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES, 1988, 85m (Terence Davies [b. 1945]); BETRAYED, 1988, 127m (Joe Eszterhas [b. 1944]; dir. Costa-Gavras)
20 Mar.	Lecture: the Unpromising Constraints upon Screenwriters in the Age of Immediacy (read: Ahistorical Mediocrity)	MONSIEUR HIRE, 1989, 81m (Patrice Laconte [b. 1947], Patrick Dewolf [b. ?] and Georges Simenon [b. 1903]; dir. Laconte; THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS, 1990, 101m (Gloria Demers with Sally Bochner, Cynthia Scott, David Wilson [b. ??]; dir. Scott);
25 Mar.	Lecture: Hints of Hope	CHILDREN OF NATURE, 1991, 85m (Einar Gudmundsson [b. ?] and Fridrik Thor Fridriksson [b. 1953]; dir. Fridriksson); THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VÉRONIQUE, 1991, 96m (Krzysztof Piesiewicz [b. 1945] and Krzysztof Kieslowski [b. 1941]; dir. Kieslowski).
27 Mar.	[Discussion]	NELLY & MONSIEUR ARNAUD, 1995, 106m (Claude Sautet [b. 1924], Jacques Fieschi [b. ?] and Yves Ulmann [b. ?]; dir. Sautet); THE OTHER SIDE OF SUNDAY, 1996, 103m (Lasse Glomm [b. ?], Berit Nesheim [b. ?] and Reidun Nortvedt [b. ?] (novel); dir. Nesheim).
01 April	Lecture: Wrapping Up!	FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL, 1993, 117m (Richard Curtis [b. 1956]; dir. Mike Newell); NOTTING HILL, 1999, 124m (Richard Curtis; dir. Roger Michell).
03 April	[Discussion; Wine & Cheese after Screenings]	LE DINER DE CONS, 1998, 80m (Francis Veber [b. 1937]; dir. Veber); BABÍ LÉTO, 2001, 95m (Jirí Hubac [b. ?]; dir. Vladimír Michálek).