# Writing for Cinema and Television

## Prof. Paolo Braga

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course will look at the fundamental aspects of screenwriting for cinema and television. Bearing in mind the various stages in the development of a narrative project for the screen (the subject, the treatment, the screenplay, the “bible” of a TV series) it will focus on the rhetorical devices writing is expected to trigger off in relation to the specificities of the two different mediums.

At the end of the course, students will be able to explore the potential of a narrative project for the screen and determine the best format for its development. In addition, they will be able to identify the target audience and the elements having an emotional impact on it, as well as the issues to be solved in order to obtain an engaging story.

Finally, students will be able to make full use of the topics explained in class in order to structure their narrative projects and be ready to meet market expectations.

***COURSE CONTENT***

– The various stages in the development of a cinema and television project.

– The structure and dramaturgical foundations of a feature film screenplay.

– The structure and dramaturgical foundations of a TV series.

– The structure and dramaturgical foundations of a TV series episode.

– The construction of a scene and the forms of film dialogue.

– The different genres and formats of television seriality with their writing specificities.

– The writing style in a screenplay: how to balance readability and terseness.

– The pitch of a narrative project.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Students studying for the single semester examination (4 or 5 or 6 CFUs) will read:

P. Braga, *Words in Action. Forms and Techniques of Film Dialogue*, Peter Lang, Bern 2015 (students can also choose to study the Italian edition: Parole in azione. Forme e tecniche del dialogo cinematografico, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2012 [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/braga-paolo/parole-in-azione-9788856849820-181064.html) ).

R. McKee, *Story. Substance, structure, style, and the principle of screenwriting*, Harper Collins, New York, 1997 (students can also choose to study the Italian edition: Story: contenuti, struttura, stile, principi della sceneggiatura, International Forum, Roma, 2000).

Students attending the annual course will also read:

A. Fumagalli, C. Albani, P. Braga (edited by), *Storia delle serie tv* (2 volumes), Dino Audino, Roma 2021 (both volumes will be asked during examination). [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/cerca.php?s=storia%20delle%20serie%20tv%20audino)

Or alternatively the following two books:

J. Truby*, The Anatomy of Story. 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller*, Faber & Faber, New York, 2007 (students can also choose to study the Italian edition: Anatomia di una storia, Dino Audino, Roma, 2009 [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/truby-john/anatomia-di-una-storia-9788875270971-177559.html)).

N. Landau, *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap: Creating Great Television in an On Demand World*, Routledge, 2022, 2nd edition, Kindle edition.

Non-attending annual course students are also required to study the following article:

P. Braga, “*The Italian Storytelling Approach to TV Seriality Compared to the US Method. A Case Study*”, in *Comunicazioni Sociali*, XLI n.s., n. 3, September-December 2019

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will mainly be taught in lectures. Once students have been provided with the discipline’s theoretical tools, they will be required to apply such tools both to the ananlysis of extracts from screenplays read together, and also of illustrative cinematographic video frames, being guided by their professor throughout the whole process.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exam. The examination aims to assess both the student’s theoretical knowledge of the main screenwriting techniques (50% of the grade), and their capacity to employ such techniques as criteria for the analysis of films and TV fictions which they are familiar with (50% of the grade).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, students enrolled in this course should ideally show a certain curiosity towards the subject and have a basic knowledge of contemporary cinema and television.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)