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## Writing a Story: the art of captivating people through storytelling

PROF. ILENIA PROVENZI

<b>Area of study:</b>	Cultural Studies
<b>Area Code:</b>	LT/AR 320su
<b>Credit</b>	6 ECTS
<b>Dates</b>	23 June – 4 July (2 weeks)

### Course description

Storytelling is not just for writers. It is for whoever needs to present an idea in a salient manner. If you want to discover the potential of creating a well-told story, if you want to learn how to engage, persuade and inspire people, this course is for you.

You will learn storytelling skills to present ideas in a successful way. What's the key to set people on fire? Uniting an idea with an emotion! Martin Scorsese said that "a director is a manager of emotions": you can learn the same writing and cinematic techniques to captivate people.

We will analyze these techniques "in action" through screenwriting, and in particular through a pillar of Hollywood, Cinecittà and the television networks: Adaptations.

We will analyze important adaptations of novels and true-life stories for the seventh art, understanding the changes from the source material to the new text and identifying the resistance of literature and true-life story.

This course includes a creative experience: the writer's lab. Each student will be given tools to create compelling characters, a well-told story, shading style and mood, and to write short film scripts.

### Prerequisites

None

### Method of teaching

Lecture and Writing Lab.

Readings of stories and excerpts of novels. Screening and analysis of clips of important films adapted from literature and true-life stories. The source material will be compared to the adaptation, revealing the essence of each medium.

### Course requirements

The reading of the books *Pinocchio* (Carlo Collodi) and *Invisible Cities* (Italo Calvino) is recommended prior to the beginning of the course. Ideally students should read both novels (which can be found in the course readings below) from beginning to end, before they are analyzed in class.



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## Learning outcomes

Students will learn narrative techniques and how Literature and Biography can be manipulated to create an original piece of art: the screenplay. Students will discover great examples of Italian novels and films and, through them, they'll acquire a deeper knowledge of the Italian Culture. Students will learn how to engage, persuade and inspire people through storytelling. Students will practice various approaches to drafting and revision through writing prompts designed to develop emotional clarity and depth in their writing.

## Grading

Class participation	30%
Final exam	40%
Creative work: Short film script.	30%

## Rules of conduct

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to UCSC International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

**Exam Date:** The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, UCSC International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

## Course reading and materials

All the required readings will be available in a course pack and the lecturer's slides will be available on Blackboard.

### Required reading (excerpts):

- Robert Mc Kee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting*, Harper Collins Publishers, NYC
- Linda Seger, *The art of adaptation: turning fact and fiction into film*, Owl Book, NYC 1992.
- Diana Wynne Jones, *Howl's Moving Castle* (<https://www.booksfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/howls-moving-castle.pdf>)

### The following Italian novels (in English, to be read prior to course):

- Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*
- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* ([https://irenebrination.typepad.com/files/calvino\\_italo\\_invisible\\_cities.pdf](https://irenebrination.typepad.com/files/calvino_italo_invisible_cities.pdf))



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### Required films (they will be shown in class):

- *Pinocchio* (2019) by Matteo Garrone.
- *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) by Hayao Miyazaki.
- *Il divo* (2008) by Paolo Sorrentino (some clips in class).

## Schedule

### WEEK 1

#### **Lesson 1: 23 June [5 h – 1:30 pm-6:30 pm]**

Introduction to narrative techniques: clear vision.

Why we need stories and the beginning of the writing process: concept and premise.

Differences between literature and cinema.

Guidelines to short film: The dramatic moment.

Screening of short film.

- Writing lab: Exercise on location.

#### **Lesson 2: 24 June [5 h – 9:30 am-2:30 pm]**

The story triangle.

Script format.

Text and subtext.

- Writing lab: location script

#### **Lesson 3: 25 June [5 h – 9:30 am-2:30 pm]**

Feedback on location script.

Character map and archetypes, with examples.

- Writing lab: Work on **story ideas** for final project (NB: final project will be individual or in pairs, depending on the number of students).
- Read "Pinocchio" by Collodi.

#### **Lesson 4: 26 June [4 h – 10 am-2 pm]**

The structure of a story: the Hero's Journey as a pattern for epic tales and fairy tales. The example of Pinocchio.

Adaptation: literature & cinema.

- Writing lab: Analyzing a fairy tale.
- Watch "Pinocchio" by Garrone.

#### **Lesson 5: 27 June [5 h – 9:30 am-2:30 pm]**



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Discussion on your **story ideas** for final project.

Adaptation: literature & cinema.

The case of "Pinocchio" by Garrone

- Writing lab: Work on outline.
- Read *Invisible Cities*
- Deadline for submitting the **outline** of your **short film**: 27 June by 11.59 pm

## WEEK 2

### **Lesson 6: 30 June [4 h: 1:30 am-5:30 pm]**

Feedback on outline.

*Invisible Cities*: from historical facts to fantastic tales

- Writing lab: Work on screenplay.

### **Lesson 7: 1 July [5 h – 9:30 am-2:30 pm]**

*Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones: structure, characters, message.

Miyazaki's adaptation of the novel.

Scene analysis.

- Watch "Howl's Moving Castle" by Hayao Miyazaki.
- Writing lab: writing your screenplay.

### **Lesson 8: 2 July [4 h: 10 am-2 pm]**

Visit to MIC (+TBC) + screening of "Il divo" by Paolo Sorrentino

Creating and shading style, mood and tone.

Adaptation from true life stories: the case of Andreotti.

- Writing lab: writing your screenplay.
- Deadline for **first draft of screenplay**: July 2 before 2 pm.

### **Lesson 9: 3 July [5 h – 1:30 pm-6:30 pm]**

Feedback on your screenplays

Rewriting your script.

Analysis of "Il Divo" by Sorrentino as an example of adaptation from a true-life story.

- Writing lab: rewriting your script.

### **Lesson 10: 4 July [2 h: 10 am-12 am]**

**FINAL EXAM** in class.

**Last draft of screenplay** by midnight



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## Bio of instructor

**Ilenia Provenzi** graduated in Modern Literature and attended a Master's Degree in Screenwriting and Film Production. She began working for Lux Vide, a production company based in Rome, as development coordinator, then she spent some months in New York working for Rai International.

After that she attended several courses and seminars held by Bobette Buster and Laurie Hutzler, worked as a scriptwriter for RAI Educational and wrote several episodes of animated series for children (*Julio Bunny*, *YoYo*, *Topo Gigio*) and screenplays for the TV series *Penny on M.A.R.S* and *Marta & Eva*. She also worked as a script translator on international TV series produced by Lux Vide and Big Light Productions (*Medici – Masters of Florence*), Lux Vide and Sky (*Devils*) and as a book translator.

In 2012 she joined the Faculty of Università Cattolica, where she teaches Creative Storytelling with Prof. Mara Perbellini.

Lately she has worked on more animated series, as headwriter and scriptwriter, among which, *MiniHeroes of the Forest* and *Mortina*. She's co-author (with Maria Chiara Oltolini) of *Once Upon a Time in Japan. Ponyo and the Ecological Fairy Tale*, published in *Comunicazioni Sociali*, 2023, n.3.

Her first YA novel was published in 2012 by Giunti Editore, Firenze, and in 2020 she co-wrote (with Eleonora Fornasari) a non fiction book about young female protagonist in literature.

Three more novels for children, written under the pseudonym of Viola Marchesi, have since been published by Einaudi:

- *Il segreto di Artica* (Einaudi Ragazzi 2021)
- *I Kirai e le cinque energie* (Edizioni EL 2022), illustrated by Alessandro Barbucci (W.I.T.C.H., Monster Allergy)
- *Il tempio dei sogni dimenticati* (Einaudi Ragazzi 2024)

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