

Screenwriting class added to program

Jocelyn Cullity comes to Truman State to teach a new screenwriting course for the English and creative writing departments

BY KATEY STOETZEL
Assistant Features Editor

The English and creative writing departments have expanded their course offerings this year to include a screenwriting workshop class. English professor Jocelyn Cullity joined Truman State's English faculty during the 2014 spring semester and will teach the screenwriting course and fiction writing courses.

Cullity said for the past 10 years she has been working in documentary and television writing, as well as teaching screenwriting and fiction at several colleges.

"I was just so pleased to see a position that carried the experience that I had for the past 10 years, plus my love for fiction writing," Cullity said. "To me, it was just a dream job when I saw it, so I'm lucky it worked out."

Because this is a 400-level class, Cullity said she suggests students wait until their junior or senior year to take the class since screenwriting is a different form of storytelling with more components, such as the camera, than just writing prose.

Cullity said two prerequisite courses will be required for the fall 2015 class — Creative Writing and Film, Form and Sense. Film, Form and Sense will not be a prerequisite for screenwriting during Spring 2015, Cullity said.

"Then people have the fundamentals of film down. They understand mis-en-scene and all those important things," Cullity said. "Film shots and cinematography [are] important and to have that before we try to write [for] camera is really good."

Before this screenwriting class, the English and creative writing majors only offered workshops in of non-fiction, fiction and poetry.

"Screenplays are different because you have the camera as a big component," Cullity said.

Cullity said like at the heart of any other genre, such as nonfiction, poetry, or fiction, what lies at the heart of the screenplay is story.

Cullity said learning how to workshop drafts while taking those writing courses is beneficial to learn before screenplay writing.

"It's really good to get those fundamentals of story down before you introduce the camera," Cullity said. "Writing a story for a screenplay means that you're writing visually. And that is a different way of writing a story. You have to think about what pictures you are putting together on the screen to tell your story, and that is an additional element to storytelling."

Cullity said her goal for this course is to tailor it to Truman students so they are able to walk away with a body of their own work, whether it's for graduate programs or production experience. She said she thinks those goals will develop as she learns what student interests are and learn what sort of goals the students have for themselves.

She said she wants her students to understand the nuts and bolts of writing for the camera and writing a screenplay.

So far, Cullity said they have focused on screenplays for Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," Roman Polanski's "Chi-

atown" and Ridley Scott's "Thelma & Louise." She said the screenplays they studied will change each semester, but "Vertigo" will be the one she keeps on the syllabus.

Cullity said she thinks Truman is fortunate to have a screenwriting class, because she has heard of other schools asking for such a class and not having the means to get it.

"The BFA [Creative Writing] program here seems to me to be very solid," Cullity said. "I just feel really blessed to join this program. I hope screenwriting is just one more valuable course in a lot of valuable courses."

Senior Carly Winchell, a creative writing major, is taking Cullity's class. Although Winchell said she never had written screenplays before, she decided to take the class after seeing Cullity's interview during the spring.

Winchell said she thought screenwriting would be a good opportunity to try a different medium for creative writing. Because Winchell said she is used to prose writing, she said she was apprehensive about writing for a script.

"The weirdest part is transitioning from 'I can write this in these words and it makes sense and it makes a picture but now I have to think visually with the camera and figure out how physically you would film it,'" Winchell said. "Explaining how the camera moves is difficult when you're still in the mode of 'I still need to create the story.'"

As someone who had no prior screenwriting experience, Winchell said she suggests anyone thinking about taking the class to have a film studies background. She said not knowing all of the technical language of film studies is difficult for her.

Winchell said what she likes about the class is how they get time during class to work.

"Dr. Cullity has us do exercises in class or we sit down and we write and write and write and work out things right here in the classroom," Winchell said. "I think is really important for workshop classes."

Though Winchell said breaking away from her usual form of writing, so far she said she loves the writing for the screen.

Creative writing professor James D'Agostino, who was a part of the effort to bring the class to Truman and hiring Cullity, said the inclusion of the screenwriting class to the English and creative writing major is something students have been asking for.

Truman has had a number of graduates go into screenwriting, but they got there through their own grit and dedication, D'Agostino said. He said this class is a way for Truman to support anyone interested in a career in screenwriting and give them a head start.

D'Agostino said it's important for writers to branch out to all forms of writing, even if their only focus is short fiction or poetry.

"We want to encourage students and require students to reach into other genres and bringing those skills back to other projects," D'Agostino said.



Katey Stoetzel/Index

Cullity teaches her noon Tuesday and Thursday screenwriting class. The class is open to all majors, but English and creative writing majors will receive first priority during registration.

D'Agostino said Cullity is a great addition to the English and creative writing department.

"Jocelyn Cullity brings this wealth of experience to campus. [She's] professionally active both as a screenwriter and a fiction writer and an accomplished teacher," D'Agostino said. "She's just a perfect match at this time with the students and the University."

WWW.TRUMANRENTALS.COM

Providing affordable
student housing
for more than 25 years

Boardwalk • Waterworks • Park Place
States Avenue • St. James Place • New York Avenue

Four Horizons Realty
703 N. Marion St.
Kirksville, MO 63501

660-665-RENT
www.4horizonsrealty.com



**1506 S Baltimore St,
Kirksville, MO 63501**

(660) 665-7272

**WOODY'S TIRE,
AUTO & TOWING LLC**



GOODYEAR, COOPER, KELLY, ELDORADO TIRES

Unlocks • Jump Starts • Brakes • Wheel Balancing

Use your Bulldog ID to receive \$5 off
top arctic 17 point oil change!

1102 N. Green • Kirksville, MO
660-665-8617
After Hours 660-216-3123

On the road to

**GRADUATE
SCHOOL?**

Let **MCNAIR**
show you the way!

The McNair Program encourages and prepares underrepresented students to pursue graduate programs leading to Ph.D. degrees. More information on eligibility and applying is at:

<http://mcnair.truman.edu>

TRIO

Adair House 301
660-785-5393

Applications
due Nov 1