

**COMMUNITY OF WRITERS**  
**2024 The Alchemy of Adaptation Class**  
**Instructors: Patty Meyer & Stacy Spruill**

You are writing either fiction or non-fiction, or both, or possibly a hybrid of the two. The film and television business (including streaming networks) are fueled by adaptations of source material such as yours. Hollywood loves books, published, self-published works, too. (The Martian, on which the Matt Damon movie is based, was an obscure self-published novel. Moonlight originated as a play. Spotlight is based on a series of *Boston Globe* feature news stories.) Hollywood thrives on true stories or any riveting saga, real or imagined, already validated by an audience, hence the ongoing relationships between book/magazine publishers and film/television studios and production companies.

During our five 90-minute seminars, you will learn the challenging fundamentals of screenplay adaptation. We will focus on the crucial elements of screenwriting: character development, story structure, scene creation, and uses of dialogue, which shall help you lay the groundwork for an outline if not a future screenplay or series adaptation of your project. We will screen clips consistently as examples.

**Optional:** Bring titles of your favorite features or TV series adaptations. Or your least favorites? Prepare to discuss why you feel they are successful or not. Some of my favorites: The Wizard of Oz; Angels in America; Forrest Gump; No Country for Old Men. TV: House of Cards, Hannibal, Sherlock, The Crown, The Sinner.

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (Subject to Adjustment for Time and the Creative Winds):

**Tuesday, July 9, 2024**

Introductions: Instructors. Writers and their projects. Present a brief synopsis of the book or novel you are writing. Make sure to specify the genre and the main character/their journey. We will discuss an approach to adaptation for your projects throughout the week.

Power-Point presentation: “The Alchemy of Adaptation.” General discussion. Is every book, play, and true story appropriate or feasible for adaptation? Overview of Dramatic Screenplay structure. Show clips.

**Wednesday, July 10, 2024**

Character Development power point presentation: Distilling, illuminating visually, discovering the arc. Character and structure: Their symbiosis. Clips.

In-Class Assignment: Character bios. Workshop and discuss character bios.

## Thursday, July 11, 2024

Show clips: Essential dramatic screenplay structure. Discuss template.

In-Class Assignment: Fill in the basic beats of your screenplay adaptation based on the provided template worksheets. Discuss.

## Friday, July 12, 2024

**NO CLASS. HIKE, WRITE, REST!**

Assignment: Revise worksheet based on class discussion.

## Saturday, July 13, 2024

Discuss revised worksheets.

In-Class Assignment: Break into teams and write a scene based on a prompt. Table read in class.

## Sunday, July 14, 2024

Instructors discuss the business of adaptation. Show professional book adaptation pitch(es).

We hope that each of you will leave the conference with at least a broad-strokes approach to a screenplay or TV pilot/series adaptation of your work. May it inspire you to further develop your outline and perhaps eventually write the screenplay.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Want to learn how to write screenplays? Read them. And if they are adaptations—read both the source material and the screenplay; then view the film or television series and study the script-to-screen process.

To find screenplays: Via Google, type in the script title and “PDF.” Or go to [www.simplyscripts.com](http://www.simplyscripts.com) or <http://www.script-o-rama.com/> and other sites.

<b>Non-Fiction (To name only a few)</b> <i>Nyad</i> <i>Till</i> <i>Erin Brockovich</i> <i>Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July</i> <i>Milk</i>	<b>Short Stories</b> <i>“Rear Window”</i> <i>“All About Eve”</i> <i>“Benjamin Button”</i> <i>“Brokeback Mountain”</i> <i>“The Swimmer”</i>
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<p><i>Hidden Figures</i>  <i>Thank you For Smoking</i>  <i>American Splendor</i>  <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i>  <i>Imitation Game</i>  <i>A Beautiful Mind</i></p> <p><b>Fiction</b>  <i>Atonement</i>  <i>The Great Gatsby</i>  <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i>  <i>No Country for Old Men</i>  <i>Fight Club</i>  <i>Up in the Air</i>  <i>Deadpool</i>  <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>  <i>The Pianist</i>  <i>Forrest Gump</i>  <i>Gone Girl</i>  <i>The Girl on the Train</i>  <i>The Godfather</i>  <i>Lord of the Rings</i>  <i>The Color Purple</i>  <i>Precious</i></p>	<p><i>"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"</i>  <i>"The Birds"</i>  <i>"The Fall of the House of the Usher"</i>  <i>"The Most Dangerous Game"</i></p> <p><b>Plays</b>  <i>Taming of the Shrew</i>  (Modern Adaptations: <i>Kiss Me Kate</i>  (musical version)  <i>Long Day's Journey Into Night</i>  <i>Children of a Lesser God</i>  <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>  <i>Frost/Nixon</i>  <i>Fences</i>  <i>Amadeus</i>  <i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>  <i>Doubt</i>  <i>Sleuth</i>  <i>The Odd Couple</i>  <i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i></p>
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