Advanced English: Creative Writing - Creeping from Page to Screen, a Creative Approach to Adapting ‘Dark’ Literature for Film

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

This is a 12-week course exploring the creative transition from novel to film intended to improve student understanding and use of English.

The course has three main objectives:
- Introducing students to “dark” literature and its related genres.
- Facilitating critical analysis of selected works in various media.
- Expanding appreciation of narrative in its myriad forms through discussion as well as both creative and critical writing.

Course Description

At the outset, students will be introduced to narrative, or the tenets of storytelling. We will then study these as practiced by selected writers and filmmakers in the relevant “dark” sub-genres spanning horror, crime, Gothic and the psychological thriller.

Together we will read The Shining by Stephen King, The Silence of the Lambs by Thomas Harris, The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson and The Talented Mr. Ripley by Patricia Highsmith, along with their adapted screenplays. Outside of class, students will review selected film adaptations of these works.

Classes will be devoted to student-led discussions of the novels and films, chapter by chapter, tracing the storyteller’s art as the works are adapted from page to screen. In small groups, students will also lead scene analyses of the films.

Finally, students will “practice” creative writing by producing either an original short-form piece of fiction (with notes for its adaptation to film), a critique of an adapted work or the first 10 pages of a screenplay.
adaptation, adhering to all formatting requirements. Time allowing, we will refine these original works via in-class workshops and readings.

Organization

Activities will cover the four language skills:
- Speaking.
- Writing.
- Listening.
- Reading.

While in-class discussion of course content will emphasize speaking (including pronunciation, stress, et cetera, evinced in the reading aloud of scenes), preparation will require reading (assigned novels, stories and adapted screenplays); writing (both critical and creative); and listening (including film extracts, author readings and presentations).