

I WANT TO BECOME THE BEST TEACHER I CAN BE

I have taught several screenwriting classes in the past 15 years and created a commercial on-demand writing course, but for the most of my career I've been focusing on creative work. It wasn't until I decided to apply for his position, that I took my first pedagogy classes online¹. I was immediately hooked! My next professional goal is to become the best teacher I can be.

Now I'm enrolled to study the Basic Pedagogical studies at Jyväskylä University². I plan to finish them by the end of 2018. If I become the Professor of Screenwriting at Aalto, I would be love to continue my pedagogical studies by taking the pedagogical classes Aalto offers to its teachers.

A GREAT TEACHER FACILITATES ACTIVE LEARNING

I see learning as an active and constructive process where the learner is the hero going through the transformation and the teacher a catalyst facilitating the learning.

I find Engaging learning model by Kirsti Lonka and Elina Ketonen³ an useful tool to understand and design a better learning process.

The first stage of this model is DIAGNOSE, ACTIVATE. To me it means first finding out what the students already know and what they want to learn and why. Then defining clear and relevant learning objectives with the students and helping them start the process.

At FOSTER LEARNING stage my job is to coach and mentor and ask right questions. To point to the right direction instead of just feeding information. To help the students to find together the principles behind the information and see how those apply to their own work and life.

I believe that technology can help us take full advantage of face-to-face time with the students. Flipped classroom⁴ is an excellent example of this kind of use of technology, and an approach I would love to use as a teacher. Aalto's MyCourses is a powerful tool and I know how to use it.

To me the best part of screenwriting is collaboration. I believe in the power of collaboration in teaching and learning as well. Collaboration is a learnable skill that is best learned in a safe and non-judgmental environment. I'm known for my exceptional collaboration skills that I've learned from the best screenwriters, producers and directors in our country. I can teach those skills, too.

The third stage of learning process, OBSERVE CHANGE is a great place to learn to give and receive feedback. This is the point where we take a look back with the students and see what has changed, what new was created and how can we do better the next time.

WRITERS WRITE

The only way to become a writer is to write. The best film schools expect their screenwriting students to write 1–2 feature length screenplays per year. Like Professor Richard Walter points out, every writer needs some scripts to find their voice and not to become too attached to them⁵.

I would have the students write *at least* one feature length screenplay and one episode of hour long drama series *each year* – in addition to serial drama concepts and short films. That may sound a lot, but it's not compared to the amount of writing the professional screenwriters do.

I would have two yearly 15–20 week workshops to help students focus on writing: one on writing a feature film and one on writing a 6-episode miniseries. By combining the MyCourse-learning system and weekly afternoon “writers’ room” sessions these workshops will fit in the syllabus.

I would use my deep connections to the film and television industry to get professional screenwriters, directors, producers and script editors give feedback to the students.

We should also gather oral histories from the top professionals of our industry and use the information gathered for education, research and to build an audiovisual knowledge library for the future generations. I'd add this to the film expression courses in the first semester of the BA studies, so that they would feel more relevant and interesting to the screenwriter students.

LEARN FROM THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Writers write what they know. Every word on the screen was first a thought on someone's mind. One of the most important tasks a writer has is to keep learning new things about themselves, others and the world. That's why learning to do research is almost as important as writing.

We must know the film and television history, understand the different genres and see how and why the film and television storytelling has changed over time. We don't have to re-invent the wheel – we can steal the best ideas and storytelling techniques and make them our own.

It is good to learn various screenwriting theories, and vital to understand that they are just tools to try out and throw out. It's also important to research both good and bad screenplays, films and television series to reveal patterns that can be turned into new theories and tools.

Screenwriters are writing for an audio-visual media, that is produced with limited resources and can be distributed in many different ways. The best writers use both the visual and the audio dimension of film and TV in their writing and cherish the limitations production and distribution gives to them. Analyzing scripts with cinematographers, sound designers and set and costume designers can give students new appreciation for all the dimensions of filmmaking. Regular contact with professional producers and buyers will help to understand the film and TV market.

As we enter the global market where the opportunities are limitless but competition hard, it is crucial to stay on top of the newest trends and developments in the filmmaking and storytelling – visit film festivals and conferences and take international screenwriting courses. As a professor I would keep on building connections to film and TV schools and industry around the world.

We should also take full advantage of the deep understanding of digital technology Aalto University has. We should find out how we could apply that understanding to our work to become together game changers in the film, television and digital media.

Researching our own work can help us become aware of the values and attitudes we didn't know we had – to find out who we are and what we want to tell others about life and the world.

I have all kinds of ideas on how to develop the screenwriting program at ELO further, but as I said, I value good collaboration above all. I know the current faculty is working hard to rise the standard of teaching at ELO even higher. I would be honored to work together with the faculty and the students to make ELO one of the leading film schools in the world.

¹ "University Teaching" by The University of Hong Kong and "What future for Education" by University of London at Coursera.com

² Kasvatustieteen perusopinnot, 25 op

³ Lonka, K., Ketonen, E. 2012. How to make a lecture course an engaging learning experience. *Studies for the Learning Society*, 2 (2–3), 63–74.

⁴ Brame, C., (2013). Flipping the classroom. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved August 15, 2018 from <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/flipping-the-classroom/>.

⁵ Film Courage. 2012. First Day In My Screenwriting Class by UCLA Professor Richard Walter. Accessed: August 15, 2018. Available from: <https://youtu.be/p0e2avJx8G8?t=8m34s>.