

Screenwriting Gurus

Nowadays you can hire a good physician, chemist, or musician at every corner. And there is plenty of staff around that trains even more of them. But, except for parts of the musician's, their industries remain literally invisible for the individual's eye.

On the other hand, movies and their stories always smile from magazine covers and get you wherever you are. People talk about movies, actors, and directors. Paradoxically, in other places than Los Angeles, New York, or London the educational means of the whole film industry are barely institutionalised, and even less so for the screenwriter.

The amount of interested screenwriting students and aspirants is far larger than the human resources of qualified teachers. Therefore, these teachers have obtained a rather cultic status and the corresponding title 'screenwriting gurus'. As a result of these high demands, Robert McKee, for instance, earns almost \$1,5 million a year for teaching about 3000 students in three-day training courses.

Other gurus are Syd Field, William Goldman, Linda Seger, John Truby, and Jeffrey Alan Schechter. Remarkably, not all of them have ever directed one of their scripts. Some of the screenwriting gurus even have never written a script and come from a literature background. As Saussure and Chomsky in the field of language, the majority of the screenwriting elite orientates towards structures.

But the list of sources for the education of screenwriters reaches as far back as the history of human action and conflict. Aristotle with his *Poetica* is the first known drama theorist. Many other approaches followed and expressed themselves in the contemporaneous literature and drama. And these are other useful sources for the craft of screenwriting.

Of course, for it bases not on visuality but mostly on inner dialogues and verbally constructed and thereby interpreted situations, a novel is different from a screenplay. However, in literature you actually find the stuff that has always interested or occupied people: murder, envy, love, war, fear, sensations, politics, sex, emotions, robbery, conflict, etc. Another field of sources consists in mythologies, religions and psychologies that tell you about the human being and its relations to others.

The best is to take in all of that in order to view upon the own script from as many different angles as possible. But if you do not intend to build up an own world like Tolkien, then stick to the news and keep up to date with what is going on in the world and in the film scene.

In the end this is the only thing your screenplay can be based on: your first and second hand everyday experiences. Nevertheless, these can be fundamentally changed by the lecture of any kind of 'screenwriting guru'.