

## Writing “Other”, a Screenwriting Module

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Ball State University  
ENG 310- Introduction to Screenwriting

### **Overview**

As we continue to master screenplay formatting and story structure, this module addresses diversity and representation in film. We will watch and discuss videos that show the value of diversity and representation in film to underrepresented people. We will watch videos that illustrate poor and absent representation in film. We will discuss the importance of diversity in representation to overrepresented people. We will then explore the Storycorps website and find inspiration for a five-page short film script featuring “other”.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the importance of diversity and representation in media.
2. Begin to understand the responsibility of representation as a filmmaker.
3. Learn to serve and adapt stories to screenplay.
4. Practice writing “other”.
5. Discuss rights for adaptation.
6. Develop trust and relationship with workshop group.
7. Become acquainted to Storycorps.

### **Notes:**

1. In this unit, I use the term “other” to refer to people or characters different from the student. The student may define for themselves what is other for them.
2. In this unit, I include gender identity, ability, class, religion, race, nationality, age/generation, geography as areas that may be other and may be underrepresented on screen.
3. The above definitions permit students of all backgrounds to flexibly challenge themselves with this assignment.
4. This unit is intended for use in a screenwriting or film production class. It is intended as one unit in a course or program of continued efforts toward inclusive teaching and diversity and responsible representation.

## **Module Part I- Diversity in Representation**

### **Watch-**

Girl Overjoyed at Doll with Prosthetic Leg- <https://youtu.be/yj5U-tr-E24>

Chadwick Boseman Surprises Black Panther Fans While They Thank Him  
<https://youtu.be/expKmfdo028>

The Danger of a Single Story-

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

### **Discuss-**

The value of representation to those who don't get to see themselves represented.

The importance of seeing more than one story about people.

## Module Part II- Poor Representation and Lack of Representation

**Watch** “ Every Line Spoken by a Person of Color” (suggested titles)

*The Fault in Our Stars*

<https://youtu.be/ITKdAfqZlhY>

*Mrs. Doubtfire*

<https://youtu.be/BXhFAYDU8r0>

*Jaws*

<https://youtu.be/G9NXYJt9EmE>

*ET*

<https://youtu.be/Q6tWJ4u4aB4>

*Blackswan*

[https://youtu.be/JDY3\\_1rNuxY](https://youtu.be/JDY3_1rNuxY)

*Spotlight*

<https://youtu.be/4qhdnRHRJbM>

*Juno*

<https://youtu.be/qG2fDsbfh7A>

How did it feel to see the representation in the "Every line spoken by a person of color" films?

What patterns do you see in casting?

What stereotypes do you see present in these examples and the media you watch?

What are some ways to avoid damaging representation and stereotypes in your writing?

- *Possible answers to discuss:*
  1. *Give underrepresented character arcs and development.*
  2. *Avoid creating underrepresented characters who just serve overrepresented protagonist's goals and stories.*
  3. *Let people read your scripts and get feedback.*

## **Module Part III- Why Diverse Representation Matters to all of us...**

### **Power Point Lecture**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uMDm7xI9CYjNTy33adsU4IJ6\\_4ALjiCa/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uMDm7xI9CYjNTy33adsU4IJ6_4ALjiCa/view?usp=sharing)

Excerpt-

“Lack of diversity and representation are not only unfair to underrepresented people, it is damaging to overrepresented people and their ability to develop their empathy circuit. The healthy development of the empathy circuit is critical to developing healthy interpersonal relationships and navigating larger social and political interactions.

We are currently experiencing an empathy deficit. An empathy deficit can lead to national and world crisis.

Film and arts are stimulators of the empathy circuit. People regularly engaging with film can practice and build that skill. Creating work with more diverse, well developed protagonists, who broaden representation can help to develop better empathy and emotional growth in overrepresented people as well as underrepresented people.

Ignoring this need leads to the opposite of empathy, which includes apathy, objectification, and dehumanization.”

## Module Part IV- Introduction to Storycorps

**Storycorps** collects stories of people from all over the country. People usually interview someone they know. The stories are collected and put in the Library of Congress and participants get copies. Often the stories are professionally edited and are featured on the website or on NPR stations. On the website, some stories are organized around common themes or identities. Storycorps can provide the opportunity to listen to authentic voices and true stories.

**Listen** to StoryCorps stories. <https://storycorps.org> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Some suggested-

Hector Black- <https://storycorps.org/stories/hector-black/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Miss Devine- <https://storycorps.org/stories/james-ransom-and-cherie-johnson/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Ramon- <https://storycorps.org/stories/ramon-chunky-sanchez/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Chris and Gabe Lopez <https://storycorps.org/stories/chris-and-gabe-lopez-160501/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

The Nature of War <https://storycorps.org/animation/the-nature-of-war/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Maurice and Miguel <https://storycorps.org/stories/maurice-rowland-and-miguel-alvarez/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Keith and Tim Harris <https://storycorps.org/stories/tim-and-keith-harris/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Balbir Singh Sodi <https://storycorps.org/stories/remembering-balbir-singh-sodhi-sikh-man-killed-in-post-911-hate-crime/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Active Shooter Drill <https://storycorps.org/stories/a-10-year-old-describes-his-first-school-active-shooter-drill/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Herman Heyn <https://storycorps.org/stories/herman-heynd-and-john-heynd-150828/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Celeste Davis-Carr and Aaron <https://storycorps.org/stories/aaron-and-celeste-davis-carr/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

What it was like to be pregnant in jail <https://storycorps.org/discover/storycorps-justice-project/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

## **Module Part V- Writing “Other”**

Using StoryCorps stories, create 5- page screenplay inspired by one of the stories. Should have a beginning, middle and end, conflict, world, and genre. It should utilize filmic tools.

Try to choose someone who is "other" than you, whether that means age, religion, race, gender, orientation, class, ability, etc.

The screenplay should not be an illustration of the Storycorps dialogue. It should be a fully developed story inspired by and in service to some truth of the story. If your screenplay is an adaptation using the same details and/ or names and locations, you need permissions to make that film.

### **WORKSHOPPING-**

- We will all support each other in our effort to write “other” and assume each of us has the best intention in representation.
- We will all understand that our early drafts may manifest stereotypes or undeveloped characters.
- We will generously help each other identify problems and be patient with each other as we work through the discomfort of developing our characters and scripts.
- We will work toward final drafts that include developed characters and avoid tropes and stereotypes.