Writing for Television is an intensive introduction for aspiring screenwriters to the subtle but encompassing problems they may expect to encounter when writing for series television. Students will study the form and format of half-hour and one hour episodic comedies and dramas intended to be encompassed as part of a television series. They will also undertake the pitching, outlining and drafting of a single episode; the creation and development of a series proposal; the make up and function of a story department; plus an overview of the industry as a whole. Long form drama including television movies and mini-series will also be examined. Prerequisite: Enrollment within the Graduate Program in Film (screenwriting); or enrollment within another graduate program at York and permission of the Graduate Program in Film Screenwriting Committee.

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INSTRUCTOR(S)
TBD

SPECIAL FEATURES

FA/FILM 4124 is an advanced screenwriting course and the second of two courses that focus on television writing.

Television is the screenwriter’s medium; the mass media platform in which writers have the most creative control – and in Canada the best chances of earning a living. The television industry is in a state of change but television storytelling is more popular than ever. With a strong focus on the future of television, this course aims to equip students with some of the knowledge and skills needed to build and sustain a career as a television writer.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

This course focuses on the collaborative process of developing ideas into TV series. Each student will develop an original series from concept to draft pilot script, with creative input from the whole class. We will start by creating and evaluating series premises, discussing the qualities that make a good series concept. Delving deeper, we will begin developing concepts into pitchable series delving deeper into story, character, engine, theme and style.
In the second term, we will focus on story: season arcs and pilot episodes. We will examine episodic structures, opening and closing scenes, character introductions, pacing, scene structure, dialogue and more.

The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion and creative work. Attendance and participation are crucial. In the TV industry the ability to present ideas orally and develop them collaboratively is an essential skill. Students will be introduced to and create a wide variety of documents and tools regularly used by television writers: pitch decks, bibles, character sketches, character grids, season arcs, beat sheets, outlines, TV scripts. Professional examples of these will be provided whenever possible.

At the same time, the course will provide students with an overview of the Canadian and international television industry. We will discuss how audience tastes, technology, market disruption, government and financial forces are impacting television and what the opportunities for writers will be in the future.

We will look at the writers roles in TV: creator, developer, writer, story editor, producer, showrunner and the writer’s role in series production from pitch to screen. We will touch on the opportunities that exist in the various genres of TV writing including children’s, animation, drama, comedy, genre writing and web series.

We will discuss how to build and sustain a career with special attention to next steps after York, including building a portfolio, the role of the union and agents, gateway jobs to television writing and other strategies for “breaking in”.

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

To prepare students for the realities of building a career as a television writer in Canada at a time of market disruption within the industry. Students will acquire a familiarity with the process of series creation by practicing the craft of series development and classroom-based collaborative creative work. Through screenings, readings and discussions, students will come to understand the elements that come together to make a great TV series. Guests speakers and mini-lectures will provide students with an overview of the process of television creation and writing, the Canadian industry, and the working life a TV writer.

GRADED ASSESSMENT

Evaluation is based on creativity, effort, participation, professionalism and writing style. Students will be expected to be in class, to participate actively and to write and deliver short documents regularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series Concept – 1-2 pages proseDue September 25, 2017 Class 3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch Deck –7-10 slidesDue October 23, 2017 Class 6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Pitch – 3-7 minutesOctober 23-November 13, 2017 Classes 6-9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series Bible – 5-10 pagesDue December 4, 2017 – Class 12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode pitch – 1 pageDue January 15, 2018 Class 14</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline – 5-10 pagesDue February 12, 2018 Class 12</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Draft 25-60 pages (script format) Due March 12, 2018 Class 21</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prerequisite: FILM 3124 – Television Writing 1 or permission of instructor. This is an advanced writing course aimed at students who are passionate about writing. Excellent writing skills are expected.

Class Attendance: Class begins at 9:30 sharp and attendance is critical. Be on time. Be prepared to participate. If you have a valid reason for missing class, inform the instructor in advance please.

Submission of Work: Proof-read all written work multiple times before handing it to the instructor. Hard-copies of assignments should be handed to the instructor at the beginning of class on the day they are due. With the instructor’s prior permission some work may be delivered by electronically. Assignments left in the instructor’s mailbox, with the department secretary or slid under an office door will NOT be accepted. Late assignments will not be accepted, other than under extraordinary circumstances and by prompt arrangement with the course director. Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized (one-half letter grade per day that the assignment is late), with a grade of F after one week. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness or compassionate grounds will require documentation (e.g., doctor’s letter).

Formatting of Written Work: Prose assignments should be formatted as follows: single- spaced, 12 pt. font, ragged right margin with pages stapled. The first page should include student’s name, course name and number, assignment title and date. All subsequent pages should include the student’s name and the page number. Except in the case of scripts and assignments longer than 5 pages, a cover sheet is unnecessary.

Outlines and scripts should be in proper TV screenplay format, Courier or Times Roman 12 point with standard margins. Acts must be number with new acts starting on a new page. The header on each page should be set up as: Series Name (if applicable): Episode number. Episode Title – Writer’s Last Name – Draft # -- Date – p. #. The title page should be formatted as follows:

Series Name
Episode Number and Title

Written by
Writer’s Name

Stage and Draft # Date
Writers Contact Information
Course Number and Name

Course Texts / Required Readings: A variety of pitch documents, series bibles and scripts will be made available for reading and class discussion.

Last date to drop a fall term (F) course without receiving a grade:
Last date to drop a winter term (W) course without receiving a grade: Last date to drop a full year (Y) course without receiving a grade:

Academic Policies / Information

The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) provides a Student Information Sheet that includes:

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures / Academic Integrity Web site
- Access/Disability
- Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants
- Religious Observance Accommodation
- Student Code of Conduct

Additional information:

- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
- Alternate Exam and Test Scheduling
- Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy

The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (a) the grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and that, (b) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for ‘full year’ courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade.

- Important University Sessional Dates (you will find classes and exams start/end dates, reading/curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more.

http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm

- “20% Rule”

No examinations or tests collectively worth more than 20% of the final grade in a course will be given during the final 14 calendar days of classes in a term. The exceptions to the rule are classes which regularly meet Friday evenings or on Saturday and/or Sunday at any time, and courses offered in the compressed summer terms.

Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.
Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.

Moodle @ York University