EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
FILM AND VIDEO
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Cinema and Media Arts
FA / FILM 3124 3.0 SECTION M
WRITING FOR TELEVISION I
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

Last Modified Date: 12/17/2019

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Provides a focus on the craft of writing dramatic scripts (teleplays) for television and related media, and hands-on experience with working in a story department, culminating in each student's creation of an original one-hour prime time television series. Prerequisites: Fa/FILM 2121 6.00 and Fa/FILM 2120 6.00

SPECIAL FEATURES

Writing for Television is a half-term course designed to introduce highly motivated students to episodic television writing. The course will include a study of the form and format of half-hour comedies and one-hour dramas; pitching, outlining and drafting a single episode of an existing TV series (a “spec script”); working in a “mock” story department plus an overview of the industry in general.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

The course will involve a detailed study of the craft of writing dramatic/comedic scripts (teleplays) for television. Students will be required to watch numerous TV series on various platforms in order learn how these shows are structured and how different platforms shape the content and structure of the shows they broadcast or stream.

Classes will consist of lectures and screenings designed to provide a brief retrospective of television series and a broad overview of the current television industry. Discussions and small group work sessions will involve analysis of specific television programs, “story-breaking” and story-editing. These will be integrated with craft-oriented assignments and exercises.

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

Once we narrow our focus to the series that students will write spec scripts for, class time will involve analyzing scripts and watching episodes of these series. Students will be divided into story-editing groups. Each student will write an original spec script of the series they choose, plus help the other members of the group to create and execute their spec scripts. This will mimic the process of many TV writers’ rooms. The process of writing the script will be broken into 4 stages: 1-page proposal, beat sheet, outline and script.
It is the goal of the course to give you the skill set necessary to write for an existing series and to learn what makes a long-running series work.

GRADED ASSESSMENT

Assignments and Grading Scheme

- ASSIGNMENT #1 (10%): DUE JAN. 13
  Analysis of a series chosen by instructor i.e. what is the series about? How does the series concept generate story ideas? Analysis of series characters i.e. how do the characters serve the series concept and generate story ideas? Three pages.

- ASSIGNMENT #2 (10%): DUE JAN. 27
  1-page Story pitches (no more than 3) for an episode of the series you will write a Spec script for.

- ASSIGNMENT #3 (15%): DUE FEB. 10

- ASSIGNMENT #4 (25%): DUE MARCH 2
  Scene by scene outline based on beat sheet.

- ASSIGNMENT #5 (25%): DUE MARCH 30
  First draft script.

PARTICIPATION (15%): Includes attendance, participation in classroom discussions, attitude, collaboration with others, (Being late or absent, except in cases of verifiable illness or family emergency will result in a reduction of this portion of the final mark.)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Story editing teams will be formed at the second or third class. If you know someone you’d like to work with, let me know and I will try to accommodate such requests.

Evaluation

Evaluation of creative materials will be based on the student’s demonstrated strengths in the areas of story creation, character development, dialogue, dramatic structure and screenplay form. Evaluation of analytical exercises will take into account the depth and breadth of the analysis, the degree to which the submitted work satisfies the stated objectives of the exercise, the quality of the discursive prose employed by the writer -- including grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling -- and, finally, the degree of imagination and originality displayed.

Written Presentation

Your written work is expected to meet professional standards and therefore should be formatted according to standard screenplay/teleplay formats and should contain no unintended spelling or grammatical errors. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments should be formatted as follows:

For prose: double-spaced, 12 pt. font, margin flush left, ragged right.
Screenwriting software is a necessity for screenplays and script outlines. Final Draft and Movie Magic Screenwriter are the two industry standard programs. Free software is also available: FadeIn, Celtx and Writers Duet are the ones most frequently used by students, but others are available.

Pages and scenes should always be NUMBERED.

Include a title page clearly indicating script title, student’s name, date, course name and number and assignment name/number.

Proofread your work carefully before handing it in. Exchange your work with your story editing partners and proof again.

Assignment Submission
Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Hard copies of the assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of the class on the due date. Electronic submissions will only be accepted if pre-arranged with me.

Lateness Penalty: Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized half a letter grade per day late. Assignments received more than two weeks late will not be marked. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

- Grading
The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments will bear a letter grade.
(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - https://calendars.students.yorku.ca/

- Drop Dates:

Last date to drop courses without receiving a grade  March 13

For other important dates refer to (https://registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/fw19)

- 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/co-curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more.
  [http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm](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.

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**Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.**

[Moodle @ York University](http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm)