Course Overview & Learning Objectives

Catalog description: Scriptwriting for basic genres of serial television & the web. Includes study of serial script structure, story, character development and dialog.

- Students will gain an understanding of the structure of the television industry and the varying role of the scriptwriter.
- Students will learn the different genres and the storytelling conventions of those genres in TV scriptwriting.
- Students will learn the importance of the premise, universal appeal, central idea, plot, themes, TV "bibles" and TV characters, development and dialog.
- Students will learn the format mechanics and conventions of writing a TV "spec script."

Required Material


Requirements, Assignments, & Grading

Complete the required reading and assignments prior to each class session and arrive prepared to discuss them. You will demonstrate your command of the subject matter through:

Draft analyses (2): "C Word" script 10%
Documentary summary 5%
Analysis & comedy spec episode 15%
Analysis & drama spec episode 15%
Original series bible & episode 25%
Scene assignments (2) 10%
Midterms &/or Final Exam 10%
Attendance / Participation 10%

TOTAL 100%

Assignment Policy

Assignments are eligible for up to 100% credit if they are submitted on the due date by 12pm. If you submit the assignment on the due date but after 12pm, you can only earn 10% credit. One day late: 75%; two days late: 50%. Assignments will not be accepted after that point, unless you have met with me in person. If you are absent on a day an assignment is due, your assignment is still due by 12pm.

(Please find the course calendar in a separate document.)
Please note: If you’ve had classes with me before, you’re used to submitting things online. This quarter I’m experimenting with requiring all submissions on paper. SCRIPTS, however, will need to be submitted both on paper and on Canvas.

Plagiarism

The Film and Video Studies program has a zero tolerance policy regarding plagiarism. If at any point plagiarism is discovered in your work, you will receive an F for the course and will be expelled from the FVS program. If you are not an FVS major, you will receive an F for the course and must meet with the instructor and your department chair to discuss other action.

Plagiarism is defined in the CWU Student Code of Conduct as "the appropriation of any other person's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own work offered for credit." If in doubt, cite your source. If you are going to quote a source verbatim, you must use quotation marks around the material and cite your source. If you are paraphrasing another's work, you still must cite the source.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance will be recorded in order to accurately assess participation. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to inform me after class. Three tardies (or instances of leaving class early) equal one absence. Keep track of your attendance to make sure you don’t exceed the allowable number. Your attendance grade can be positively affected by your active participation in class, and negatively affected by the lack of it.

You can take 1 “free” absence without penalty. Here’s how your attendance grade will break down (out of 100%):

- 2 absences: minus 10%
- 3 absences: minus 40%
- 4 absences: minus 80%
- 5 absences: zero points possible

6 or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Please don’t put both of us in the position where I have to enforce this. Because I will.

There are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences. Save your absences for sick days, production shoots, job interviews … etc. If there is a death in your family or you are hospitalized or otherwise detained, please contact me, your advisor, and the department chair or program director of your major (in the case of FVS, Dr. Michael Ogden).

The schedule may change, weird stuff comes up, life gets crazy for all of us. I understand that. Please communicate with me if anything is going on that affects your ability to succeed in the class, or if you are concerned, frustrated, overjoyed … let’s keep each other in the loop.

Proofreading & Screenplay Format

You are expected to carefully proofread all assignments and scripts. Every assignment grade will include a percentage based on spelling and grammar.

Formatting should follow the script guidelines presented in class, in the textbook, and on the assignment sheets. You may either purchase script formatting software or use one of the free resources available online:

(Please find the course calendar in a separate document.)
- Celtx is great for single-camera comedies and hour dramas – go to celtx.com
- For multi-camera sitcom format, you will have to format manually within Celtx or download a free trial of Movie Magic Screenwriter 6 – screenplay.com/t-mmsdemo.aspx

Your scripts must ALWAYS be submitted BOTH on paper and in .pdf format. (Other assignments are paper-only.)

Canvas & Email

The Canvas classroom will contain pertinent course documents. You are responsible for retrieving necessary items to complete your homework from Canvas.

I will be using your school email address or Canvas to contact you. Please check your messages regularly. If I have to cancel class, I will email everyone and arrange for a note on the door, if possible.

ADA Accommodation

If you have a disability and wish to set up academic adjustments in this class, I will be happy to work with you on this. Please send me an electronic copy of your “Academic Adjustments” form so we can meet to discuss how the approved adjustments will be implemented. If you do not yet have this form, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible: Bouillion 140 / ds@cwu.edu / 509-963-1202.

Behavior

Disruptive and/or unkind words or actions will not be tolerated and could result in your removal. Together, we will maintain a respectful, productive environment.

In consideration of me, your classmates, and our shared experience, please turn off your cell phones and other devices when class begins. Laptops may be used, but your participation grade may be affected if it is clear you are not really “present” and engaged in the class.

As writers, we can feel sensitive or exposed when our ideas or scripts are discussed. We’ll respect each other and the work, and strive for thoughtful, honest and constructive comments and questions.

(Please find the course calendar in a separate document.)
**COM/ENG 357 - Scriptwriting for Serial Media**  
**Tue / Thur   12p - 1:50p    L&L 223**  
**Spring '15**

### Week 2

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>31-Mar</td>
<td>Introductions; Syllabus &amp; Course Expectations</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment:</strong> A1 &quot;The C Word&quot; 1st draft analysis (due Tue. 4/7)</td>
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<td>Thur</td>
<td>2-Apr</td>
<td><strong>No class; Prof. Sanders in Yakima</strong></td>
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**Reading:** Chapters 1 & 2 (Industry overview; getting your scripts read)

### Week 2

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>7-Apr</td>
<td>Industry overview; staff/freelance writing; spec scripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>9-Apr</td>
<td><strong>No class; Prof. Sanders in Missouri</strong></td>
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**Assignment:** A2 "The C Word" 2nd draft analysis (due Tue. 4/14)  
**Assignment:** Documentary Summary (due Tue. 4/14)

**Reading:** Chapters 3-8 (Comedy)

### Week 3

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<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>14-Apr</td>
<td>Single-camera comedy; screening(s) and discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>16-Apr</td>
<td>Genre &amp; &quot;Favorites&quot; exercise; &quot;C Word&quot;</td>
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**Assignment:** A3 Half-hour comedy analysis (due Tue. 4/21)

### Week 4

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<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>21-Apr</td>
<td>Multi-camera comedy format, script examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>23-Apr</td>
<td>Screenings &amp; discussion</td>
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**Assignment:** A4 Comedy Scene (due Tue. 4/28)

**Reading:** Chapters 15 & 16 (Characters & Dialogue)

### Week 5

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<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>28-Apr</td>
<td>Multi-camera comedy cont'd; &quot;How I Met Your Mother&quot; script</td>
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<td>Thur</td>
<td>30-Apr</td>
<td>Seinfeld Day: &quot;Running With the Egg&quot;</td>
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**Assignment:** A5 Comedy spec episode outline & 1st scene scripted  
(due Tue. 5/5)

**Reading:** Chapters 9-11 (Drama)

### Week 6

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<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>5-May</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Thur</td>
<td>7-May</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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**Assignment:** A6 Drama analysis (due Tue. 5/12)
**Week 7**

**Tue  12-May**  Drama

**Thur  14-May**  Drama; discuss A7 scene assignment

**Assignment:**  *A7 Dramatic scene (due Tue. 5/19)*

**Reading:**  Chapters 12 & 13 (Original series)

**Week 8**

**Tue  19-May**  Drama; workshop scenes

**Thur  21-May**  Drama

**Assignment:**  *A8 Drama spec episode outline & 1st scene scripted (due Tue. 5/26)*

**Reading:**  Chapter 17 (Getting a pitch meeting)

**Reading:**  Chapters 25-27 (Agents, WGA, writing in teams)

**Week 9**

**Tue  26-May**  Industry Structure cont'd.; Bibles

**Thur  28-May**  Pilots & Pitching

**Assignment:**  *A9 Series pitch (due Tue. 6/2)*

**Reading:**  Chapters 14 & 23 (MOWs and reality TV)

**Reading:**  Chapters 28-32 (Getting work, interviewing, getting the job, networking, etc.)

**Week 10**

**Tue  2-Jun**  Pitch sessions

**Thur  4-Jun**  Reality TV; Writing for the Web; working in the industry

**Assignment:**  *A10 Series episode outline (due Wed. 6/10)*

**Week 11**  *Finals week*

**Mon  8-Jun**  2p - 4p  Final Exam

**Assignment:**  *A11 Series bible & pilot episode (due Wed. 6/10 by 5pm)*