

# COMM 3305-02: SHORT FORM SCREENWRITING & ANALYSIS

(CRN 10955)

Spring 2016 T / Th 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM ANTHROPOLOGY G15

## INSTRUCTOR: Christopher Renaud

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs: 2 - 5 PM and by appt.

Office: HUM 143

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## REQUIRED MATERIALS See <http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/>

- Your Screenplay Sucks: 100 Ways to Make it Great.** Akers, William. Wise Film. 2008. ISBN 1-932907-45-9
- Celtx.com account** (free screenwriting software from Celtx.com)
- Other online readings and resources via D2L-CourseDen**

## OPTIONAL RESOURCES (ie Library) by subject

Save the Cat, by Blake Snyder (*film related*)

On Writing, by Stephen King (*on being a writer*)

Writing the TV Drama Series, by Pamela Douglas

Create your own TV Series for the Internet, by Ross Brown

Write to TV: Out of your head and onto the screen, by Martie Cook

Screenplay, by Syd Field

*What's happening **now** must be inherently more interesting than what just happened.* – Doug Heyes

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This is a writing workshop where students will study and implement storytelling structure in the creation of cinematic, televisual and web-based stories and series. This is also the writing-intensive course for two of our departmental concentrations, so extreme attention will be given to the technical, structural, and grammatical components of writing.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will critically understand storytelling structure across multiple platforms, including web, television, and film.
2. Students will develop skills in both their technical and creative writing. (Screenwriting combines both.)
3. Students will develop skills in story and project, development, analysis and promotion.

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Students will demonstrate understanding of paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, theory/research, social, and **technical** issues facing convergence journalism, **film and media arts**, and public relations industries, as well as the role of the principle personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and social responsibility.

## MASS COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will demonstrate awareness of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological issues; and the role of principle personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines awareness as familiarity with facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.

Students will demonstrate understanding of mass communications scholarship, i.e., theory/research; paramount economic, ethical, legal/policy, social, and technological issues; and the role of principle personalities and stakeholders within the context of freedom of speech, freedom of press, media competition, media convergence, diversity, and/or social responsibility. ACEJMC defines understanding as assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.

Students will demonstrate effective application of mass communications scholarship, i.e., relate and/or apply concepts, theory/research, and professional principles to analyze and synthesize information, create, develop, produce, and/or write for converging digital, multi-media, and traditional media. ACEJMC defines application as competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Warm-up Exercises (10 points) – Short pieces of writing to help you find story ideas and characters which will sustain your creative interest for the rest of the semester. These (and all below) will be detailed via handouts.

Shopping Trip Script (15 points) – 3 pages, standard script format, 3 characters maximum, only 2 may speak. Protagonist is shopping inside a store (of choice) for something they will use that evening. They interact with a stranger, and that interaction changes their original plans for the night.

Family Gathering Script (15 points) – 4 pages maximum, standard script format. Relatives have gathered for an event, and drama/conflict ensues when someone delivers life-altering news.

Treatment (5 points) – 1 page, single-spaced. Your complete final script story written in short story format.

Final Script (25 points) – 10 pages maximum, no minimum. Content of choice, but must be feasible for production by a college student with available resources similar to your own.

Logline (2.5 points) – 1-2 sentence teaser of your Final Script.

Synopsis (2.5 points) – 2-5 sentence plot summary of your Final Script.

Reading Quizzes 3 x 5 (15 points) – To test comprehension of textbook reading assignments.

Participation (10 points) – Gauged by quality of in-class peer critiques, willingness and engagement during in-class readings, and attendance as it relates to in-class participation.

*Many assignments have multiples phases. You will **not** be able to get an **A** if you do not follow all the instructions and stick to all the deadlines provided.*

All assignments will contain an in-class component, including self and peer review, that will contribute to that assignment's overall grade. You will not be able to complete this in class peer portion if you did not finish the writing being reviewed.

**Late Assignments:** I reserve the right to **not** accept late assignments. If a late assignment is deemed acceptable, it will be severely penalized (think 15-40%).

**You will turn in ALL WORK in two forms:**

1) a printed paper copy, in-hand when you arrive AND 2) a digital document (Word or a .pdf generated from Celtx) in the D2L Dropbox for that assignment. **You must turn in both by the due date to receive credit.**

## GRADE ALLOCATION

A = 90 - 100%      B = 80 – 89%      C = 70 – 79%      D = 60 – 69%      F = 59% or below

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:** This is a workshop-style class and requires active participation from everyone. So much learning is done from listening, from thinking, and from asking each other questions. If you are not in class, you are not participating and you are therefore doing yourself and your classmates a disservice. **Attendance and active participation are learning.**

Additionally, there is something due every week of the semester along with other In-class exercises and assignments. If you are not in class, your work will be considered late and you will miss in-class exercises, which are also graded.

- Class starts at 11:00 AM: **Show up prepared and on time.** Being prepared includes having your assignments printed before our meeting time.

- Doing things unrelated to the class during class-time (ie. sleeping, emailing, surfing the web, not paying attention) will effect your participation grade. **No “multitasking.”** This is a space for you to focus on one thing, and one thing only. Give yourself this gift.

- Documented, excused absences will not count against your participation grade, but you are required to make up any work that has been missed. If you miss class, your work is still due.

- Because so much learning gets done in class, if you miss more than 25% of the class meetings, **for whatever reason**, you cannot pass the class.

**Cell phone use: Cell phones have NO PLACE in this classroom whatsoever. Turn them off before you walk into the room. If I see your cell phone you will be considered absent for that day (i.e. you cannot turn work in, and you could fail if it happens repeatedly).**

*If there is something pressing you need to deal with, inform me at the start of class, and leave the room to the deal with the matter.*

#### **OTHER UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES**

**Students with Special Needs:** I will gladly make the necessary accommodations to ensure students with special needs can complete the class and get the most out of it. Please don't “wing it” and then tell me at the end of the semester. Come see me in private with your paperwork and we can discuss your particular needs.

**UWG Email Policy:** The University considers students' **my.westga.edu (Gmail)** account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email frequently for class, department, and University information. I frequently email documents and class-related updates – not checking your email is no excuse for not completing work on time.

**Common language for course syllabi:** Students should please review the following information regarding ADA, UWG Email Policy, Credit Hour Policy, and UWG Honor Code.

[http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common\\_Language\\_for\\_Course\\_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf)

#### **FINAL “EXAM” MEETING**

We will meet on **Tuesday, Apr 26, 11:00-1:30 pm**  
to turn in final projects and do course evaluations. Attendance is required.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Our schedule will be delivered separately, and if necessary, will be adjusted to accommodate the flow of the course. You are responsible for tracking these changes and meeting class deadlines.

## **MY ROLE**

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I am **absolutely, fundamentally, committed** to helping you understand concepts, principles, software and techniques – both professionally and by personal inclination. My method is:

- 1) to assign exercises and projects that activate you intellectually, creatively and as a person
- 2) to provide interesting examples and context
- 3) demystify the process the process of storytelling
- 3) offer and foster frank, benevolent feedback – with the **sole** purpose of helping you become a **better, more expressive filmmaker**
- 4) to facilitate lively in-class discussions.

I am available and ready to help you when you need it - especially the harder you work, and the more ambitious your goals. If you're having trouble, it's crucial that you **speak up**. I think I'm perceptive, but I can't read minds.

Ask. Seek. Question. Aim high. Stay in the game. I will be there for you.