

FIS 618 – Writing for TV I – Fall 2015

9:30 – 5:15 Fridays CBC C122

Office Hrs: 9:30-12:30 Thursdays

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Objective -- To engage the student in the study of television screenwriting, both the hour drama and the half-hour comedy. By the completion of the course, the student will be conversant with the form, style and structure of the television screenplay as well as the group dynamic required to “break story” in a writer’s room at the level they will be comfortable in a professional situation. The student will be conversant enough with the form in order to produce an outline for an existing show, as a group, and a pilot script for a new series.

Process -- Our approach to this course will be with the attitude of creating the most professional product possible given the classroom circumstances. Prior to the practical assignments, we will analyze and discuss traditional structure and style of the television screenplay. The students will learn to interact creatively, outlining, as a group and in a series of small groups. Students will be established in a series of small groups, or writer’s rooms. Each group will execute an outline, then script, of an existing television series as determined by the instructor. Upon completion of the “spec” sample, as a group, each writer will, then, begin to work on their original pilot episode. The writers will finish a rough draft of the pilot for their final exam.

Outcome – By the end of the course the student will be able to demonstrate and participate in the “pitching” process that will be the same in any professional writers room they may encounter in “Hollywood.” The student will be able to create a “writer’s room” script in correct industry format and structure of an existing show. The student will produce an original pilot script by the final day of class.

Requirements and Grading (Assessment)

--Pitching and outlining as a group will consist of **30%** of the grade. The student will prepare periodic evaluations of themselves and of the group. The collaboratively created spec script for an existing show will be worth **30%** of the final grade. Everyone in the group will share that grade. If the group isn’t working, your grade will reflect. We need to monitor each other and determine how to produce correctly. T.V. writing is as much about the process as the product. The final **40%** of the grade will be determined by the rough draft of the original pilot script. In that script the student must demonstrate the format and structural principals that will have been covered in the study and “spec” –of-an-existing-show portion of the class. Just because it’s original does that mean you not do what you’ve been trained to do.

--Assignments are due on specified dates. Malfunctioning or unavailable computer technology is **NOT** an excuse.

--All discussion will be respectful and professional in nature. This is a collaborative environment and a forum of open and creative expression. Any student unable to deport him/herself in professional and courteous manner will be counseled and warned in writing. If the situation does not change, the student will be administratively dropped at the discretion of the instructor.

Schedule of Classes (Subject to change: this is a group-driven, student-directed class requiring collaborative and individual creative activity. Strict adherence to a schedule may not yield the optimum results. This will all be monitored and determined by the Professor.)

NOTE: All written material to be discussed in class must be submitted to the entire class NO LATER than the Wednesday before that Friday. In other words, give your classmates a two day lead time to see the material. If you do the math, you will see that there is a lot of material on some days. Pitches will never be submitted as written material. They are pitches. That means aloud and in the room. If you write it, you start to get set on it, then you get defensive about it and when you do that – you cease to be a screenwriter.

August 28 -- Introduction to the form, structure, and format of the television series and how episodic is different from features and how it is similar. View samples, both of scripts and finished episodes. In-depth discussion of how the writers room works: with examples and expectations.

September 4 – View additional samples of established show. Discussion of appropriate samples for the writer’s portfolio. Group determination of which shows we will spec. Determination of groups. Both of these will be student-directed exercises, with Instructor approval, of course....

September 11 – Groups work on breaking outlines of spec episodes.

September 18 – Groups pitch outlines to class: class and professor notes are given: discussion. Groups either sent to revise or to go to script.

September 25 – Pitch revisions: notes on scripts: group work on scripts with Professor interaction.

October 2 – Workshop first drafts of “spec” scripts – cohort and professor give revision notes.

October 9 – Workshop first drafts of “spec” scripts – cohort and professor give revision notes.

October 16 – Mid-term – All drafts of spec screenplay are due. Begin pitching spec pilots.

October 23 – continue pitching spec pilots: first outlines in.

October 30 -- Nevada Day (enjoy the day off – go to California... or Valley of Fire... or Sam's Town...)

November 6 –pitch any that need to still be pitched; workshop outlines that have come in.

November 13 – wrap up all pitches, definitely, and any outstanding outlines.

November 20 – Everyone launched to script on this date. Workshop any lingering outlines.

November 27 – Thanksgiving – Go enjoy some gluttony.

December 4 - Trouble shooting for scripts. Any first drafts may come in for workshop.

December 11 – Final Exam: selected readings and discussion.

IMPORTANT

As a film major you will be presented with opportunities to work in the production of your own projects, other student or faculty projects, projects for other classes and even professional projects that will shoot in town. You are encouraged you to take advantage of every opportunity to practice and hone your art and craft but not at the expense of your work in this class. Participation in **any** production outside of this class is **not** an excuse for failing to complete any and all responsibilities established in this course.

And that other stuff the University wants to have in every syllabus!

Academic Misconduct – Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright – The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC) – The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor before or after class in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Religious Holidays Policy – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes, September 4, 2015, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Incomplete Grades - The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700- level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring – The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling 702-895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

Rebelmail – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.

Final Examinations – The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.