

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
2500B: Writing for the Television Industry
Winter 2018

Section: # 001
Time/Room: Wednesdays 2:30pm-5:30pm in
Sommerville House 3345
Instructor: Dr. Michael Arntfield
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Email: marntfie@uwo.ca
Office: Lawson Hall 3270

Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-2:20pm &
5:30-6:20pm

Course Objectives

This course teaches students how to write and subsequently pitch creative projects that reflect the four current television broadcast models: network, basic cable, premium cable, and Over the Top (OTT). By exploring a variety of both scripted and unscripted approaches traversing the genres, this course will also help prepare students for careers in paid writing and production in the TV industry in both Canada and the United States. Students will also learn how to navigate the different funding models and development processes between the two countries, including the use of agents, unions, and studios. Each week will consist of two lecture hours plus a one-hour tutorial/screening session.

Required Texts

-  Landau, Neil (2014) *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap*. New York: Focal Press
-  Sepinwall, Alan & Matt Zoller Seitz (2016) *TV: The Book*. New York: Grand Central

Course Assignments

1. (40%) - In-class quizzes (4 in total)
2. (20%) - "One-Pager" for unscripted project
3. (30%) - "Bible" for scripted project
4. (10%) - Attendance, peer editing & in-class workshops



Tentative Course Schedule

Part I: The Television Industry Today

- ‡ Week 1 (Jan. 10): Course Introduction & the Evolution of Television as a Medium
Read Landeau pages xvii-xxiii & 21-26 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed
- ‡ Week 2 (Jan 17): Dominant Broadcast Models & the Role of Writers
Read Landeau pages 1-20 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Part II: Scripted vs. Unscripted Projects

- ‡ Week 3 (Jan. 24): In-Class Quiz #1
No readings
- ‡ Week 4 (Jan 31): Writing for Scripted & Unscripted Genres
Read Landeau pages 27-55 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed
- ‡ Week 5 (Feb. 7): In-Class Quiz #2
No readings

Part III: Plotting & Pitching

- ‡ Week 6 (Feb. 14): Writing Pitch Documents Part 1
Read Landeau pages 56-96 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed
- ‡ Week 7 (Feb. 21): READING WEEK – NO CLASSES
Review previous readings as required
- ‡ Week 8 (Feb. 28): In-Class Quiz #3
No readings
- ➔ **“One Pager” for unscripted series due via OWL by 4:30pm on February 28**
- ‡ Week 9 (March 7): Writing Pitch Documents Part 2
Continue reading Landeau pages 97-142 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Part IV: Development & Production

- ‡ Week 10 (March 14): Getting Your Project “Green Lighted”
Read Landeau pages 167-194 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed
- ‡ Week 11 (March 21): Writing into the Production Process
Read Landeau pages 195-222 & 250-267 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed
- ‡ Week 12 (March 28): Guest Lecture – Getting into the Industry in Canada
No readings
- ‡ Week 13 (April 4): Quiz #4
No readings
- ‡ Week 14 (April 11): END OF TERM – NO CLASS
- ➔ **“Bible” for pilot episode of scripted series due via OWL by 4:30pm on April 11**



↳ Assignment Format

All assignments are to be typed, using 12 point font unless otherwise specified. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and both the professor and TA's names on the first page. When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or CMS standards for documentation, detailed in *The Brief Penguin Handbook* sections 22, 23, 24, and 25, as well as on Wikipedia.

↳ Assignment Deadlines

Assignments are due in-class on the date specified on the schedule. Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day, including weekends, unless I've granted an extension at least 72 hours in advance and *in writing*. You must apply for extensions ahead of the due date; they are not automatic and are granted selectively. I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since the purpose of this course is to prepare you for a career in writing, you need to know that deadlines are not a matter of negotiation. For these reasons, all assignments will be due on the date specified barring some catastrophic event. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer.

N.B.: NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE TERM ENDS.

How to Submit Assignments

Assignments are due via OWL and in PDF format no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date specified on the class schedule and displayed under the "assignments" tab on OWL. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day unless I have granted you an extension, as explained in the previous section. Note that assignments submitted after 4:30 p.m. (the end of the "business day") are graded as though they are received the day after they are uploaded.

If hard copies of assignments are deemed necessary, please submit assignments either in class as specified or via the Writing Department Drop Box located outside Lawson Hall 3270, making sure you include your instructor's name and your section number. However, do not:

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments

Also, be aware that **you are responsible for keeping copies of all assignments submitted.**

Attendance policies

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. A ledger is circulated in each class requiring that students confirm their attendance in writing for tracking attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance is expected and simply signing the register in each class will not ensure a strong class work grade on its own. Regular and impassioned participation in class discussions and workshops is your best method to excel in this area of the grading rubric. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.
- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons with your instructor within one week of that absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should

discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors. See also: ‘**Medical Accommodation Policy**’ to follow. **Note:** Absences from classes reserved for peer review workshops will not only affect your final attendance/participation grade but will have the incur the additional penalty of an immediate 10% deduction from any grade received on the final version of that same assignment. The peer review process is foundational to improving as a writer and is a core function of this course and the associated learning objectives and pedagogy. A failure to attend class on these dates not only undermines the ability for your assignment to receive feedback and proofreading services from your colleagues but also disrupts this process for the entire class.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/schloff.pdf>.”

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

“All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Note: *In this course you will be required to submit an electronic copy of the final version of each of your essays to turnitin.com through your section’s OWL home page.*

Prerequisites

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student’s record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Medical Accommodation Policy

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

[downloadable Student Medical Certificate {SMC}: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading]

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or Writing Studies, and Writing Studies requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing

Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information.

Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

‡ Dr. Mike's Policy on Social Media & Wireless Devices:

Note that while the responsible use of smartphones, notebook computers, tablets, and other devices as learning tools in this course is certainly encouraged, and while I understand that smartphones in particular are increasingly integral to students' social experience at Western, it is expected that these technologies will be used appropriately in the context of the classroom. Please respect your professor (me) and peers (your friends and classmates) by refraining from SMS texting, BBMing, iMessaging, or using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, et al. other than during the designated break times. Students who are found to be distracted by and/or routinely engaged in social media, or found using wireless devices for personal business during lectures, peer review sessions, or in-class assignments will be deemed to be *mentally absent* and will have their attendance and participation marks affected to the same degree as someone who has failed to attend entirely. Please don't make this an issue. Please use discretion and common sense.