



## WRITING 2204F: SHORT FLICKS: AN INTRO TO SCREENWRITING – FALL 2023

**SECTION: 650**

**Online, Asynchronous**

### **Course Description**

This course explores writing short film screenplays via lectures and practical workshops, all conducted online, asynchronously. Students will learn the fundamentals of storytelling in the film medium and how short films differentiate from feature-length movies. Students will be guided on how to use screenwriting software to write short films between five and ten minutes in length, while also learning how to orally pitch film ideas, outline and draft scripts and incorporate feedback into revisions. Lectures will focus on structure, plot and genre; characters and dialogue; the anatomy of scenes; and conflict and point of view.

### **Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

- communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audience;
- identify the purpose, function and narrative structure of short films;
- understand industry standard screenwriting formatting and software;
- analyze and respond critically to scripts, completed films and the work of peers;
- generate story ideas into outlines and screenplays and incorporate feedback

### **Required Texts and Software**

- Writing Short Films, 2nd Edition by Linda J. Cowgill (available at Western Bookstore)
- Celtx Screenwriting Software (online, free)

### **Recommended Texts**

- The Writer's Journey, 25th Anniversary Edition by Christopher Vogler (available at Western Bookstore)

### **OWL**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

## Course Requirements

The overall course grade will be calculated as below:

Assignment	% of Grade	Deadline
Loglines & Synopsis	15%	Week 3 (Sep 27)
5 minute Short Film Script	15%	Week 5 (Oct 11)
Pitch Presentation and Written Proposal for 10-minute film	20%	Weeks 6 & 8 (Oct 18 & Nov 8)
Final Draft of 10-minute film	30%	First drafts due Week 9/10 (Nov 15 & 22) Final drafts due week 12 (Dec 8)
Exercise Engagement & Discussion	10%	N/A
Workshop Peer Review (participation & professionalism)	10%	N/A

### **Assignment Format**

All assignments must be word-processed in a 12-point Courier font for scripts and a 12-point for other assignments. Scripts must be formatted in proper screenplay format as described in class. Students must use either the online Celtx software or another screenwriting program. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor's name on the first page. Please include page numbers.

### **Submitting Assignments**

In this course, you will be required to submit the final version of each of your assignments electronically via OWL as a PDF to Turnitin.com and provide your instructor with a hard copy in class the day the assignment is due. Some assignments will require first draft submissions via email or dropbox in advance of final drafts.

Late assignments will receive a penalty of up to 5% per day including weekends. If you need an extension for a medical reason, you must contact the Academic Counselling of your home Faculty.

### **Attendance Policy**

This course will be conducted as asynchronously, and therefore students will be able to engage in relevant class materials at their own pace on their own schedule.

However engagement in these materials is required to improve as a writer. Students will be expected to watch lecture materials and screenings and to participate in classroom discussions where applicable. Lecture modules and screenings will feature short subsequent questionnaires or surveys as means of measuring student engagement. Relevant lectures topics will also feature discussion groups, where the instructor will post questions for the students or the students can ask questions for clarification. Participation in these activities will count towards the “Exercise Engagement & Discussion” portion of the student’s grade.

Many assignments, will require students submit their work in advance of the final deadline, so that students can provide constructive feedback on their peers work. This process is mandatory, and counts towards the Workshop Peer Review portion of the grade.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below. For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University’s medical illness policy at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

## Academic Offences

**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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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.

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>).

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes **only** (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing

access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism in any form.

Assignments should always reflect students' own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry, and encourages original written contributions.

## **Prerequisites**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The prerequisite for registration in this course is:

At least 65% in one of [Writing 2101F/G](#), [Writing 2125F/G](#) (or the former [Writing 2121F/G](#)), [Writing 2111F/G](#), [Writing 2130F/G](#) or [Writing 2131F/G](#); or at least 65% in one of [Writing I000F/G](#), [Writing 1030F/G](#), or [Writing 1031F/G](#); or at least 65% in each of [MIT 1020E](#) (or both of [MIT 1021F/G](#) and [MIT 1022F/G](#)) and [MIT 1025F/G](#); or permission of the Department (consult the Undergraduate Program Director, Writing).

## **Intellectual Property and Copyright**

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.