

# ENGL A127: SCRIPTWRITING I

Item	Value
Curriculum Committee Approval Date	12/02/2020
Top Code	150700 - Creative Writing
Units	4 Total Units
Hours	72 Total Hours (Lecture Hours 72)
Total Outside of Class Hours	0
Course Credit Status	Credit: Degree Applicable (D)
Material Fee	No
Basic Skills	Not Basic Skills (N)
Repeatable	No
Open Entry/Open Exit	No
Grading Policy	Standard Letter (S), • Pass/No Pass (B)
Associate Arts Local General Education (GE)	• Area 3 Arts and Humanities 3B Active Participation (OC2)
Associate Science Local General Education (GE)	• Area 3A Arts (OSC1)

## Course Description

This is a writing workshop in which students gain professional insight into scriptwriting techniques for stage, television, and feature films. Students learn how to write a beginning and ending, synopsis, treatment, step outline, and a brief scene designated for the stage, as well as television or the movies. The class focuses on the discussion of student works and their evaluation by the instructor. ADVISORY: ENGL C1000 and ENGL A119. Transfer Credit: CSU; UC.

## Course Level Student Learning Outcome(s)

1. Identify and comprehend various conventions of script writing, including how those conventions support and develop an author's themes, and apply those conventions to the process of developing the first 30 pages of an original script.

## Course Objectives

1. Identify the basic techniques of story telling as derived from a study of modern stage plays, screenplays, and television scripts.
2. Develop a disciplined writing schedule and a method of composition that will lead to the successful completion of a full-length manuscript.
3. Analyze and assess the work of contemporary writers of stage, screen, and television.
4. Write and revise 30-60 pages of a script and present them for evaluation.
5. Criticize and discuss manuscripts in a professional manner, backing up opinions with technical and theoretical principles.
6. Develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of dramatic art through written and verbal analysis of published works and student works in progress.

## Lecture Content

Introduction to the fundamentals of scriptwriting via text, lecture, videos, writing practice, and workshop. Writing skills are fostered through a range of exercises, including improvisation, collaborative scenes, overheard dialogue, premise development, character sketches, and scene building. Students participate in close reading and analysis of scenes, plays and screenplays. Peer and instructor feedback help students evaluate their own manuscripts as well as the manuscripts of others. Specific writing assignments may vary according to the instructor's assessment of student need. Introduction to the tradition of dramatic writing A brief history of theatre, motion pictures, and television Similarities and differences between film, television, and stage, including strengths and limitations of each Fundamentals of writing for the stage Fundamentals of writing for the screen Fundamentals of writing for television Introduction to basic dramatic techniques Premise / Concept Plot Structure Character Dialogue Setting Beats, Scenes, Sequences Objectives Obstacles Framing, Backstory, and Foreshadowing Style, Pacing, Tone Peripeteia Dramatic Irony Movement and Modulation Introductory Writing Schedule Page Count Hour Count Writer's Block Prewriting Revising Editing Getting Started Structural Paradigms (Hero's Journey, Hourglass, Rags-to-Riches, Riches-to-Rags, Triumph Over Adversity, Boy-Meets-Girl, etc.) Approaches to the opening scenes The Synopsis The Story Capsule The Step Outline The Treatment Manuscript Formatting for Stage and Screen Introductory Level Methods of Criticism Reading writing coverage Analysis of structure, style, and theme Applying judgments to filmed and published work Applying judgments to students' work Study of Appropriate Models Contemporary plays, screenplays, and television scripts Mainstream vs. independent Identification of genres

## Method(s) of Instruction

- Lecture (02)
- DE Live Online Lecture (02S)

## Instructional Techniques

Lectures focus on creative writing techniques and critical thinking strategies about the craft of dramatic writing, providing a variety of methods to enhance structure, style, and content. Lectures also examine the methods of aesthetic evaluation, the process of revision, and the strategies for production. Demonstration: Models of modern and contemporary scripts from various genres (drama, comedy, dramedy, action/adventure, romance, mystery, sci fi, western, and others) are demonstrated using a variety of methods: script scenes, handouts, overheads, videos, DVDs. Discussion: Students engage in regular discussions on reading and writing assignments, workshop group writing assignments, and topics (social, political, cultural, etc.) introduced in class. Technology: Students use the Internet to access information about writers and to view relevant motion pictures, television episodes, and stage plays. Video Presentation: Students view relevant videos of television, film, and dramatic works, as well as interviews with filmmakers and authors discussing their methods. Collaborative Learning: Partners and groups engage in discussion of each others' written assignments and manuscripts. Conferencing: The instructor is available for individual conferences throughout the semester.

## Reading Assignments

Reading: 45 hrs (3 hr/wk) Students interpret and evaluate dramatic literature and film, including modern and contemporary work from various genres. Students then discuss the work's relative success according to the application of standards established in class. Students learn and demonstrate the ability to apply these critical standards to contemporary film and dramatic work. Students must also read and critique their

colleagues' manuscripts each week, in seminar fashion, according to specific protocols that require them to analyze, criticize, and assess one another's manuscripts according to fundamental dramatic techniques, such as plot, character development, scene, and setting. Critical thinking is involved in determining the technical solutions to the problems in the in-progress manuscripts.

## Writing Assignments

PLEASE NOTE: The writing assignments below are produced out of class. Writing: 75 hrs (5 hr/2k) Students will produce a substantial amount of dramatic writing outside of class, 30-60 pages over the course of the semester, which will be submitted for workshop. Students will analyze their own work and others' work in terms of technical and stylistic sophistication. Students may keep journals on the process of writing and on observations that may be included in their creative work. Students may develop a final portfolio of the best revision of their manuscript.

## Out-of-class Assignments

144 hours (roughly 9 hrs/wk): Reading: 45 hrs (3 hr/wk), Writing: 75 hrs (5 hr/2k), Research, including viewing films/plays/television: 24+ hrs. Students will produce a substantial amount of dramatic writing outside of class, 30-60 pages over the course of the semester, which will be submitted for workshop. Students may keep journals on the process of writing and on observations that may be included in their creative work. Students may develop a final portfolio of the best revision of their manuscript. Students may attend plays and/or view films and television programs in their chosen genre.

## Demonstration of Critical Thinking

Analysis of one's own writing, including creating and revising portions of the manuscript, is evaluated in terms of the student's ability to critique using specific elements of dramatic art, such as plot, dialogue, character development, structure and scene, and story arc. Analysis of the writing of others, including the evaluation of professional manuscripts and of peer submissions, is evaluated on the basis of completion, effective summary, and level of analysis. Students may also be evaluated on their presentation of oral critiques during workshop discussion. Criteria are clarity, knowledge of studied material, attention the manuscript being discussed, and utility of the critique.

## Required Writing, Problem Solving, Skills Demonstration

Substantial writing, including creating and critiquing 30-60 pages of the manuscript, is evaluated in terms of the student's ability to complete written responses and manuscripts that are timely, grammatically correct, and relevant to the assignment and that incorporates the specific elements of dramatic writing discussed in class, such as plot, character, dialogue, scene development, and structure. Skills Demonstration: Students are evaluated on their class performances; that is, their reading of their creative work in class. They are also evaluated on their level of critique and comments during group discussions, and their analysis of their own work and the work of others. Portfolio: Students are evaluated on a final portfolio of their best revision of their manuscript and on the basis of timely submission, clarity of presentation, and technical merit.

## Eligible Disciplines

English: Master's degree in English, literature, comparative literature, or composition OR bachelor's degree in any of the above AND master's degree in linguistics, TESL, speech, education with a specialization in reading, creative writing, or journalism OR the equivalent. Master's degree required.

## Textbooks Resources

1. Required Aristotle (Anthony Kenny, trans.). *Poetics*, Reprint ed. Oxford U. Press, 2013 Rationale: Fundamental text on the art of drama.
2. Required Egri, Lajos. *The Art of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives*, ed. Kessinger Publishing, 2010 3.
- Required Fields, Syd. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, ed. Delta, 2005 Rationale: An accessible introductory text in screenwriting.
4. Required Riley, Christopher. *The Hollywood Standard: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Script Format and Style*, ed. Michael Wiese Prods., 2009 Rationale: Scriptwriting style guide.