

# ENGL A227: SCRIPTWRITING II

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 3A Theory (OC1)
Associate Science Local General Education (GE)	• Area 3B Humanities (OSC2)

## Course Description

This is a course for students who have completed at least one act (30 pages) of an original play or screenplay. The emphasis this semester will be on analyzing dramatic strategies in film, television, and theatre, with special attention given to bringing a short project to completion (30-60 pages). Transfer Credit: CSU; UC.

## Course Level Student Learning Outcome(s)

1. Analyze the conventions of scriptwriting across a range of genres, and employ those conventions in the development of the next 30-60 pages of an original script.

## Course Objectives

- 1. Demonstrate knowledge of specific techniques of story telling with a concentration on scene building and plot elements, as derived from an analysis of modern and contemporary stage plays, screenplays, and television scripts.
- 2. Maintain a disciplined writing schedule and method of composition, making substantial progress on the completion of a full-length stage play, screenplay, or television pilot.
- 3. Analyze and assess the work of contemporary writers and critics using intermediate dramatic techniques.
- 4. Write the next 30-60 pages of an original manuscript and present them for evaluation, or write an original short work of similar length: a one-act play, film short, or half-hour television episode.
- 5. Criticize and discuss manuscripts according to workshop protocol, incorporating line and scene editing skills.
- 6. Develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of dramatic writing through analysis of plays, films, episodic television, and student works in progress.

## Lecture Content

Intermediate scriptwriting with an emphasis on bringing a short-form script to completion, taught 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 intermediate techniques of dramatic art Refining the Concept Plot Development The Dramatic Question: Internal and External Sequence, Causality and Consequence Plot Points Multiple Plotlines Raising the Stakes Structure 3-Act Structure (Plays and Screenplays) 4-Act and 7-Act Structure (Cable Network TV) Character Development Biography Protagonist / Antagonist / Archetypes Voice Dialogue: Stage vs. Screen Setting: Sets, Locations Budgets Intermediate Scene Development Intermediate Style, Pacing, and Tone Peripeteia and Dramatic Irony Intermediate Concerns Structural Analysis Advanced Outlines Continuity Writing Mainstream vs. Independent Films Demands of Genre Special Project: Completion of a Short Work Adaptations Film Shorts Writing for Television Developing an Original Plot Spec Scripts For Existing Half-Hour Series For the One-Hour Dramatic Series For Cable and On Demand Developing an Original Pilot Writing for Soaps Writing for Reality Television Writing for the Stage The One-Act Play The One Man/Woman Show Intermediate Methods of Workshop Criticism Techniques for writing effective critiques Analysis of structure, style, and theme Applying judgments to published work Applying judgments to students' work Intermediate Study of Appropriate Models Contemporary Short Films Episodic Television Scripts Contemporary Ten-Minute Scenes and One-Act Plays Critical Reviews and Essays Intermediate Editing Concerns

## Method(s) of Instruction

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

## Instructional Techniques

Lectures focus on intermediate creative writing techniques and critical thinking strategies about the craft of writing for stage, screen, and television, providing a variety of methods to enhance style, content, and voice. Lectures also focus on the methods of aesthetic evaluation and the process of revision. 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 read published criticism and view relevant motion pictures, television episodes, and stage plays. Video Presentation: Students view relevant videos of television, film, and dramatic works, with an emphasis on short forms, and will view interviews with filmmakers and authors discussing their methods. Collaborative Learning: Partners and groups engage in a large amount of discussion of each others' written assignments and manuscripts. Supplemental Learning: Students may also attend readings and live performances of plays, to meet with and talk to professional writers and performers. Conferencing: The instructor is available for individual conferences throughout the semester.

## Reading Assignments

Reading: 45 hrs (3 hr/wk) Students interpret and evaluate substantial amounts of dramatic literature and film, including classic, modern, and contemporary work from various genres. They may also review and discuss journal articles, critical essays, and books about writing for screen and stage. 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 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. Additionally, students read selected screenplays, television scripts, and stage plays or excerpts for structural and technical analysis.

## Writing Assignments

PLEASE NOTE: Writing assignments are prepared outside 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: either the second act of a play or screenplay, or a separate short-form project (spec script, adaptation, one-act play, or pilot.) In addition, they will write critiques of peer submissions and published works, evaluating them according to intermediate dramatic strategies and techniques. Students may keep journals on the process of writing and on observations that may be included in their creative work. Students working on a feature-length film will begin to use long-manuscript writing strategies, while students working on short forms will work on revision techniques to bring the work to completion. For intermediate writers, the portfolio consists of 60 pages of original work, exhibiting a competency in the strategies and techniques of dramatic writing.

## 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: either the second act of a play or screenplay, or a separate short-form project (spec script, adaptation, one-act play, or pilot.) In addition, they will write critiques of peer submissions and published works, evaluating them according to intermediate dramatic strategies and techniques. Students may partake in visiting writer activities, attending talks and readings by professional writers and participating in question-and-answer sessions with these professionals. Students may keep journals on the process of writing and on observations that may be included in their creative work. Students working on a feature length film will begin to use long-manuscript writing strategies, while students working on short forms will work on revision techniques to bring the work to completion.

## Demonstration of Critical Thinking

Analysis of one's own writing, including creating and revising large 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. 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 work that is 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, structure and story arc. Written responses to published works are evaluated on the basis of completion, levels of analysis, and quality of summary. Weekly written critiques are evaluated by peers and by the instructor on the basis of technical accuracy and utility of the critiques to the writer(s) receiving them. Skill Demonstration: Students are evaluated on their class performance, their adherence to deadlines, and their manuscript preparation and presentation. They are also evaluated on the level of their critiques and comments during group discussions and their analysis of their own work and the work of others. Portfolio Review: 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 Gurskis Dan. *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*, ed. Cengage, 2006 Rationale: Guide to building a short film.
2. Required Dunn, Will. *The Dramatic Writer's Companion: Tools to Develop Characters, Cause Scenes, and Build Stories*, ed. U of Chicago Press, 2009 Rationale: Guide to developing character for the stage.
3. Required Walter, Richard. *Essentials of Screenwriting: The Art, Craft, and Business of Film and Television Writing*, Revised ed. Plume, 2010
4. Required Trotter, David. *The Screenwriter's Bible: A Complete Guide to Writing, Formatting, and Selling Your Script*, ed. Silman-James, 2010