

UCLA DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION, AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Example Syllabus. *The syllabi posted are general syllabi for students who wish to find out the topics generally covered in these courses*

FTV 131: INTRODUCTION TO TV WRITING UCLA FILM AND TELEVISION SUMMER INSTITUTE

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

This course will dive into the process of writing a television series. By the end of the course, you will:

1. Complete a TEASER and FIRST ACT of a TV pilot
2. Complete an OUTLINE for the rest of the pilot episode
3. Complete a SERIES DOCUMENT overviewing your series
4. Be able to PITCH the core of your series in 5 minutes or less

The course will study the current landscape of television, with an in-depth look at how projects are purchased, developed, and produced. You will become familiar with some of the major “buyers” and their specific mandates.

You will examine the different avenues of “breaking in” with a specific eye toward **writing an excellent original pilot**.

This course will explore your own tastes, experiences, and interests in order to help you develop a pilot and series that reflects your unique perspective.

Throughout the course, you will be reading and watching several noteworthy television pilots in order to analyze some current “best practices.” These pilots will be treated as texts for the course and will integrate discussions accordingly.

You will learn the fundamentals of dramatic story structure and be able to analyze the structural elements in your favorite shows and your own work.

You will also gain experience workshopping material. This includes giving and receiving feedback. You will learn how to respectfully provide notes, receive a note, pitch story ideas, and punch-up scenes.

REQUIRED READINGS

SCRIPTS

Black-ish by Kenya Barris
Breaking Bad by Vince Gilligan
Killing Eve by Phoebe Waller-Bridge
Friday Night Lights by Peter Berg
Insecure by Issa Rae
Stranger Things by The Duffer Brothers
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend by Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna*

*scripts subject to change, will be provided by instructor

BOOKS

The Power of Film by Howard Suber
TV Writing on Demand by Neil Landau
The TV Showrunner's Roadmap by Neil Landau

SUGGESTED BOOKS

Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott
Story Maps: TV Drama by Daniel Calvisi
TV Outside the Box by Neil Landau
Writing the TV Drama Series by Pamela Douglas

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- All assignments MUST be to the Professor on time. Late assignments will lose 15% points per day late.
- The assignment listed at the bottom of each CLASS will be DUE the day of the FOLLOWING CLASS. For example, the assignment listed at the bottom of CLASS 1 will be due no later than one hour before the beginning of CLASS 2.

READING/VIEWING ASSIGNMENTS

- The READING/VIEWING assignment listed at the bottom of each CLASS will be DUE the day of the NEXT CLASS. For example, the assignment listed at the bottom of CLASS 1 will be due no later than one hour before the beginning of CLASS 2. Come prepared for discussion on the reading and viewing assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

CLASS 1: INTRO AND FORMAT

- Icebreaker
- Rules/syllabus
- Fundamental elements of a dramatic TV series
- What's a logline?

- In-class character exercise

READING/VIEWING:

Breaking Bad pilot.

TV Writing on Demand, Intro and Chapter 1

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: Write a LOGLINE for the story of your life (must include the word “BUT”).

Part 2: Write TWO loglines for potential series you are interested in developing (must include the word “BUT”). Be prepared to share these loglines in class.

Part 3: Write a paragraph about what you hope to get out of this course.

CLASS 2: CHARACTERS AND CONFLICT

- What makes a great CHARACTER?
- What do we mean by CONFLICT and STORY ENGINE?
- Power of Paradox

READING/VIEWING:

Friday Night Lights pilot.

TV Writing on Demand, Chapter 7

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: Pick three characters from *Friday Night Lights* and answer how they are introduced and what is their main problem?

Part 2: Write THREE ORIGINAL CHARACTER BIOS for characters you’d be interested in exploring.

Part 3: Using screenplay formatting, write the dialogue of an argument between two characters. (More parameters will be given during class). 2 pages.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: Demystifying the Script Coverage Process (Guest Lecturer)

CLASS 3: DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

- Tentpoles of structure
- Pitching your series

READING/VIEWING:

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend pilot

The Power of Film: “Aristotle”; “Structure”; “Acts”

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: Complete the first half of KNOW THY SERIES handout.

Part 2: Be prepared to PITCH the gist of your SERIES. You are allowed to use the notes from the handout.

CLASS 4: PITCHES/BISOCIATION

- Let's hear your pitches
- How to take a note
- What is BISOCIATION?
- What's funny? Bisociation and comedy

READING/VIEWING:

Killing Eve pilot

The Power of Film: "Bisociation"; "Paradox."

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: FINISH the KNOW THY SERIES handout.

CLASS 5: ACT STRUCTURE

- Why are TV series structured in ACTS?
- What are different ACT STRUCTURES, and how can you utilize them?
- A, B, and C pilot stories

READING/VIEWING: *Emergence* pilot

ASSIGNMENT:

Determine and write out the A, B, and C storylines of your pilot. Come up with five main story points for each storyline.

CLASS 6: ELEMENTS OF A SCENE

- Review KNOW THY SERIES handouts
- Discuss MAJOR STORY TURNS
- Breaking down scenes and set pieces. Context. Content. Conflict.

READING/VIEWING:

Black-ish pilot

TV Showrunner's Roadmap, Intro and Chapters 1 & 2

ASSIGNMENT:

Complete the BEAT SHEET handout.

CLASS 7: WORKSHOP

- Workshop BEAT SHEETS
- Notes and feedback

READING/VIEWING:

TV Showrunner's Roadmap, Chapters 3 & 4
Insecure pilot

ASSIGNMENT:

Revise BEAT SHEETS

CLASS 8: TONE/VOICE/REWRITES

- Writing that leaps from the page
- Writing habits
- Craft vs. Voice

READING/VIEWING:

Choose a pilot that is a COMP for your series and be prepared to discuss

ASSIGNMENT: Write your TEASER

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: How to Pitch (Guest Lecturer)

CLASS 9: WORKSHOP

- Workshop TEASERS
- Notes and feedback

READING/VIEWING:

Stranger Things (Montauk) series bible

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: Revise TEASER

Part 2: Start ACT ONE

CLASS 10: TV LANDSCAPE

- Networks vs. Cable vs. Streaming
- How shows get bought. How shows get made. How shows get cancelled.

ASSIGNMENT:

Part 1: Be prepared to give short 2-5 minute pitch about your series.

Part 2: Start your SERIES DOC

CLASS 11: BREAKING INTO THE BIZ

- Practice pitches
- Receive feedback

- Guests TBD

ASSIGNMENT:

Polish your FINAL TEASER, FIRST ACT, BEAT SHEET, and SERIES DOC.

CLASS 12: REVIEW

- Individual meetings (schedule TBD)

ASSIGNMENT:

Polish your FINAL TEASER, FIRST ACT, BEAT SHEET, and SERIES DOC
(DUE by end of the day SUNDAY)

STATEMENT OF GRADING

Attendance and participation are mandatory. All written assignments including need to be carefully proofread. You will be marked down for careless errors.

Attendance, participation, and assignments as part of the two professional development workshops (Demystifying the Script Coverage Process and How to Pitch) are a part of your course participation grade.

Participation: 20%

Assignments: 20%

Beat Sheet: 20%

Teaser and First Act: 20%

Final Pitch: 20%

OTHER CLASS POLICIES

No electronic devices out unless we are reading someone's pages and you need to use your device to read. But devices go away when we are discussing.

This course aims towards creating a positive creative community. A huge part of being in a workshop is learning how to provide useful supportive feedback for your peers without simply poking holes in their stories. Disrespect to your classmates will not be tolerated.

FTV 133B: INTERMEDIATE TV WRITING ONE-HOUR DRAMA/HALF-HOUR DRAMEDY SERIES

Example Syllabus. *The syllabi posted are general syllabi for students who wish to find out the topics generally covered in these courses*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The goal for this class is for you to create an original one- hour original drama/dramedy or half-hour dramedy pilot.

COURSE GOALS:

Students will learn how to:

- Service the franchise of your original series
- Fit into the network’s “wheelhouse” and meet their expectations
- Develop and deepen your characters
- Create and revise an Outline for your pilot
- Write the first draft of an effective pilot for your original series.
- Outline your series into an effective short pitch

You’ll also be expected to provide notes on your fellow writers’ material. This includes: verbal/written notes, participation in table discussions, and active contribution to the work of others.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS/READINGS:

Writing the TV Drama Series, by Pamela Douglas

The TV Showrunner’s Roadmap, by Neil Landau

TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution, by Neil Landau

TV Writing On Demand: Creating Great Content in the Digital Era, by Neil Landau

Plus, read every successful pilot you can get your hands on, especially in the genre, style, and tone that relate to your script.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE (Class Meetings 1&2): Introduction to the course and syllabus. Student pitches and feedback. Review of: one-hour drama and half-hour dramedy structure; A, B, and C story-lines; premise, theme, conflict, characters; the difference between writing screenplays and episodic TV; episodic pilot vs. “premise pilot” vs. hybrid. Lecture on: servicing the “franchise”

and story arcs (aka “long story”); breaking story; beat sheet and outline formats; effective pitches and loglines.

Assignment #1: Refine chosen pitch and come up with two potential A and B stories. Due for next class.

Assignment #2: Orally pitch two possible A and B stories for your pilot. Discussion of Beat Sheets and how to write a Teaser. Write a Beat Sheet for your pilot. Due for next class.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: Demystifying the Script Coverage Process (Guest Lecturer)

WEEK TWO (Class Meetings 3&4): Discussion and feedback on Beat Sheets. Discussion about writing an Outline based on Beat Sheets. Unifying theme, character arcs, network “story area documents,” and compelling act breaks. Character development.

Assignment #3: Write first half of outline (5 pages), due for next class. Discussion about outlines in progress.

Assignment #4: Revise first half and write second half of Outline (5 more pages). Completed Outline due for next class.

WEEK THREE (Class Meetings 5&6): Discussion and feedback on Outlines. Discussion about how to segue from Outline to First Draft. Scene structure. Writing memorable scenes. Discussion about series bibles. The studio and network notes process.

Assignment #5: Begin writing first draft of your script. Goal is complete rough draft of the Teaser, due for next class.

Assignment #6: Continue writing script. Goal is to complete Teaser and Act One. Due for next class.

WEEK FOUR (Class Meetings 7&8): Read selected pages in class and discuss. Discussion of issues that have emerged from Outline to script. Writing great dialogue.

Assignment #7: Continue writing script. Turn in pages for table read in next class.

Assignment #8: Continue writing scripts. Goal for this week is to complete Acts Two and Three, due for next class.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: How to Pitch (Guest Lecturer)

WEEK FIVE (Class Meetings 9&10): Read selected pages in class and discuss. Discussion on establishing the world of your show, tone, and voice.

Assignment #9: Acts 4 and 5 (depending on format). For half- hours, please revise all acts. Discussion about rewriting strategies, editing, and polishing. Solving story issues.

Assignment #10: Complete and revise first draft of script. Develop a pitch.

WEEK SIX (Class #11): **First draft of all teleplays due in PDF format via email.** Discussion about what happens in the real world with the draft to be “published” and distributed to the director, actors, assistant directors, and all department heads for pre-production. The pre-production, production, and postproduction processes: the production board and call sheet. Breaking into the industry. Practice pitches.

Assignment #11: Refine your pitch for Pitch Session. Turn in pitch document prior to final script conferences.

Class #12: Individual Script Conferences. Receive notes on your completed draft in a one-on-one script consult. You will also have the opportunity to discuss feedback from the Pitch Session.

STATEMENT OF GRADING:

GRADES: Attendance at every class is mandatory for a passing grade. Two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Assignments must be turned in on time. Please carefully spellcheck and proof-read your work; sloppy, ungrammatical, typo-ridden work will be returned, unread, graded down.

Attendance, participation, and assignments as part of the two professional development workshops (Demystifying the Script Coverage Process and How to Pitch) are a part of your course participation grade.

Below is the weight given to each component of the final grade: Please note that **ALL COURSE GRADES ARE FINAL.**

Participation 20%
 Series Pitch 5%
 A/B Stories 5%
 Teaser 5%
 Acts 1 & 2 15%
 Acts 3,4,5 15%
 Final Pitch 5%
 Beat sheet 10%
 Outline 10%
First Draft 10%
Total: 100%

Final Course Grade: 100%
 A (90-100%)
 B (80-89%)
 C (70-79%)
 D (60-69%)
 F (≤ 59%)

FTV 104: FILM AND TELEVISION SYMPOSIUM

Course Description

This course is a speaker series featuring guests from various aspects of the film, television and digital media business. In today's entertainment industry, aspiring Writers, Producers, Animators, and Filmmakers need to have an in depth understanding of the business issues that influence creative decisions. Additionally, aspiring executives, agents and attorneys need to understand how the creative process works to guide their business decisions and their success.

Each week, a new panel of industry experts will participate in a comprehensive Q & A with the instructor focused on a particular topic of interest followed by a Q&A by the students. Students will have an opportunity to ask the experts questions that will help enhance their entertainment business education and inform more on their future career paths. The goal is for students to gain understanding of the relationships, experience and knowledge that must be achieved to build a career in this business.

At the completion of each class, students will write a paragraph evaluating the panel, what they learned, and how it affects their area of interest. The six paragraphs (one for each class) will be combined into a final paper (no longer than 2 pages, double spaced) that will summarize their experience in the course and how their view of the TV and Film industry has changed.

1. Course Requirements

Course work consists of attending weekly class meetings, participating in a meaningful manner in Class Discussions and in Q&A sessions with Guest Speakers, and writing a brief Summary Paper at the end of each class evaluating the panels. These summaries will be combined into a Final Paper to be turned in at the completion of the course.

2. Weekly Class Topics

Class One: TV series from pitch to screen

Class Two: Adapting existing IP into a feature or series

Class Three: What does "diversity" mean in the TV and Film Business?

Class Four: Working with Talent

Class Five: Entertainment Law 101

Class Six: Women in front of and behind the camera

(For additional detail and guest speakers please see the attached weekly course schedule.

Weekly topics subject to change based on guest speaker availability.)

3. Final Paper

At the end of the course students are required to write a paper summarizing their thoughts on the Guest Speaker panels and how the panels have influenced their view of the industry and their own career aspirations.

4. Grading

50%: Participation in Class Discussions Guest Panels

25%: Attendance

25%: Final Paper

The use of laptops is strictly prohibited during sessions with guest speakers and will adversely affect your grade. Our guests are volunteering their time, it's important that we make the most of their visit.

Lecture and Discussion Topics

NOTE: The order of panels is subject to change based on Guest Speaker availability. Guest speakers will be announced closer to the beginning of the course.

Week One: TV Series from Pitch to Screen

The Week One panel will host TV Executives, Producers, and Showrunners and Literary Manager to discuss the process from a writer's pitch, through development, production, and distribution of a TV series.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

Pitching, distribution platforms, and series development in the OTT streaming world.

Week Two: Adapting existing IP into a feature or series

Students will learn from executives, agents, TV writers and documentary filmmakers the challenges and rewards of adapting existing IP to a series or Film.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers
- Summary Questions regarding priority Discussion Topics

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

How can an unrepped writer or young producer get the rights to a book, article, graphic novel,

etc to adapt?

What are the benefits of adapting versus writing your own story?

Week 3: What does "diversity" in the TV and Film Business mean?

Students and panelists will participate in an in-depth discussion about the state of diversity in the entertainment business.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers
- Summary Questions regarding priority Discussion Topics

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

What are the struggles that people of diverse backgrounds face today in entering the entertainment industry.

How are people of color, indigenous, neurotypical, disabled, LGBTQ+ misrepresented in TV and film and how can change take place in the future?

Week Four: Working with Talent

In this class session, students will learn about the business of working with talent; whether it be as representation or working at the celebrity's production company to find and develop projects specific to that performer.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers
- Summary Questions regarding priority Discussion Topics

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

Why do so many entertainers start their own production companies?

How does a manager or agent find talent, or decide to represent new talent?

Week Five: Entertainment Law 101

In this class session, students will learn the basics of contracts and negotiations that take place

in the entertainment industry and how these legal issues can help or hurt them.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers
- Summary Questions regarding priority Discussion Topics

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

How does a writer protect their work before they submit it publicly?

What are the dangers of working with a friend?

Week Six: Women in front of and behind the camera

In the final class, we will be discussing with our panelist how women's roles in the entertainment

industry have changed from pay disparity to holding positions of power.

- Introductory Questions regarding the Guest Speakers' Career Paths
- Open Q&A Session between Students and Guest Speakers
- Summary Questions regarding priority Discussion Topics

Specific Discussion Topics will include:

Personal experiences on sets, good and bad.

Allies in the entertainment industry.

FOR ALL COURSES – IMPORTANT UCLA POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Please arrive to the online class on time. If you're going to be late/absent, please send instructor an email.

All ideas discussed in class are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with others outside of class.

Industry professionals are partially defined or rise and fall by their interactions with other Industry professionals. As such, you will be graded on your interactions in class. That means that class attendance is mandatory, as is class participation. Your feedback is invaluable to your colleagues. Therefore, you are expected to actively listen, contribute and analyze during class discussions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT

With its status as a world-class research institution, it is critical that the University uphold the highest standards of integrity both inside and outside the classroom. As a student and member of the UCLA community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, when accusations of academic dishonesty occur, The Office of the Dean of Students is charged with investigating and adjudicating suspected violations. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the presentation of another author's words or ideas as if they were your own. If you have any questions about documentation, quotations, and related matters, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor before submitting your work.

Please also refer to the UCLA Rules of Student Conduct at the below website:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Student-Conduct>

STATEMENT OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

University of California Diversity Statement

Adopted by the Assembly of the Academic Senate May 10, 2006

Endorsed by the President of the University of California June 30, 2006

The diversity of the people of California has been the source of innovative ideas and creative accomplishments throughout the state's history into the present. Diversity – a defining feature of California's past, present, and future – refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more.

Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees.

The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to qualified students from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State.

Diversity should also be integral to the University's achievement of excellence. Diversity can enhance the ability of the University to accomplish its academic mission. Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Ideas, and practices based on those ideas, can be made richer by the process of being born and nurtured in a diverse community. The pluralistic university can model a process of proposing and testing ideas through respectful, civil communication. Educational excellence that truly incorporates diversity thus can promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all to foster innovation and train future leadership.

Therefore, the University of California renews its commitment to the full realization of its historic promise to recognize and nurture merit, talent, and achievement by supporting diversity and equal opportunity in its education, services, and administration, as well as research and creative activity. The University particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.