

Professor Jon Stahl
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Office Hours: T 5:00-6:00PM, W 2:00-3:30PM, W 6:15-7:00PM,
TH 3:15-4:00PM (hours subject to change)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To paraphrase Steven Spielberg upon accepting the Academy's Irving Thalberg Award in 1986, it all starts with the writer. Indeed, some form of writing provides the framework for virtually every film and electronic media production. Therefore, it is crucial for those who intend to work in these fields to understand and appreciate the fundamentals of media writing, regardless of whether you hope or expect to write professionally. This course is designed to help you to develop that understanding and to foster that appreciation. It may also, whether you like it or not, help to make you a better writer.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, you should:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the technical and aesthetic issues related to writing for radio, television, film and multimedia;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of narrative fiction screenwriting;
3. demonstrate proficiency in writing in a variety of script formats, including the two-column video script, film script and sitcom script formats.

This course addresses CTVA Departmental SLO #2: research, structure, and write dramatic and non-dramatic scripts for cinema, television, and multimedia.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Writing For Visual Media, Second Edition, by Anthony Friedmann.
Media Writing Handbook by Donald Wood.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition, by William Strunk Jr., E.B. White and Roger Angell.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

There will be several writing assignments. These are to be printed using the correct font (12-point Courier), on good-quality paper. You must proofread for typos and errors in spelling and/or grammar. The presence of such errors will affect your grade adversely. It is strongly recommended that you back up all computer files on an obsessively frequent basis, using CD-RWs and/or USB memory sticks.

All assignments must be written in the appropriate format and handed in on time. Do not use covers or binders; do use title pages when appropriate. Short assignments are to be stapled together; longer ones are to be printed on 3-hole punch paper and fastened with brads. I will expect you to apply your full effort, intelligence, craft and creativity to each assignment, and I will grade accordingly. The final assignment, a 12-24 page narrative film script, will be due in class on Tuesday, 12/18, the last session.

There will be a midterm exam, which will be based on readings from Friedmann as well as information covered in class. Prompt attendance is expected and class participation is encouraged. Each will be factored into your final grade.

NOTE: Students are prohibited from pursuing work in this course that has been previously developed or written, unless permission is sought from and granted by the instructor.

Also, please note that this course requires strict compliance with the Academic Honesty Standards contained in the University Catalogue.

GRADING (unless otherwise amended)

Punctuality, attendance, class participation	25 points
TV commercial script	5 points
Screenplay format assignment	2 points
Character profile	3 points
Midterm Exam	10 points
One-page story sketch	10 points
Expositional film-script pages	10 points
Final script	<u>35 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

I will use plusses and minuses for the final grades, which will correlate to the total amount of points earned during the semester. There is no extra credit available. I reserve the right to penalize excessive tardiness, absence or disruptive

behavior beyond the allotted 25 points. Therefore, come early, don't miss any classes, and act professionally.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at 818-677-2684.

CLASS SCHEDULE (unless otherwise amended)

Tues.	8/25	Course introduction, writing in general.
Thurs.	8/27	Media writing. Read Chaps. 1-3
Tues.	9/1	Narrative writing: plot, theme, structure.
Thurs.	9/3	Narrative writing, cont'd. Read Chap. 4
Tues.	9/8	Artistic identity. Creativity.
Thurs.	9/10	Writing the commercial. Read Chap. 5
Tues.	9/15	Radio writing.
Thurs.	9/17	Two-column video writing. Assignment: TV commercial.
Tues.	9/22	DUE: TV commercial. Film script format. Assignment: film script format exercise.
Thurs.	9/24	DUE: film script format exercise. Dramatic writing: conflict. Read Chap. 10
Tues.	9/29	Dramatic writing: character. Assignment: character profile.
Thurs.	10/1	DUE: character profile. Dramatic writing: dialogue. Assignment: watch <i>Gladiator</i> with an eye for structure.
Tues.	10/6	Structure review.
Thurs.	10/8	Structure review. Assignment: Study for Midterm exam.
Tues.	10/13	MIDTERM EXAM.
Thurs.	10/15	Developing a screenplay. Assignment: 1-page story sketch, prepare pitch.

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

Tues. 10/20 DUE: 1-page story sketch. Pitches.
Thurs. 10/22 Pitches.

Tues. 10/27 Pitches.
Thurs. 10/29 Pitches.

Tues. 11/3 Pitches.
Assignment: film-script outline (not handed in).
Film-script expositional pages (handed in --
(first 1-3 pages).
Thurs. 11/5 NO CLASS -- WRITING DAY.

Tues. 11/10 DUE: Film-script expositional pages.
Episodic TV writing.
Thurs. 11/12 Episodic TV writing, cont'd.

Tues. 11/17 "New Media" writing. Recommended reading: Chaps. 13-15.
Assignment: make copies of film-script scene(s) for class
readings (class set).
Thurs. 11/19 Script readings.

Tues. 11/24 Script readings.
Thurs. 11/26 NO CLASS -- HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Tues. 12/1 NO CLASS -- WRITING DAY.
Thurs. 12/3 Script readings.

Tues. 12/8 **FINAL SCRIPTS DUE.** Conclusion.