



## **MRTS 3400 Intermediate Screenwriting**

Department of Media Arts

Section - 001

Time and Location – Mondays 2-4:50pm, RTFP 282

Text – None. Online readings and links provided in Canvas

Instructor – Frances Perkins

Email – [frances.perkins@unt.edu](mailto:frances.perkins@unt.edu)

### Office Hours

Media Arts Office Hours – room 263 (next to Media Arts office)

T/Th 12:30-2pm

W 1-2pm

Honors Office Hours – dorm lobby w/ snacks and my dog!

T 3-5pm

Wed 5-7pm

Virtual Office Hours - Book a meeting here: [Frances' Virtual Office Hours](#)

Office Phone: 940-565-4578

Media Arts Office Phone: 940-565-2537

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Intermediate-level study of the methodologies, theories, principles, formats, skills, and techniques of writing scripts for narrative features from concept to completed script using formatting-relevant software.

Prerequisite(s): MRTS 1330, 2010 and 2210.

## **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of the different elements of a script and how each is used.
2. Demonstrate the construction of a script, complete with plot, characters, action, and dialogue.
3. Identify and demonstrate individual style and creativity in writing a script.
4. Demonstrate industry knowledge of steps screenwriters must take to be successful.

## **COURSE BASICS**

### **Structure**

In-person lessons, small and large group discussions, demonstrations, viewing of films and clips, critiques of professional and personal work.

### **Virtual Classes**

At least **two** meeting of this class will be **asynchronous online**, with others possible if I have to cancel a class for illness or personal reasons. You can complete these lessons at your own pace as long as the assignments and discussions are completed by the due dates. If you do the virtual lesson before we meet next week, you will have "attended" class for that week.

### **Attendance**

Please be on time for class and be ready to work. A student may be absent without penalty for maximum of ONE full class period. For each absence after that, your final grade will be reduced by 25 points. For virtual classes, completion of the online activity will count as attendance.

### **Use of Electronics**

Phones, laptops and tablets are allowed in class but must be used responsibly and with respect for your classmates and instructor. It is the instructor's right to ask that electronics be put away during class.

## **Assignments**

All assignments are due as uploads in Canvas and will be submitted on the assignment page. All assignments are due by the end-of-day on the due date (meaning 11:59 pm on the due date). **All written work must be typed, double-spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins on all sides, or in screenplay format where applicable.** All outside information must be properly cited. No handwritten assignments will be accepted unless otherwise stated – some in-class activities will be handwritten. If you are unable to upload your assignments to Canvas, you may email them to me. NOTE: emailing me assignments may result in a delay in grading.

## **Required Software**

[Final Draft](#) – This is the industry standard software. All the computers in the Mac Lab (RTFP 180Z) have Final Draft on them. There is a **free [22-week educational trial](#)** for students in this class. Note: One request per machine. The one-time trial lasts one semester. Enrollment or employment status verification is required for purchase. There is also a 35% educational discount if you decide to purchase Final Draft; use promo code FD13LEARNFALL.

## **No Double Dipping**

That means you cannot use a script you wrote for another class as an assignment in this class. **Everything you write in this class should be ORIGINAL.**

## **Viewing Cuts/Reading Drafts**

I am always available to watch cuts, read drafts, and otherwise critique work at any stage of development, whether it's for this class or another. I'm happy to look at the work you are doing outside of class. If you aren't free for my office hours, upload your work online and send me a link. I will view it and get back to you in a timely fashion. I'm a geek and love this stuff, so bring it on.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE** **Spring 2026**

Course Schedule subject to change. Changes will always be announced in class and updated on the schedule in **RED**.

All assignments due as submissions in Canvas by 11:59pm on due date unless otherwise stated.

### Week 1 – Jan 14

Topic – Course Overview – syllabus, expectations, assignments, etc.

Activity – Watching Film of Choice in class

Assignment – Screening worksheet – due Jan 21

### Week 2 – Jan 21

Topic – Screenwriting Formatting and Fundamentals

Activity – The Warm Up

Assignment – Script Analysis #1 – due Jan 28

### Week 3 – Jan 28

Topic – Writing Strong Characters

Activity – Famous Characters Exercise

Assignment – Script Analysis #2 – due Feb 4

### Week 4 – Feb 4

Topic – Premises and Genres

Activity – Cringe Exercise

### Week 5 – Feb 11

Topic – Plot and Subplots

Activity – Plot Possibilities Discussion

Assignment – Plot breakdown Exercise – Feb 18

### Week 6 – Feb 18

Topic – Story World

Activity - Writing Cinematic Scenes

Reminder – we'll start workshoping your feature script soon so bring ideas!

### Week 7 – Feb 25 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**

Topic – Writing Dialogue

Activity – Story World Checklist for Short Film Script

Assignment – Short Film Script – due March 18

### Week 8 – March 3

Topic – Writing Strong Scenes

Activity – Team Presentation Planning  
Assignment – Team Presentations - due in class on March 18

### **SPRING BREAK MARCH 9-13**

#### Week 9 – March 18

Topic – Team Presentations in class  
Activity – Subgoals Exercise  
Assignment – Character Bio – due March 25

#### Week 10 – March 25

Topic – Outlining  
Assignment – Feature Step Outline – due April 1

#### Week 11 – April 1

Topic – Pitching  
Activity – Pitching Exercise  
Assignment – First Draft – due April 15

#### Week 12- April 8 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**

Topic – Writing Beyond the Script  
Activity – Logline Exercise

#### Week 13 – April 15

Topic – Rewriting and Editing  
Activity – Editing Exercise  
Online Activity – Plan questions for guests & submit before class in Discussion before next class.  
Assignment – Peer Feedback of First Draft – due to me AND writer April 22

#### Week 14 – April 22

Topic – Zoom Screenwriting Guests  
Reminder – Final Assignment - due May 6

#### Week 15 – April 29

Topic – Screenwriting Resources

Reminder – ALL LATE WORK DUE May 6

## MRTS 3400 Grading & Assignments

### Your assignments are:

In Class/Online Activities (12)	100 points
Script Analysis (2 @ 20 pts each)	40 points
Plot Breakdown Exercise	25 points
Character Bio Exercise	25 points
Short Film Script	50 points
Team Presentation	50 points
Feature Step Outline	50 points
First Draft Assignment	50 points
Peer Feedback of First Draft (3 @ 20 pts each)	60 points
Final Assignment	50 points
TOTAL CLASS POINTS POSSIBLE =	500 POINTS

### Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
A	90+ - The work is consistently outstanding.
B	80+ - The work is consistently strong and occasionally outstanding.
C	70+ - The work is adequate, fulfilling minimum requirements.
D	60+ - The work fails to meet minimum standards.
F	below 60 - The work is incomplete, or evidence of plagiarism.

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or words as your own. It will not be tolerated. Even when you are paraphrasing, you must give appropriate (and formal) credit to the source of the ideas or the words. Plagiarism will result in a failing course grade. You cannot reuse previously written material; all writing for this class should be original. If you'd like to rework or rewrite existing material you must get approval from the instructor in advance.

### Assignments

Written instructions for each assignment will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. All assignments are due as uploads in Canvas and will be submitted on the assignment page. All assignments are due by the end-of-day on the due date (meaning 11:59 pm on the due date). **All written work must be typed, double-spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins on all sides, or in screenplay format where applicable.** All outside information must be properly cited. No handwritten assignments will be accepted. If you are unable to upload your assignments to Canvas, you may email them to me. NOTE: emailing me assignments may result in a delay in grading.

### Grading

Grades will be figured out of a total of 500 points. **Two** late assignments will be accepted and graded at 70% of the total possible points for that assignment. **Any further late work beyond two must be approved in advance by the instructor or they will not be accepted.**

### Participation

Class participation is part of your final grade; I expect you to participate in all classroom exercises and discussion. All in-class or online activities have point values **that cannot be made up outside of class.** This is a communication course, and you must be able to communicate, experiment and share your ideas with your classmates. The instructor reserves the right to implement pop quizzes if the class does not read the assigned material.

### Attendance

Please be on time for class and be ready to work. A student may be absent without penalty for maximum of ONE full class period. For each absence after that, your final grade will be reduced by 25 points. For virtual classes, completion of the online activity will count as attendance.

### Philosophy of Grading

What I look for and care most about is the obvious thought and energy that goes into your work. Connecting the dots between lessons, readings, and your writing is what this course is all about. Doing literally what is asked for in an assignment usually requires the least amount of effort and care, and it comes across in your work. Putting thought and effort into an assignment also comes across in the work. I am always willing to read first drafts, watch cuts, give notes, or answer questions at any time. I am always frustrated by giving someone a lower grade who says, after the fact, "Well, I wasn't sure exactly what you wanted ..."

### Let's talk about AI

AI is a tool, like anything else. It can be used properly or misused, and this has become a bigger issue over the past few years. We will discuss this in class, but for now, always remember - **what you submit must be in your words**. If your work gets flagged for AI, I will read the report and check your submission with two or more other AI detectors to ensure that it is a fair report. As I have found, sometimes it is not. I find AI helpful in giving me ideas and options with how to develop a specific effect, but that is as far as I take it - I use it as another research tool, but my writing is what truly makes work original.

The [Writers Guild of America addresses AI](#) really well and it is a good policy to follow.

The following [AI Disclosure Statement](#) required if you use AI in any of your assignments.