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

Office – 263 (right next to the Media Arts office)

  Media Arts Office Hours
  Tuesday 9-11am
  Wednesday 4-6pm

  Honors Hall Office Hours
  Tuesday 5-7pm
  Wednesday 10am-12pm

  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

Some of this class will be **asynchronous online**. 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.**

Artificial Intelligence will be periodically discussed in class. The use of artificial intelligence tools without full transparency violates professional media standards of journalism and violates the University policies regarding Academic Integrity (also see below). Violations of either or both policies will result in disciplinary action up to and including a failing grade on a specific assignment or in this course.

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
FALL 2025

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 – August 18
Topic – Course Overview – syllabus, expectations, assignments, etc.
Activity – Watching Film of Choice in class
Assignment – Screening worksheet – completed in class

Week 2 – August 25
Topic – Screenwriting Formatting and Fundamentals
Activity – The Warm Up
Assignment – Script Analysis #1 – due September 1

Week 3 – September 1 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**
Topic – Writing Strong Characters
Activity – Famous Characters Discussion
Assignment – Script Analysis #2 – due September 8

Week 4 – September 8
Topic – Premises and Genres
Activity – Cringe Exercise

Week 5 – September 15 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**
Topic – Plot and Subplots
Activity – Plot Possibilities Discussion
Assignment – Plot breakdown Exercise – September 22

Week 6 – September 22
Topic – Story World
Activity - Writing Cinematic Scenes
Reminder – we'll start workshopping your feature script soon so bring ideas!

Week 7 – September 29 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**
Topic – Writing Dialogue
Activity – Story World Checklist for Short Film Script
Assignment – Short Film Script – due October 6

Week 8 – October 6
Topic – Writing Strong Scenes

Activity – Team Presentation Planning
Assignment – Team Presentations - due <u>in class</u> on October 13

<u>Week 9 – October 13</u>
Topic – Team Presentations in class
Activity – Subgoals Exercise
Assignment – Character Bio – due October 20

<u>Week 10 – October 20 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**</u>
Topic – Outlining
Assignment – Feature Step Outline – due October 27

<u>Week 11 – October 27</u>
Topic – Pitching
Activity – Pitching Exercise
Assignment – First Draft – due November 10

<u>Week 12- November 3 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**</u>
Topic – Writing Beyond the Script
Activity – Logline Exercise

<u>Week 13 – November 10</u>
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 November 17

<u>Week 14 – November 17 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**</u>
Topic – Zoom Screenwriting Guests
Reminder – Final Assignment - due December 8

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 24-28 for THANKSGIVING BREAK

<u>Week 15 – December 1 – **VIRTUAL CLASS**</u>
Topic – Screenwriting Resources

NO CLASSES December 5 – Reading Day

Finals December 6-12

Reminder – ALL LATE WORK DUE December 9

MRTS 3400 Grading & Assignments

<u>Your assignments are:</u>

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

<u>Grading Scale</u>

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.

<u>Academic Integrity</u>

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or words as your own. It will not be tolerated. <u>Even when you are paraphrasing</u>, 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.

<u>Assignments</u>
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.

<u>Grading</u>
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.**

<u>Participation</u>
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.

<u>Attendance</u>
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.

<u>Philosophy of Grading</u> - 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 <u>always</u> willing to read first drafts, watch cuts, give notes, or answer questions at any time. I am <u>always</u> frustrated by giving someone a lower grade who says, after the fact, "Well, I wasn't sure exactly what you wanted ..."