

INTERMEDIATE SCREENWRITING
MRTS 3400.001 – Spring 2026
Department of Media Arts

Class Time: Tuesday's 2:00-4:50p

Location: RTFP 282

Textbook: None. Online readings and links provided in Canvas

Instructor: Johnathan Paul

Office #: RTFP 232

Office Hours: Monday's 12:00-2:00p

Email: johnathan.paul@unt.edu

INTERMEDIATE SCREENWRITING (ONLINE) COURSE OVERVIEW

- 1.1 **COMMUNICATION:** In order to set realistic expectations in regard to communication I want to be fully transparent with you. While I do teach at UNT, I also work full-time outside the University. With this said, please allow 24-48 hours for me to respond to your email during the weekdays. Please do not expect a response over the weekend, or late in the evening. For any office visits please contact me via email so we can schedule that appointment as I do have office hours on Monday.
- 1.2 **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/CBCM major status and MRTS 2010

- 1.3 **LEARNING OUTCOMES:** 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 of a script.
 4. Demonstrate industry knowledge of steps screenwriters must take to be successful.

COURSE BASICS

- 2.1 **Structure** – in-class lesson, discussion, demonstrations, viewing of films and clips, critiques of professional and personal work.
- 2.2 **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 11:59pm 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 it to me. NOTE: Emailing me assignments may result in delay in grading.

- 2.3 Equipment – there is no equipment necessary for this course. However, you will be expected to use software to ensure proper screenplay formatting at all times. There are a few resources out there for you:

Best Option

- Final Draft – www.finaldraft.com. This is the industry standard screenplay software, and there is a free 18 week demo you can download and use for this class (<http://trial.finaldraft.com/edutrial/>). Make sure you save your scripts as a PDF so they can be read by people not using Final Draft.

Other Options

- Raw Scripts – www.rawscripts.com. This is a free, online resource for formatting scripts, so subscription is required. Make sure you save your scripts as a PDF so they can be read by people not using Raw Scripts.
- Celtx – www.celtx.cm. This is a free, online resource for formatting scripts, but you must sign up for a free membership. There are other production resources on Celtx that are paid memberships. Make sure you save your scripts as a PDF so they can be read by people not using Celtx (not sure if this feature is available!)

More – an article about best free software, published Dec. 1 2019:

<https://www.scriptreaderpro.com/free-screenwriting-software/>

- 2.4 No Double Dipping: That means you cannot use a script you wrote for another class as an assignment in this class. Everything you produce in this class should be ORIGINAL.
- 2.4 Viewing Cuts/Reading Drafts: Due to my work schedule, I, unfortunately, do not have the time to watch cuts, read drafts, and or otherwise critique work beyond your class assignments. If you would like to schedule time to discuss any other material during my office hours I will be happy to accommodate you.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

3.1 Your assignments are:

Script Analysis	25 pts
Short Film Concepts	25 pts
Short Film Script #1	100 pts
Short Film Script #2	100 pts
3pg Act One Treatment	50 pts
Act One Outline	50 pts
Feature Film 1st Draft	200 pts
Peer Feedback	100 pts
Discussions	100 pts
Final Feature Film Act One Script	250 pts
TOTAL CLASS POINTS POSSIBLE =	1000 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.

3.2 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.

- A. Prohibited Use of Artificial Intelligence : Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

- 3.3 Assignments: Written instructions for each assignment will be announced in class and posted on Canvas. All assignments will be due as postings in the CANVAS dropbox in either MICROSOFT WORD (.doc, .docx) or ADOBE ACROBAT (.pdf) formats. PLEASE be responsible and check your email - I may have to contact you if I cannot open your assignment.
- 3.4 Grading: Grades will be figured out of a total of 500 points. Late assignments will be accepted and graded at 80% of the total possible points for that assignment (so if an assignment is worth 10 points, the highest score a late assignment could receive is 8 points).
- 3.5 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 answer questions via email 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 ..."
- 3.6 Late Work: You are allowed TWO late assignments, graded at 80% of the total points, without prior permission. That means a 20 point assignment that is turned in late is only worth a maximum of 16 points.

MRTS 4460 Course Schedule

- 4.1 Course Schedule subject to change. All assignments and discussions due one week from being assigned as submissions in Canvas by 11:59 pm ***unless otherwise stated.***

Week 1

- Topic – Course Introduction
- Discussion – Introduce Yourself
- Assignment – Watch *There Will be Blood*, read script

Week 2

- Topic – Screenwriting Formatting & Fundamentals
- Discussion - Discuss Cohort Short Film Concepts
- Assignment – Script Analysis for *There Will be Blood*
- Assignment – Short Film Concepts

Week 3

- Topic – Screenplay Structure
- Assignment – Write Short Film Script #1

Week 4

- Topic – Premises and Genres
- Discussion – Peer Review of Short Film Script #1

Week 5

- Topic – Writing Strong Characters
- Assignment – Write Short Film Script #2

Week 6

- Topic – Writing Dialogue
- Discussion – Peer Review of Short Film Script #2

Week 7

- Topic – Outlining
- Assignment - Craft a 3pg Feature Film Treatment

Week 8

- Topic – Plot and Subplots
- Discussion - Peer Feedback on 3pg Feature Treatment
- Assignment - Develop an Act One Outline for the Feature

Week 9

- Topic – Scenes as Concepts
- Discussion – Peer Feedback

- **Assignment** – Feature Film Script pgs. 1-5

Week 10 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

Week 11

- Topic – Screenwriting Resources
- **Discussion** – Feature Film Progress & Workshop
- **Assignment** - Feature Film Script pgs. 6-10

Week 12

- Topic – Rewriting and Editing
- **Discussion** – Feature Film Progress & Workshop
- **Assignment** – Feature Film Script pgs. 11-15

Week 13

- Topic – Writing Beyond the Script
- **Discussion** – Peer Review Feature Film 1st Draft

Week 15

- Topic – Working Professionally & Understanding Unions
- **Assignment** – Write 2nd Draft of Feature & Act One Outline
-

Week 16

- Topic – Screenwriting Insights & Pathways
- **Assignment** – Submit Final Feature Film Script & Act One Outline

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND DEPARTMENT POLICY

- 5.1 **Syllabus Policy.** While this syllabus outlines the expectations for successful completion of the course, it is not a contract. Therefore, some elements of the course may be altered by the Instructor as needed.
- 5.2 **Drop Policy.** As this is a Media Arts course, students without the correct prerequisites (both non-majors and pre-majors) are subject to being dropped from the course automatically with or without notice. Students absent on the first day of the class who do not immediately contact the instructor with a legitimate excuse may be dropped immediately and without notice.
- 5.3 **ODA Information.** The Department of Media Arts cooperates with the UNT Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the ODA to verify eligibility. If verified the ODA will provide an accommodation letter for faculty to initiate a confidential discussion of specific course needs. You may request accommodations at any time though you are encouraged to do so as early as possible in the semester in order to avoid delays in implementation. Students must obtain a new ODA letter and meet with their instructor at the beginning of each semester.
- For more information see disability.unt.edu, or call 940.565.4323.
- 5.4 **Semester Evaluations.** Students should complete the SPOT Evaluation. The SPOT is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. Feedback from students is very important to the Department of Media Arts and to the Professor. This evaluation is considered an important part of your participation in this class.
- 5.5 **Mobile Device Policy.** Department of Media Arts production courses prohibit the use of personal electronic devices during class, unless specifically determined by the individual Instructor. Unless those exceptions are contained in a course syllabus and/or altered by the instructor of record, department policy takes precedence.

Personal electronic devices include (but are not limited to) mobile phones, digital media players, digital readers/tablets, and some handheld computers. All devices should be turned off before entering the classroom or laboratory area. Personal computers and some tablets may be used in the classroom for note taking with instructor permission.

Each student will receive one warning. Afterward, any student found in violation of the personal electronic device policy will incur a 5% penalty to their overall final course grade for each occurrence.

5.6 **Religious Accommodation.** HB 256 provides students with an excused absence from attending classes, taking examinations, or other required activities in observance of a religious holy day and related travel. It also provides that students be given a reasonable time to take an exam or complete an assignment. Requests for accommodation must be made to the instructor a minimum of three days prior to the observed religious holy day.

5.7 **Success in the Course.** UNT endeavors to offer high-quality education and a supportive environment to help you learn and develop as a future creative professional. My job is to help you make the most of that opportunity. Help me help you. Do your part by: Showing up. Being prepared. Staying Focused. Getting involved. Communicating with your advisors and finding support when you need it.

Everyone has a different learning style and learning pace. If you are having trouble with any aspects of the classroom instruction or assignments, please see me during the office hours listed above. If you cannot schedule a time during the posted office hours contact me to make an additional appointment. In addition, there are numerous on-campus resources for help found at: success.unt.edu/.

5.8 **Academic Integrity.** This course adheres to the standards outlined by the University of North Texas Policy Office (sec: 18.1.16 Student Standards of Academic Integrity). Students who cheat or plagiarize in their work - submitting the work of others as their own, their own work from previous semesters and/or other classes instead of the assigned project- will not receive credit for that assignment. Students who cheat or plagiarize a second time or on the final editing assignment will receive a failing grade for the course. Offenses will be reported to the department chair and UNT Dean of Students. Detailed information is available at:

http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf

5.9 **Incomplete Grade for the Course.** *From the UNT Office of the Registrar: An Incomplete Grade ("I") is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a student (1) is passing the course and (2) has a justifiable and documented reason, beyond the control of the student (such as serious illness or military service), for not completing the work on schedule.*

Under no circumstances will an "Incomplete" be assigned automatically. A student must make a formal request from the instructor (see the above information from the UNT Registrar) which satisfies the listed guidelines, not have excessive absences or late arrivals, and be able to demonstrate proficiency in the creative and technical techniques covered in the course. All requests will be considered on a case by case basis and students must provide verifiable documentation of the reason for the request.

5.10 **Success and Academic Integrity Notes.** Submitting an assignment that mimics a pre-existing version, regardless of how a template for this action was obtained *is still plagiarism*. Within the editing industry, this would result in banning the individual from future work, jeopardizing their career. In this course such an action is a direct violation of academic integrity and will be treated as such. The thing to remember above all else is: *Do Not Copy the Work of Others. Not Even from The Internet. Don't Do This.*

The license agreement which provides the editing footage used in the course limits use to on campus editing assignments. Footage *is not to be downloaded from the server* for outside editing. Students who do so are in violation of academic integrity policies.

The network storage system *is not accessible outside of the editing lab*. Assignments submitted through online hosting or download sites will not be accepted unless otherwise stated.

UNIVERSITY AND SYLLABUS POLICIES

- 6.1 **WELCOME TO UNT!** As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT's full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.
- 6.2 **Academic Integrity Policy.** Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. [Insert specific sanction or academic penalty for specific academic integrity violation.]
- 6.3 **ADA Policy.** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).
- 6.4 **Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004).** The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.
- 6.5 **Emergency Notification & Procedures.** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.
- 6.6 **Retention of Student Records.** Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments,

is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

- 6.7 **Acceptable Student Behavior.** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct> to learn more.
- 6.8 **Access to Information - Eagle Connect.** Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward email Eagle Connect <https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>
- 6.9 **Student Evaluation Administration Dates.** Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email spot@unt.edu.
- 6.10 **Sexual Assault Prevention.** UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.
- 6.11 **Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses. Federal Regulation.** To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1

students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

- 6.12 **University of North Texas Compliance.** To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

- 6.13 **Student Verification.** UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002)(<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).

- 6.14 **Use of Student Work.** A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.

- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

Download the UNT System Permission, Waiver and Release Form.

Academic Support & Student Services

7.1 **Mental Health.** UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- Student Health and Wellness Center
 - (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- Counseling and Testing Services
 - (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- UNT Care Team
 - (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- UNT Psychiatric Services
 - (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- Individual Counseling
 - (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

7.2 **Chosen Names & Distinctions.** A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Additionally, if you would like the instructor or fellow cohort to use other identifying distinctions, such as pronouns, please make those requests known.

Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT.

- [UNT Records](#)
- [UNT ID Card](#)
- [UNT Email Address](#)
- [Legal Name](#)

*UNT eUIDs cannot be changed at this time. The collaborating offices are working on a process to make this option accessible to UNT community members.

7.3 **Additional Student Support Services.**

- Registrar (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](#)

- (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

7.4 **Academic Support Services.**

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)