

# MRTS 4412.006 – Video Production Topics

## MEDIA SERIES PRODUCTION

Instructor: Johnathan Paul Office Hours: By Appointment Only  
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Thursday 9:30am – 12:20am SPRING 2019

### TEXT:

There are no required texts, but several recommended texts. (See Below)

### PRODUCING

- *The Producers Business Handbook* John J. Lee Jr.
- *From Concept to Screen* Robert Benedetti
- *Producing, Financing, and Distributing* Paul A. Baumgarten
- *Producer to Producer* Maureena A. Ryan
- *The Complete Film Production Handbook* Eve Light Honthaner

### SCREENWRITING

- *Writing Screenplays that Sell* Michael Hauge
- *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* Syd Field
- *Master of the Cinematic Universe* Bucher & Casper
- *Story: Substance, Structure, Style...* Robert McKee
- *The Screenwriter's Bible* David Trottier

### DIRECTING

- *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics* Michael Rabiger
- *On Directing Film* David Mamet
- *Film Directing: Shot by Shot* Steven D. Katz

### CINEMATOGRAPHY

- *Master Shots Vol 1* Christopher Kenworthy
- *Master Shots Vol 2* Christopher Kenworthy
- *Master Shots Vol 3* Christopher Kenworthy
- *Cinematography: Theory & Practice* Blain Brown

### OBJECTIVES:

This course will take students through the process of developing, planning, budgeting, and organizing a narrative production for television. Collectively this is known as development and pre-production, and we will analyze each piece of the process to develop well-crafted scripts, a show bible, and a production binder. Students participate in outside assignments and in-class workshops to help assess their mastery of each element. By the end of the course each student will:

- Learn the importance of the script as a guide for production.
- Develop critical evaluation skills needed for script analysis and breakdown.
- Develop a basic understanding of crew roles and responsibilities during preproduction.
- Understand how the casting/audition process is a vital step in preproduction.

- Understand the importance of the administrative skills needed for effective preproduction.
- Learn how effective resource management (cast, crew, equipment, locations, funding) can prevent issues in production before they occur.
- Have a general understanding of the copyright, clearance, permit and permissions issues that may arise during preproduction and production.
- Crafting a comprehensive show bible and production binder that will be utilized during the 10 Week Summer Production Schedule.

### **CLASS COMMUNICATION:**

We will be utilizing *Slack* for all communication for this class. Slack allows us to direct message, send links, files and collaborate in a small scale online. We will be using additional online platforms and apps to help us streamline the pre-production process.

### **TARDINESS AND ABSENCE POLICY:**

Absence: Due to the nature of this course and the amount of content we have to develop in just one semester, attendance is vital. One unexcused absence or two late arrivals are allowed without penalty. Subsequent unexcused absences or late arrivals will be deducted from the total attendance percentage. Any student missing the first two class meetings (unexcused absences) or two or more unexcused absences must meet with the instructor to determine if an administrative withdrawal is required.

### **PROJECTS & ASSIGNMENTS:**

#### **PROJECT #1 - Show Bible:**

Series Outline  
Pitch Deck  
Full Show Bible

#### **PROJECT # 2 - Production Binder:**

Script Breakdown  
Episode Scripts  
Marketing Plan  
Cinematic Style / Test Shoots  
Schedule & Budget

#### **PROJECT #3 - Production Tests:**

Cinematic Style & Approach  
Gear Roundup & Workshop  
Short Scene Test Shoots  
VFX Test Shoots

Individual grades will be dependent on your participation and the work you put into this course. Since we will be running this course as close to how a studio or network would be running a series, each student will be responsible for those in their group. If bad reports are given to myself or the producers your final grade will reflect that effort. Also, grades on individual assignments will reflect a total evaluation of how well the skills and theories in the course are exemplified. Each assignment will also be graded based on and how closely each project adheres to the instructions and content of the requisite course unit. Let's take advantage of this opportunity and put our best foot forward. Be professional, be accountable, and let's help one another create something really special.

#### COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

As the instructor, my role is to act as the head Showrunner, or Executive Producer. I will work to ensure that I provide each student with the tools, materials and information to complete the task at hand.

#### 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. You will then be referred to the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for consideration as to whether the conduct in question violated the Code of Student Conduct. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct).

This course will include discussion of various television, film and similar projects and in-class exercises to help further the understanding of preproduction. This may include work in small groups. It is expected students will participate in all of these instances in a respectful, courteous and constructive manner indicative of future creative professionals. If there is any uncertainty, please refer to the section on student behavior above.

# **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

Below is a tentative schedule for the Media Series Production Course. With each week the instructor will present a short presentation or just work to set the goals of the week. From that point on the rest of the class will be putting those plans into motion. Again, this a tentative schedule, and is subject to change as we get into the process of developing the series.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS**

- Overview of Syllabus & Course
- Interviewing and Forming Teams

Weekly Goal - **Issuing first assignments**

## **INTRODUCING THE WORLD OF THE SERIES**

- Overview of Fairview and the Characters
- Overview of the Sandbox for Writers
- Looking over the Night Fables Pitch/Show Bible
- Plotting Rough Ideas
- Solidify Logline

Weekly Goal - **Begin Research Proposal & Pitch**

## **WRITERS AND DIRECTORS UNITE!**

- **Producers:** Solidify Creative Personnel
- **Writers:** Work with Directors on Visual Design
- **Directors:** Provide Writers with Visual Design

Weekly Goal - **Assign Writers to Pitch Episodes**

## **TIME TO GET TO WORK!**

- **Producers:** Collaborate and Decide on 6 Episodes
- **Writers:** Workshop Episodes
- **Directors:** Collaborate with PreVisuals
- **PreVisual:** Collaborate with Directors / Cinematographer

## **SCRIPTS IN PROCESS, VISUAL DESIGN**

- **Producers:** Begin working on the Production Binder
- **Writers:** Submit early synopsis to Episode, begin first draft
- **Directors:** Review Previs and Finalize Visual Design
- **PreVisual:** Begin any revisions needed

Weekly Goal – **Visual Design Finalized, First Script Drafts Started**

### **POINT OF NO RETURN**

- **Producers:** Continue Production Binder Work, Review Team goals
- **Writers:** Submit **WHITE DRAFT** for Review
- **Directors:** Select a Line Producer, begin building a Crew
- **PreVisual:** Work with Art Director Andrew Dunn on Storyboards

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Build Crew**

Special Guest – **Lloyd Kaufman – Troma Entertainment**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION CONTINUES**

- **Producers:** Develop Tentative Shooting Schedule
- **Writers:** Submit **BLUE DRAFT**
- **Directors:** Continue interviewing for Crew, Discuss Casting
- **PreVisual:** Research Visual Effects needed for Post Production

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Continue Crew Build**

Special Guest – **Andrew Nelson – A&E Networks**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION CONTINUES**

- **Producers:** Connect with City of Gainesville to Secure Locations
- **Writers:** Begin **BLUE DRAFT** Revisions
- **Directors:** Send out Casting Call
- **PreVisual:** Work with Directors on Scheduling Test Shoots

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Casting Call, Location Scouting**

**NO CLASS THE WEEK OF SPRING BREAK**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION CONTINUES**

- **Producers:** Continue Building out Production Binder
- **Writers:** Submit **PINK DRAFT**
- **Directors:** Continue Casting, Test Shoots
- **PreVisual:** Continue work on Test Shoots, Art Direction

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Casting Call, Location Scouting**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION FINAL STAGES**

- **Producers:** Review E&O Insurance
- **Writers:** Begin **PINK DRAFT** Revisions
- **Directors:** Continue Casting, Schedule Test Shoots
- **PreVisual:** Continue work on Test Shoots

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Casting Call, Location Scouting**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION FINAL STAGES**

- **Producers:** Begin the Production Budget, Finalize Shooting Schedule
- **Writers:** Submit **YELLOW DRAFT**
- **Directors:** Finalize Casting, Finalize Crew
- **PreVisual:** Begin Dailies workflow

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Casting Call, Location Scouting**

### **PRE-PRODUCTION FINAL STAGES**

- **Producers:** Work with Music Supervisor on Score and Budget
- **Writers:** Begin **YELLOW DRAFT** Revisions
- **Directors:** Review Final Prep for Production Binder
- **PreVisual:** Review Final Prep for Production Binder

Weekly Goal – **Scripts Draft Revisions, Casting Call, Location Scouting**

### **FINALIZE PRE-PRODUCTION**

- **Producers:** Review Production Binder for Final Revisions
- **Writers:** Submit **GREEN DRAFT**
- **Directors:** Review Production Binder for Final Revisions
- **PreVisual:** Review Production Binder for Final Revisions

Weekly Goal – **Review Production Binder for Final Revisions**

### **FINAL WEEK PRODUCTION HARD PREP**

- Determine if we need guild signatory forms
- Determine what production insurance is available through the University
- Circulate pre-locked budget for approval.
  - Submit to Department Chair
- Work with creative team to set tone meeting and then combined studio/network tone meeting at least **1 week prior** to start of principle photography
- Set up script clearance company and provide with distro list
- Determine if any pre-records will be needed for on set playback
- Engage risk management with production to set up safety/harassment training during production meeting
- Check with line producer on the status of production locations
- Remind production about set status reports/daily wrap reports
- If production is over 2 locations, ensure 2<sup>nd</sup> unit location is provided with all materials in advance of shoot (manual, templates, distro lists, etc)

**Ensure all cast and crew contracts are signed before first day of photography!**

## **UNIVERSITY POLICY INFORMATION**

### **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 (including the schedule and assignments listed above) may be altered by the Instructor as needed.*

### **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 class who do not immediately contact the instructor with a legitimate excuse may be dropped immediately and without notice.

### **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](http://disability.unt.edu) or call **940.565.4323**.

### **SEMESTER EVALUATIONS:**

Students should complete the SETE (Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness). The SETE 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 this evaluation is considered an important part of your participation in this class.

### **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 specific

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 or completely silenced 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.** Afterwards, 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. **Penalties are not negotiable.**

#### **RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATION:**

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 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.

#### **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 caught cheating or plagiarizing (including submitting the work of other students, their own work from previous semesters of other classes from the current semester) will receive no credit for that specific assignment. Students found cheating on the final assignment will receive a failing grade for the course. All cheating/plagiarizing offenses will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. This information may be viewed on the UNT Policy Office website:

[http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student\\_Affairs-Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf)

#### **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.

Students will not be assigned a grade of incomplete for the sole purpose of avoiding a failing grade or because of any current or impending graduation status.

#### **SUCCESS IN THE COURSE:**

UNT endeavors to offer a 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.

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 time during the posted office hours feel free to contact me to make an additional appointment. Everyone has a different learning style and pace. Working together we should be able to find what works for you. In addition, there are numerous on-campus resources for help found at: [success.unt.edu/](https://success.unt.edu/).