

FILM 3400 401  
Intermediate Screenwriting  
Course Syllabus  
(virtual)

Instructor & Virtual Office Hours

Troy Perkins, he/him/his

[troy.perkins@unt.edu](mailto:troy.perkins@unt.edu)

Virtual Office Hours: Send me an email with your availability and we'll find a time that works for you for a Zoom meeting.

**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 1310, 2010 and 2210.

**Course Objectives**

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of the major elements of a screenplay and how each is used.
2. Deliver a complete short film script, complete with plot, characters, action, and dialogue.
3. Deliver the first section to a feature film script.
4. Identify and demonstrate individual style and creativity in writing a script.
5. Demonstrate industry knowledge of steps screenwriters must take to be successful.

**Required/Recommended Materials**

NO REQUIRED TEXTBOOK, but you will be doing a lot of script reading, along with article reports, along with the amount of writing that you will be required to complete. Resources for free screenwriting software are found on Canvas, and the UNT Media Arts labs have Final Draft software for your use.

## **How to Succeed and Assignment Policy**

Dive In! Any kind of education works best if it allows for a focused study - the ability to step away from the outside world to fully engage in a subject. This applies to your readings, but more importantly, the discussions, where your level of engagement will not only impact your grade, but your overall understanding of course content.

Keep at it. In storytelling, the hero often times wins by not giving up. This class will not only help you to develop writing skills, but will also expand your creativity, so the more you push, the more original your work will be.

Respect and a Safe Creative Space. I expect everyone to respect each other's perspectives and creativity. Everyone will have a different approach to storytelling and just because it is different than yours, it doesn't mean it is the wrong approach. We seek to not judge, but to understand what the writer is trying to accomplish, and provide feedback that helps to get them there in a positive way.

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please contact me and let me know (this will be kept confidential!). We are all learning together.

No double-dipping. All work created in this course cannot be used for assignment work in other classes!

### **Original Work/Adaptations**

Original work means that it is ENTIRELY your concept. No aspect of another written or produced screenplay will be accepted, following Writers Guild of America guidelines for registered work. Adaptations are accepted as long as you have permission or if it is from public domain.

### **Statement on Communication**

You may contact me via email or the Canvas inbox. I will respond to your question or email within 24 hours. Responses might be slightly delayed on holidays and weekends. Assignments will be graded within 6 days of the assignment due date, with the exception of the FINAL WRITING PROJECT.

### **Statement on Native American ancestral territory**

I acknowledge that where I am teaching this course is on the ancestral territory of the Wichita, the Comanche, the Caddo, the Cherokee, and the Kiowa peoples. I pay

respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to their descendants and to all Indigenous people. To acknowledge this land is to recognize its longer history and our place in that history; it is to recognize this land and its significance for the people who had lived and continue to live in this region, whose practices and spiritualities were and are tied to the land; and whose lives continue to enrich and develop in relation to the land and to other inhabitants today.

### **Statement on AI usage**

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. I use AI myself for a variety of things and just completed a certification course on AI tech and ethics. After taking this course, I am shifting my AI expectations, so if you do use AI in the creation of any of your work, you will need to do the following:

1. Complete an AI disclosure statement which is available on Canvas and submit
2. Rewrite any AI-created work to make it your own.

If your work gets flagged for AI, I will read the report and check your submission with your disclosure statement. This way, we can remove the academic issues related to AI creation and develop AI in the industry model that the Writers Guild of America has established. I find AI helpful in giving me ideas and options with how to develop a specific dramatic effect, but that is as far as I take it - I use it as another research tool, but my writing is what truly makes my work original. As WGA has established in the industry, if you create anything with AI and don't rework it, then your work will be flagged as AI created and that is not a good career launch strategy!

The Writers Guild of America addresses AI really well and it is a good policy to follow:  
<https://www.wga.org/contracts/know-your-rights/artificial-intelligence>

### **Grading**

Grades will be available through Canvas and students may access them to determine where they stand in this course at any time. Your grade will be calculated according to the "Assignments are weighted by group:" table displayed in this syllabus page. Please make sure to check your grade book to see your instructor's feedback on your projects and activities. To see in-line feedback, go to the assignment, then click on View Feedback if applicable. It is your responsibility to check for your instructor's feedback and make appropriate improvements to assignments if necessary. Most of the graded assignments will provide you with feedback to help you as you develop your final writing project.

### Assignments and Points

Assignment	Points	% of Total
Feature film analysis (5)	200 points	20%
Article reports (5)	100 points	10%
Thematic and Genre Design	75 points	7.5%
Character Arcs and Scene Outline	75 points	7.5%
Pitch and Pitch Deck	100 points	10%
Short Film Script (7-12 pages)	200 points	20%
Feature Screenplay - 1st 10	200 points	20%
Discussions & Participation	50 points	5%
<b>TOTAL CLASS POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>1000 POINTS</b>	<b>100%</b>

### UNT 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.

### Requirement/Description of Assignment Groups

#### **Screenwriting Knowledge [35% of Grade]**

You will read modern feature film screenplays and industry articles to expand your screenwriting knowledge and to help you develop your feature concept.

#### **Concept and Script Development [20% of Grade]**

These assignments take you through the stages of concept and script development..

### **Screenplays [40% of Grade]**

The final project of the semester is the first 10 pages of a feature screenplay. You will also develop a narrative short film script.

### **Participation/Preparation [5% of Grade]**

In-class participation and being a consistent part of discussions, and supporting your classmates is an important function of this course. This also relates to the timeliness and quality of the work that you submit.

### **Late Assignments**

Information on assignments and readings is available 24/7 on Canvas. It is your responsibility to pay attention to deadlines and ask questions on assignment information and possible due date changes. Misinformation usually occurs when an individual has not paid attention to assignment expectations and asks other students outside of class. Detailed assignment information is found for every assignment on Canvas. Contact me if you are confused about ANYTHING – I am always more than happy to clarify assignment and script expectations. **PLAN ON CHECKING YOUR UNT EMAIL DAILY!** I will be sending out reminders, changes, updates on a regular basis, so remember that an open line of communication between us is an important part of this course.

Class readings and assignments must be completed by due date, **OR LATE POINTS WILL BE SUBTRACTED.**

Late Assignments: past deadline = 50% reduction

late beyond 4 weeks = 75% grade reduction

If you are running into difficulty with completing assignments or are unable to move forward due to confusion, you must contact me immediately. I will help clarify any assignment expectations or course questions that you may have, but I will not seek you out to track your progress. As a college student, it is solely your responsibility to ask questions and seek any information needed for each course.

Academic Support & Student Services

Technology Support

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as

expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues:

Phone: 940-565-2324

Email: [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

Current list of Student Help Desk hours Academic Support Services

- The UNT Academic Resource Center, which provides links to the bookstore, registration and advising information, tuition information, financial aid, and more.
- The UNT Academic Success Center, which offers academic support services and free individual tutoring.
- UNT Writing Lab
- UNT MathLab  
Student Services
- Multicultural Center
- Counseling and Testing Services
- Student Affairs Care Team
- Student Health and Wellness Center
- Pride Alliance
- Student Legal Services
- UNT Food Pantry

#### Course Outline/Calendar

For the full course Outline/Calendar, please visit the Modules section of the course.

Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule of the class. Any alterations will be announced in class, in Canvas or via email by the instructor. Students who do not check Canvas or their email assume full responsibility for missing alterations to the course.

#### Technical Assistance

Part of working in Canvas involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UIT Help Desk: UIT Student Help Desk site Email: [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)  
Phone: 940-565-2324  
In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Walk-In Availability: 8am-9pm Telephone Availability:

- Sunday: noon-midnight
- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm  
Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm  
For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](#)
  - [\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

## UNT Policies

### Important Academic Dates

- [Registration Guides by Semester Links to an external site.](#)
- [Online Academic Calendar Links to an external site.](#)
- [Final Exam Schedule Links to an external site.](#)

### Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, [Student Academic Integrity](#)

#### [Links to an external site.](#)

, 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.

### 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](#)

#### [Links to an external site.](#)

. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

## The Dean of Students Office

### Links to an external site.

enforces the Code of Student Conduct

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. The Code explains what conduct is prohibited, the process the DOS uses to review reports of alleged misconduct by students, and the sanctions that can be assigned. When students may have violated the Code they meet with a representative from the Dean of Students Office to discuss the alleged misconduct in an educational process.

## ADA Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>

### Links to an external site.

. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## 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 visit the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

### Links to an external site.

website. 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.

#### 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](#)

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by telephone 940-565-2195 or email [internationaladvising@unt.edu](mailto:internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

1/15/04

Rev. 7/22/2016

#### Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as 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. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at

[SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)  
for more resources.

Undocumented Students

Please see UNT'S [Resources for DACA Students](#)

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web page for more information.

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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.

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Web Accessibility and Privacy

Please find the web accessibility and privacy statements for UNT, Canvas, and all CLEAR supported technologies below.

UNT

- [Web Accessibility Policy Links to an external site.](#)
- [Privacy Statement Links to an external site.](#)

Canvas/Instructure

- [Accessibility Statement Links to an external site.](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

CLEAR Supported Technologies

- See [CLEAR's Supported Technologies web page Links to an external site.](#) for links to Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies.

UNT Copyright Notice

Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. Materials may include, but are not limited to: documents, slides, images, audio, and

video. Materials in this course Web site are only for the use of students enrolled in this course, for purposes associated with this course, and may not be retained for longer than the class term. Unauthorized retention, duplication, distribution, or modification of copyrighted materials is strictly prohibited by law. For more information, visit the [UNT Policy Office](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)  
or [Copyright.gov](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

## Netiquette

Netiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online. Something about cyberspace makes it easy for people to forget that they are interacting with other real people. The following bullet points cover some basics to communicating online:

- Be sensitive to the fact that there will be cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different political and religious beliefs, plus just differences in general.
- Use good taste when composing your responses in Discussion Forums. Swearing and profanity is also part of being sensitive to your classmates and should be avoided. Also consider that slang can be misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- Don't use all capital letters when composing your responses as this is considered "shouting" on the Internet and is regarded as impolite or aggressive. It can also be stressful on the eye when trying to read your message.
- Be respectful of your others' views and opinions. Avoid "flaming" (publicly attacking or insulting) them as this can cause hurt feelings and decrease the chances of getting all different types of points of view.
- Be careful when using acronyms. If you use an acronym it is best to spell out its meaning first, then put the acronym in parentheses afterward, for example: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). After that you can use the acronym freely throughout your message.
- Use good grammar and spelling, and avoid using text messaging shortcuts.
- [Emoticons \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and [emojis \(Links to an external site.\)](#) can be used to add emotion to your text or convey invisible body language, as long as they are used tastefully.
- For synchronous meetings, make sure you are in a safe and private place (please do not connect while you are driving or when there might be distractions around you). Also, for a better experience, make sure to use headphones and make sure you are not interrupted.

# Course Summary:

## Course Summary

Date	Details	Due
Sun Jan 18, 2026	Discussion Topic <a href="#"><u>Key elements of a Screenplay</u></a>	to do: 11:59pm
	Assignment <a href="#"><u>Article Report #1</u></a>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Jan 25, 2026	Discussion Topic <a href="#"><u>Introduce Yourself DISCUSSION</u></a>	to do: 11:59pm
	Assignment <a href="#"><u>Feature Film Analysis #1 - Get Out</u></a>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 1, 2026	Assignment <a href="#"><u>Feature script analysis #2 - Parasite</u></a>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 8, 2026	Assignment <a href="#"><u>Feature Film Analysis #3 - Hidden Figures</u></a>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 15, 2026	Discussion Topic <a href="#"><u>Connecting the Dots of your Concept</u></a>	to do: 11:59pm
	Assignment <a href="#"><u>Article Report #2</u></a>	due by 11:59pm

Sun Feb 22, 2026	Discussion Topic <u>Short Film Writing</u>	to do: 11:59pm
	Assignment <u>Article Report #3</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 1, 2026	Assignment <u>Feature Film Analysis #4 - Die Hard</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 8, 2026	Assignment <u>Short Film Script</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 22, 2026	Assignment <u>Feature Film Analysis #5 - Zombieland</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 29, 2026	Assignment <u>Article Report #4</u>	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment <u>Thematic and Genre Design paper</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 5, 2026	Assignment <u>Virtual Pitch</u>	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 12, 2026	Assignment <u>Article Report #5</u>	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment <u>Pitch Deck</u>	due by 11:59pm

Sun Apr 19, 2026	Assignment <u>Character Arcs and Scene Outline</u>	due by 11:59pm
Tue May 5, 2026	Assignment <u>Feature Screenplay or Series Pilot - 1st 10 pages (final project)</u>	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment <u>Participation/ Preparation</u>	