

RTF w348: *The Working Hollywood Writer*

CRAFTING STORIES FOR THE SCREEN¹

4 FUN &
PROFIT

CLASS HOURS: **6:30–10:30pm**

CLASSROOM: **MAIN CLASSROOM #103**

ONLY 1
FRIDAY CLASS ->

CLASS #1: **FRIDAY** (JUNE 2)

#2-9: **WEDNESDAY** (JUNE 7 - JULY 26)





INSTRUCTOR: **BRIAN DAVIDSON**

OFFICE HOURS: *BEFORE CLASS* (5:30p-6:30p) & *AFTER CLASS* (if needed)

CONTACT: **e:** grvrbr@utexas.edu

c: 818-395-8168

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE...*dealer's choice, suggested software:*
 -  *FINAL DRAFT* (INDUSTRY STANDARD)
 -  *MOVIE MAGIC SCREENWRITER* (INDUSTRY STANDARD)
 -  *FADE IN*
 -  *CELTX*
- VARIOUS READINGS...*provided by instructor (see COURSE ASSIGNMENTS)*
- ABILITY TO PLAY WELL W/ OTHERS...*wearing other's shoes is greatly encouraged*
- CLOTHING...*do not test me on this one*
- PASSION & DRIVE...*to tell stories & work your a-- off*
- A CAPTIVATING & *UNIQUE FACT*...*to share in EVERY class*

“First learn to be a craftsman; it won't keep you from being a genius.” — DELACROIX

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

I must apologize to you...the “4 Fun & Profit” subtitle above is just a cheap marketing ploy. I'm afraid we won't be making any money in this class (*though you'll learn a few tricks that might get you a Tesla or two in the future*), but I promise we will definitely have fun. Because what could be more fun than staring at a blank page until our forehead bleeds...as a wise sage once described the process of writing.

Where the act of writing may not always be fun...watching others experience something you wrote sure the hell is—especially when they pay you for it! Know what else is fun? Understanding that we Writers & Storytellers are the “*prime movers*” of the entertainment industry. Though the corporations controlling the industry hate to admit it, this town rises & falls on what we writers put on that blank piece of paper. As another sage² once said: “directors & actors can turn a good script bad, but they *can't* make a bad script good.” So if you only take one thing away from this class it's this: *it's all about the script!*

But before you can write a good script, you need to know how to tell a good story. Before you can do that, you need to know what the hell a story even is. Newbie writers & execs often make the mistake believing the idea—summed up in a well-spun sentence—defines the quality of a Story. The right idea

¹ of any size, medium, or format—for the rules of narrative apply equally to Marvel blockbusters, high-literature, youtube, & mimes

² this town is full of 'sages' who are always handing out wisdom...though oddly, I have never met one

has value in the marketplace, but crafting a *successful* screen story is less about *what it is* and more *how you tell it*. So if you only take one thing away from this class it's this: *it's all about the craft of Storytelling!*

We'll push past the usual approaches to screenwriting (traditionally *outside-in*) and come at it from the *inside-out*—just as an audience experiences a story. Crafting stories for a living is less about pure art and more like making furniture. Human-beings only bend a couple of ways, so if you make a chair no one can sit on...can't really call it a chair, can you?³ So you must learn how to build the Storytelling version of a proper chair and master the tools you need to make it. How well you wield these tools is what separates the Aaron Sorkins from the Tommy Wiseaus⁴. Whether you're a Writer, Producer, Director, Actor, or Exec, the secret to success is mastering this invisible science.

For it is a *science*—maybe *alchemy* is better term—because producing a successful Story is never an accident. Certain rules must be obeyed. I'm not talking about saving felines or platitudes inspired by fruit⁵...but the laws of Story older than we are. I believe Story is the original language of mankind. For no matter culture or era, the grammar of Story is universal...as powerful today as when the first human, after hearing her companion's tale, asked “*uga...wacta ragutoo baba?*”⁶

But to discover the secrets of this ancient priesthood, you must make a sacrifice—every Story you want to tell. It's actually in the job description: we craft a *STORY not for ourselves* but for the purpose of *TELLING it to someone else*. A Story is never ours alone. We must build it out of the language & symbols of our audience, or else, they will *never* understand it. A Story without an audience isn't really a Story, is it?

This does not mean we pander or write what the audience wants. A Storyteller shouldn't ever give the audience what they want—unless they torture the hell out of 'em first. We craft Stories *for* our audience the same way a hunter prepares a trap *for* their prey. Storytellers are more con(wo)man than artist. Human hackers executing scams & emotional malware to make the audience experience what *we want* them to, when *we want* them to. Do it right, they'll never know they're dancing on the end of your puppet strings. Of course, the trick is knowing what string to pull when—which is exactly what this class is about.

If you've written several scripts or never typed “Fade In,” you'll walk away with techniques to help you design screen-stories that'll keep your audience asking “*wacta ragutoo baba?*” More practical than theoretical, because the best way to understand this arcane art is by practicing it. Though leaving room so you can write a Story you are passionate about, the focus will always be on the *Hows* over the *Whats*. For my goal is to give you the tools so you can become the kind of Storyteller you want to be—whether it's the next Ava DeVernay, Ryan Murphy, or J.J. Abrams...or even better—the next *you*.

So if you only take one thing away from this class it's this: *it's all about you!*

“Somebody's got to want something, something's got to be standing in their way of getting it. You do that and you'll have a scene.” — AARON SORKIN

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Beyond building an army for a bid at world domination, my goal is to help you **THINK LIKE A STORYTELLER & A CREATOR**. Employing the old “teach 'em to fish” approach to higher education, my focus will be less about getting to a complete draft of a script (*the catching of said fish*) and more on the skills you'll learn working toward that goal (*the how of catching said fish*)—so you can “feed yourself” after the class is over.

That said, the course is built around **DEVELOPING, ANALYZING, & SCRIPTING A DRAFT OF A TELEVISION PILOT** (*comedy, drama, or any combo of*). I'm limiting the options to television for 4 reasons: **1) I primarily write & produce tv dramas; 2) The best writing we can study is on tv; 3) The scripts are a hell of a lot shorter;**

³ and no, you can't call it “art” either...art no one can access is just masturbation (which is fine, but you really shouldn't get paid for it)

⁴ if you've never seen Wiseau's film, *THE ROOM*, you haven't lived—so bad it's inspiring—a cult favorite always playing somewhere in LA

⁵ got no time for snake-oil manuals like *SAVE THE CAT* or *THE NUTSHELL TECHNIQUE* when Uncle Ari figured it all out over 2,000 years ago

⁶ translated from the caveman: “so...what happened next?”

4) *The rules you learn writing a pilot are the same you'll use writing features, stage-plays, operas, even mime shows (especially the dialogue).*

Backwards from a traditional writing course, we will first focus on *scene-work*. In fact, a large part of the course will be **EQUIPPING YOU TO WIELD ASS-KICKING SCENE-FU**. I'm doing this because of this simple truth: **IF YOU CAN WRITE A GOOD SCENE, YOU CAN WRITE A GOOD SCRIPT!** The engines we use to drive a scene are just smaller versions of those we employ to shape the entire story. Which is why most experienced writers can tell if a writer has the goods after *only reading the first 10 pages of a script*.

Though I hope you'll be able to **SCRIPT A CHUNK OF YOUR FIRST DRAFT**, I'm giving you a lot of time to **MASTER THE POWERFUL OUTLINE-JITSU PHASE OF WRITING A SCRIPT**. **DON'T ROLL YOUR EYES AT MY SYLLABUS!** I hate to break it to you, but outlining is writing—50% of writing a finished script is spent *outlining*.⁷ It's the best place to discover your story—and learn how to tell a story—so you don't have to worry about that sh-t when you're laying down scenes. Trust me on this. The time you think you save writing a script without a detailed outline (*drafted 3 or 4 times, of course*) you lose twice-over re-writing your script over & over. My plan is to **SET YOU UP WITH A SOLID OUTLINE**, so once class is over, **YOU CAN QUICKLY FINISH A FIRST DRAFT**...and hopefully keep going all the way to a Final Draft. But don't worry, you'll be **SCRIPTING SCENES FROM THE FIRST WEEK ON**.

Beyond completing the projects above and **GAINING A BASIC PROFICIENCY IN THE STORYTELLING TOOLS & TECHNIQUES PRESENTED IN THE LECTURES & NOTES**, you should also be able to—

- ✓ **BREAKDOWN SCRIPTS & MEDIA SO YOU CAN CONTINUE TO DISCOVER & IMPROVE THE TRICKS OF YOUR TRADE**
- ✓ **FORMAT A SCRIPT PROFESSIONALLY & CREATIVELY...AND WHAT RULES YOU SHOULD NEVER BREAK**
- ✓ **IDENTIFY THE CAREER OPTIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF A WRITER/PRODUCER IN TELEVISION & FEATURES**
- ✓ **RECEIVE CRITIQUE OF YOUR WORK WITHOUT PERSONAL AFFRONT & OFFER THE SAME FOR OTHERS**
- ✓ **SEPARATE PERSONAL TASTES FROM HONEST ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE MEDIA & SCRIPTS**
- ✓ **DEMONSTRATE A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUSINESS & POLITICS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY**
- ✓ **BEGIN & MANAGE A CREATIVE CAREER IN HOLLYWOOD**

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

For specific assignments & deadlines, please refer to the *SCHEDULE* below. When necessary, further details will be provided through an *ASSIGNMENT SHEET* provided by the instructor. Your assignments will fall under one of three categories—

“When I think of pacing, I go back to Elmore Leonard who said he just left out the boring parts. To speed up the pace, all you have to do is ‘kill your darlings!’ I got a comment that changed the way I rewrote forever. Jotted below a rejection letter was this mot: ‘Not bad, but puffy. Revise for length. Formula: 2nd Draft = 1st Draft – 10%.’” — STEPHEN KING

READING

Most weeks, you will be required to read something before coming to class. A PDF will be provided in the *ASSIGNMENTS FOLDER* folder in the class Dropbox.

SEARCH & SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FROM INDUSTRY NEWS SITE [DUE BEFORE EVERY CLASS]

If you want to thrive in this town you need to keep up with the town...reading the various industry news sites will help you keep pace. To build this habit & introduce you to this business side of storytelling, every week, I want you to peruse the websites below & choose 1 ARTICLE you find interesting to share in class. At the beginning, I will ask 1 or 2 of you to present what you discovered.

ACCEPTABLE WEBSITES: deadline.com hollywoodreporter.com variety.com thewrap.com

PROCEDURE: Anytime before class begins, upload an article from the previous 7 days into the INDUSTRY ARTICLE FOLDER in the class Dropbox. Submit as a PDF w/ your name in file-name (no requirement for length).

⁷ really only 10% of the total time is scripting an initial draft...the other 40% is spent re-writing that draft over & over

SCRIPTS/ARTICLES FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS [DUE BEFORE CLASS BEGINS]

*It is imperative you read whatever is assign before a class—not only for your own benefit, but for mine. I will be using them to illustrate whatever tool/technique I want you to use in your writing after this point. If you don't read them, it will be much harder to grasp whatever I'm laying down. So for the love of everything holy & profane, **READ WHATEVER IS ASSIGNED FOR CLASS!***

SUPPLEMENTAL READING [AT YOUR PLEASURE]

*I have curated selected readings from various books to enhance our class discussions. Where I won't directly refer or quiz you on them, they will help you accomplish your goals in this class and as a writer. I promise the titles I've chosen are worthy of your time...so highly recommend reading every one in the near future. I list what you should read when after the primary **CLASS SCHEDULE**.*

DEVELOPING

The focus of this course is to teach you how to construct any story you want to tell...well, that's what we call "development." We will develop your skills in story development through—

THE BREAKDOWN: DECONSTRUCTING SUCCESSFUL TV PILOTS

Just as art students will copy a masterpiece to learn how to paint, we narrative-jockeys should never stop deconstructing the films & tv episodes that blow us away to discover the tricks & techniques we can use to make our own film & tv scripts blow someone else away. Since I have greatly improved as a writer by doing this on regular basis, I want you to develop this vital habit as well. We will only have time to do one or two as a class assignment, but I may ask individual students to do a break-down to help them develop their own script.

DEVELOPING A TV PILOT

What better way to learn the arcane secrets of telling a story than by spending a lot of time figuring out how to tell our own. We will start by pitching a Concept...then, working it into a marketable Premise...which will give us what we need to discover our story through a Beat Sheet...and shape with a rough Tentpole Outline...making it really easy to go to a full-blown Scene Outline...where we figure out the entire story through a few more Outline Drafts...and then, we will finally hear those beautiful but terrifying words: "Go to script!"

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN ASS: LEARNING FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

As they say, this business is all about who you know...thankfully for you, I know a few working writers, directors, & execs (at every level of the industry). Schedule permitting, several of them have agreed to come in so we can pick their brains. Over an hour, I will lead a Q&A giving you opportunities to ask your own questions...so we can hear the unvarnished truth of what it's like to work in this monkey-house of a business & how can you get in. Don't waste this opportunity. Q&A's just like these helped me start my own career—on more than one occasion. I will inform you who & when they are coming...allowing you some time to do a little homework before. I expect each of you to ask questions and show your appreciation for their time & wisdom.

WRITING

I don't care if you have written 100 scripts or never heard of FINAL DRAFT, I won't judge you on your current writing ability. All I ask of you is to show me you are trying to use the techniques I'm introducing. I will never grade on objective quality, but only on the blood, sweat, & tears you leave on your pages as you work to improve wherever you are at.

SCENE-WORK

Almost every week, I will be giving you prompts to build & write scenes to give you opportunities to practice using the various techniques we will be learning along the way. Sometimes we will review them in class, sometimes not. Sometimes I'll might ask you to rewrite one, to hone a skill, some you'll never touch again. Either way, I will always give you written notes so you know where you need to improve. I expect you to apply the same passion & attention to every scene whether its your baby or not.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: TV PILOT

I've already yapped about this one enough. Writing a script—let alone a tv pilot—is damn hard...so you may as well have fun. Leave any fear you have in your suitcase. Be bold. Dream big. I want—no, demand—you show us your f'ing passion! Tell us a story only you can tell. Open our eyes to universes only you have the key to—

“Dramatic structure is not an arbitrary—or even conscious—invention. It’s organic...the human mechanism for ordering information. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis; boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl; act one, act two, act three.” — DAVID MAMET 5 of 10

PARTICIPATION & WORKSHOPPING

In order for this class to succeed, the *EAGER & CONSTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION OF EACH STUDENT IS REQUIRED!* Whether its during discussions, my interactive lectures, or the workshopping of your writing. Active participation is vital if you want to gain these skills...not to mention, stay awake through a 4 hour class. Writing & Storytelling is a craft. It only comes through doing it, sharing your journey, & learning from others walking along side you. So...*come early, stay late, and make some noise!*

I will be grading you on both *in-class participation* and *reading & sharing your thoughts on your classmates' work*. If you don't speak, I won't know how to evaluate where you're at or if you are even trying...therefore, your grade will reflect this.

Ours is a collaborative medium, so knowing how to receive & give feedback is one of the most important skills you can develop. Start practicing now. Class is a *mistake-free zone*. No one will judge you. Let me repeat that: ***NO ONE WILL JUDGE YOU!*** During these hours together, it's all about how hard you try. Contrary to what Yoda⁸ said, we only fail when we *don't* try.

The key to mastering the art of criticism is to separate the writer from the work—this goes for yourself and anyone you share notes with.⁹ I realize it's hard to hear someone pick apart a script covered in your forehead blood...so use this time to thicken your writer-skin. Be open to other ideas. Read between the lines of even the worst notes. In turn, show compassion when you offering your own criticism. Share some “sugar” before you give the “medicine”...or tell them what you thought worked before you say what doesn't. Identifying problems isn't enough, suggest possible solutions. Simply saying “x isn't working” doesn't help a writer—say *why* X doesn't work. Use the same techniques we'll be discussing in class to develop a language of constructive criticism.

LAPTOPS IN THE CLASSROOM

Where I understand the necessity of using laptops in a writing class, I have found I am not a fan since I've begun teaching. I've spent the last 15+ years in writers rooms & the we *never* brought our laptops into any of the rooms I've been a part of. Why? Because laptops, cellphones, the latest issue of *CROCHET QUARTERLY* offer us other options instead of discipling our brain cells to contribute to the room's common cause. And what's worse, these things will make the Showrunner think you aren't paying attention to them. Showrunners like to be the center of attention. In fact, they want all of your attention...all the time...even on your days off. They can smell it when you aren't thinking of them. So, think of our classroom as a Writers Room and me...as your own personal Showrunner.

I will allow you to bring your laptop/tablet into class, but they must remain completely closed *whenever—*

- ➔ *I am lecturing or leading a discussion (take notes w/ a pen)...*
- ➔ *we are watching/discussing a video...*
- ➔ *a guest Mentor is speaking to the class...*
- ➔ *I tell you to...*

If one person's laptop becomes a problem, I won't just ban that laptop—I *will ban all of them* (except mine, of course) and you'll be forced to travel back to those ancient days of pen & paper. *The same for Cellphones & issues of CROCHET QUARTERLY!*

“Good storytelling never gives you four, it gives you two plus two. Don't give the audience the answer; give the audience the pieces and compel them to conclude the answer. Audiences have an unconscious desire to work for their entertainment.” — ANDREW STANTON

⁸ *truth is, word around town is Yoda's was a jerk. While filming EMPIRE & RETURN OF THE JEDI, he had a coke problem...always going off script, reading his lines backwards, & inserting his own nonsense.*

⁹ *repeat after me: “I am not my script. Criticism of my story is not criticism of me.” Keep saying this until you believe it.*

MECHANICS & CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

“No joke...if I know what the first page and a half is of my script, I don't want to say I'm way but I can see the house.”

— AARON SORKIN

ASSIGNMENTS & SCRIPT PAGES

Assignment instructions will always be discussed in class and provided through an Assignment Sheet. I will invite you to join a Dropbox folder—labeled **UTLA:WHW**—you will use this to share assignments with me and the class (*when appropriate*). Please do not submit anything to me on paper, only electronically, as a PDF. I also accept emails if need be.

As a general rule, most writing assignments will be due at **5pm on the Monday before** Wednesday classes. These deadlines—and all others—will be strictly enforced...this is so your classmates and I have plenty of time to read & consider your work so you get the most out of your workshoping sessions.

Unless you get prior permission, assignments turned in late will be penalized as follows: **0-2 hrs late** [GRACE PERIOD]; **2-12 hrs late** [2.5% GRADE DEDUCTION]; **12-24 hrs late** [5% GRADE DEDUCTION]; **over 24 hrs late** [10% GRADE DEDUCTION]; **not submitted by class start** [0 POINTS FOR ASSIGNMENT].

GRAMMAR & FORMATTING

Professional grammar, spelling, & punctuation is strictly encouraged. We live and die by the word in this business, so we need to present our own the best we know how. If your work doesn't look professional, it won't be read by professionals. So start practicing now.

With script formatting, I'll give grace as I assume many of you will be learning...but if I show you something in class, I expect it to be followed. I'm usually vigilante on this as I used to be a Script Coordinator—tv production's Script Manager/Editor—so I like me some nicely formatted Courier. If your script is sloppy, I'll assume you don't care so your grade will reflect this. But in all things, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask—my schedule/phone/email is always open.

ATTENDANCE

Every student is required to attend all classes as scheduled. You're expected be on time and prepared for each class. We rise or fall together, so we need you to be here with us. You are allowed **1 Unexcused Absence**. With every unexcused absence *after*, your grade will be lowered by 5% (ex: 93 to 88).

You are allowed **2 Late Arrivals** (over 10 mins past 6:30 pm)...but for every 2 Late Arrivals *after*, your class grade will be lowered by 5%. Of course, if you run into an unforeseen problem—like LA traffic—talk/text me. Grace is always granted for those who ask.

YOUR INTERNSHIP WILL NEVER BE ACCEPTED AS AN EXCUSE for being late or missing class (incl. assignments). Your internship host must accommodate your classroom schedule. If you have a problem with your host, please contact UTLA's administration.

CLASS BEHAVIOR

As Maximus said in *THE GLADIATOR*: “*What you do in this class echoes into the industry,*”¹⁰ so be aware of how you present yourself for it will carry far beyond our time together. When taking a course on industry craft, you will serve yourself & your future career if you treat it as a job interview/audition for your career. You'll learn this industry is damn small and it's rare anyone gets a job without a recommendation by a peer.

These courses are taught by instructors with industry connections. In my case, I'm currently working *in the industry* you want access to. I often have opportunities to hire or share resumes with my colleagues. But even more important: *how you appear & treat your fellow classmates will make or break your career.*

¹⁰ I realize Crowe didn't say this in the film, but this was how Logan wrote the line in his first draft.

TRUE STORY... The two biggest breaks which jump-started my career came through 2 college classmates I hadn't spoken to in years. They remembered my passion & professionalism from our production classes, so knew they wouldn't be risking their reputations by recommending me for a job. And honestly, they weren't people I thought would ever be in a position to help me. The gatekeepers aren't the big names we all recognize, it's the nameless who work for them. It really does matter who you know in this town...it's just usually the people you least suspect.

GRADING & ACADEMIC BUSINESS

<u>CLASS PARTICIPATION & INITIATIVE</u>	25%
LECTURES & DISCUSSIONS	15%
WORKSHOPS: SHARING NOTES & WRITERLY AID	10%
INTERACTING W/ GUEST MENTORS	5%
SUBMITTING/SHARING INDUSTRY ARTICLES	5%
BREAKDOWNS & IN-CLASS ANALYSIS	15%
COMPLETING & REFERENCING CLASS READINGS	15%
<u>WRITING: DEVELOPMENT & SCRIPTING</u>	35%
SCENE-WORK: SCRIPT PAGES & REWRITES	15%
PILOT SCRIPT: OUTLINES & SCRIPT PAGES	20%

GRADING SCALE

A	100 - 93
A-	92 - 90
B+	89 - 87
B	86 - 83
B-	82 - 80
C+	79 - 77
C	76 - 73
C-	72 - 70
D+	69 - 67
D	66 - 63
D-	62 - 60
F	59 - 0

NO final exam for this class. NO incompletes given.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, outside collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension, and **the submission of essentially the same written assignment for two different courses without the prior permission of the instructors.** By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Students who violate University rules are subject to disciplinary penalties, including failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information, please visit the Student Judicial Services site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (video phone).

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin you must notify your instructors at least fourteen days prior to any class you will be absent to observe a holy day. You will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence.

UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC MAIL NOTIFICATION POLICY

It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis—daily or, at minimum, twice/week—in order to stay current with University communications, recognizing they may be time-critical. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

“When a film turns narrative rather than dramatic, when it fills in the blanks for a viewer’s imagination, interest is lost. Exposition, backstory, or characterization spotwelds a reader’s interest to what is happening now—stopping the show.” — DAVID MAMET

CLASS/ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE¹¹

DATE		CLASSROOM LECTURES & WORKSHOPS	ASSIGNMENT <i>upload to Dropbox by 5pm on Due Date unless noted</i>
CLASS	DUE		
<p><i>read in the order of the # arrows below, then repeat</i></p> <p>JUNE 2 ←-----2</p>			<p>1 <u>READ...or LISTEN</u> [DISCUSS IN CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SCRIPTNOTES PODCAST—Ep. 296 (4/18/17): Television w/ Damon Lindelof [free @ iTunes]
JUNE 2	3 →	<p><i>WHEREIN we buckle-up & plunge into the hellscape that is writing for Hollywood..</i></p> <p>1</p> <p><u>MENTOR INTERVIEW</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ME: a writer’s pov of Hollywood & what it takes to succeed <p><u>CRAFT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Become an Emotional Manipulator</i>: the secret to selling a script ▶ <i>Momentum</i>: the only thing you need to tell a successful story <p><u>WORKSHOP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ATLANTA Pilot: how to teach yourself how to write 	<p>4 →</p> <p><u>READ</u> [FOR DEVELOPMENT]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pilot script of a produced show [your choice from those provided] <p><u>DEVELOP</u> [PRESENT IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakdown pilot you read to identify the engines in every scene [choose 1 seq. to blow our minds] <p><u>WRITE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SHORT FILM SCRIPT: Adapt a short story to script using tools intro’d in class (4-6 pgs)
JUNE 6			
JUNE 7		<p><i>WHEREIN we learn how to build a engine from the ground up..</i></p> <p>2</p> <p><u>CRAFT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>The Myth of Character</i>: what those character-y things are really for ▶ <i>Scene Q&A</i>: 3 questions you must answer for any scene you write ▶ <i>Intro to Adv. Engine Building</i>: a few tools to help you construct an idea powerful enough to push a story thru an entire season(s) <p><u>WORKSHOP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>BREAKDOWNS</i>: show us what’s under the hood of your favorite scs ▶ <i>SHORT SCRIPT</i>: will select a couple for us to discuss in class 	<p><u>READ</u> [FOR CLASS DISCUSSION]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MAMET MEMO ▶ <i>HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS</i>: short story <p><u>DEVELOP</u> [PRESENT IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PILOT SCRIPT: Conceive 3 Story Concepts for a TV Pilot to pitch in class [select one in class] <p><u>WRITE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Re-Write SHORT SCRIPT based on notes & discussions [using tools intro’d in class]
JUNE 12			
JUNE 14		<p><i>WHEREIN we continue to fine-tune our engine into a purring dino-kitten..</i></p> <p>3</p> <p><u>MENTOR INTERVIEW</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MIKE MCGRALE: Screenwriter & mid-level TV Writer <p><u>CRAFT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell</i>: more tools to craft killer scenes ▶ <i>Rubber-balls</i>: using a “chain re/action” to arc every scene ▶ <i>Dialogue-Jitsu</i>: using words to break bones & sever limbs ▶ <i>Suck v. Suck</i>: using choice & dilemma to connect/generate scenes <p><u>WORKSHOP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SHORT SCRIPT</i>: will select a few to discuss in class ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: pitch & discuss your pilot concepts ▶ <i>PIMPING YOUR PREMISE</i>: how to find your pilot story thru selling it 	<p><u>READ</u> [FOR CLASS DISCUSSION]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>MR. ROBOT</i> pilot script <p><u>DEVELOP</u> [REVIEW IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PILOT: Design & Write-up a <u>Premise & Character List</u> as a “sales” doc [to show on-screen] <p><u>WRITE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SCENE-WORK (w/ 2 PILOT Characters): Write a sc. using 1 Character’s Intention; then, Write a 2nd sc. now driven by the other Character’s Intention (2-3p max each)
JUNE 19			
JUNE 21		<p><i>WHEREIN we transform our engine into perpetual-story machine..</i></p> <p>4</p> <p><u>MENTOR INTERVIEW</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ILDY MODROVICH: Showrunner (<i>LUCIFER</i>, et.al) <p><u>CRAFT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Finding G.O.D.</i>: harnessing the “3 Act Structure” to build every level of your story (scenes, sequences, acts) ▶ <i>DJ Story</i>: developing your entire story thru big Beats & Sequences <p><u>WORKSHOP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SCENE-WORK</i>: will select a few to discuss in class ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss your Premises on-screen ▶ <i>HACKING HUMANS</i>: using the <i>MR. ROBOT</i> pilot to teach us how to use all these tools to craft a kick-ass story 	<p><u>READ</u> [FOR CLASS DISCUSSION]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>BREAKING BAD</i> pilot script <p><u>DEVELOP</u> [REVIEW IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PILOT: Expand your Premise into a <u>Beat Sheet</u> of the major moments of your entire story [to show on-screen] <p><u>WRITE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SCENE-WORK (w/ PILOT Characters): Write 2 connecting scs. harnessing the G.O.D. structure (4-5p total)
JUNE 26			

¹¹ instructor reserves right to make adjustments due to his short-sightedness & poor organizational skills...

<p>JUNE 28</p> <p>5</p>	<p><i>WHEREIN we begin to build a story around our engine...</i></p> <p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Pitching Tentpoles</i>: give your story a shape using big structure as a map so you never get lost in the story-jungle ▶ <i>The Universe In Every Atom</i>: using scenes to find your story's plot <p>WORKSHOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SCENE-WORK</i>: will select a few to discuss in class ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss Beat Sheets on-screen ▶ <i>THE WHOLE ANIMAL</i>: using the <i>BREAKING BAD</i> pilot to teach us nothing is wasted in great writing, every element must drive the story 	<p>READ [FOR CLASS DISCUSSION]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>MAD MEN</i> pilot script <p>DEVELOP [REVIEW IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: Using the 5-Act Template, convert your Beat Sheet into Rough Outline [to show on-screen] <p>WRITE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SCENE-WORK</i>: Re-write your connecting scs. based on notes & craft discussion (4-5p total)
JULY 3		
<p>JULY 5</p> <p>6</p>	<p><i>WHEREIN we continue to shape, fill-in, shave, & file the rest of the story...</i></p> <p>MENTOR INTERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>ROSS RICHIE</i>: CEO/Founder of BOOM! STUDIOS & a UT alum <p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Don't Break the Chain</i>: using cause & effect to control your story ▶ <i>Opposites Attract</i>: design every aspect of your story with contrasting elements <p>WORKSHOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss selected 5-Act Outlines ▶ <i>STRING THEORY</i>: using the <i>MAD MEN</i> pilot to teach us how everything in a story is connected to & a result of everything else 	<p>DEVELOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: Using all the tools we've discussed, Create & Write a detailed scene-by-scene Outline
JULY 10		
<p>JULY 12</p> <p>7</p>	<p><i>WHEREIN we take our story out for a spin...</i></p> <p>MENTOR INTERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SCOTT REYNOLDS</i>: TV Writer/Prod. (<i>DEXTER, JESSICA JONES, IRON FIST</i>) <p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Whiplash</i>: using Turns, Reversals, & Value-Switching to weave & pace your story <p>WORKSHOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss your Outlines ▶ <i>IT TAKES A VILLAGE</i>: turning the class into a mock Writers Room to develop a few of the Outlines, you'll get a taste of what it feels like to negotiate the spastic genius of a room 	<p>DEVELOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: Re-Break & Write the 2nd Draft of your Outline based on notes & class discussions
JULY 17		
<p>JULY 19</p> <p>8</p>	<p><i>WHEREIN we install nitrous in the engine to keep our story moving...</i></p> <p>MENTOR INTERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ tbd <p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Adv. Engine Building 101</i>: how to find the parts you need to build a Series Engine to push your story across several seasons <p>WORKSHOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss your Outlines ▶ <i>SUCKER PUNCH</i>: how to craft & script a powerful opening scene that will create its own gravity 	<p>DEVELOP [PRESENT IN-CLASS]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: Re-Break & Design a 3rd Draft of your Outline based on notes & class discussions...OR go to Script! [discretion of instructor] ▶ BREAKDOWN: Write & Notate a Critique/Analysis of another student's opening scenes [assigned by instructor] <p>WRITE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>SCENE-WORK</i>: Script your <i>PILOT</i>'s Opening Scene(s) [to be critiqued/analyzed by another student in class]
JULY 24		
<p>JULY 26</p> <p>9</p>	<p><i>WHEREIN we slam pedal to medal and thunder into Hollywood to conquer the industry with our badass storytelling kung-fu...</i></p> <p>MENTOR INTERVIEW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ tbd <p>CRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>Courier Ninja</i>: a few tips & tricks to make your scripts read like they were printed on money ▶ <i>A Few Extra Tools</i>: anything I forgot to throw in your toolbox <p>WORKSHOP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: each student will critique/analyze another's Opening Scene(s) ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: review & discuss Outlines & Script Pages 	<p>WRITE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ <i>PILOT</i>: Continue Scripting your First Draft thru Act 1 based on notes & discussions [for one last round of notes from instructor]
AUG 2		

EXTRA INSTRUCTION HOURS

The University requires a total of 37.5 instructional hours, requiring this class to make-up an additional **1.5 hours**. They will be accounted for by:

SCREENPLAY FORMATTING [0.5 hr]

- Video & Guide

1-ON-1 ADVICE & REVIEW W/ INSTRUCTOR [1.0 hr]

- Throughout the course, I will arrange a time/location with each of you convenient to both our schedules

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION

- Watch & Comment
- Answer the brief quiz provided by instructor
- Use this formatting in all script assignments.
- Schedule time w/ instructor
- Show up
- Bring all your questions or concerns

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

I highly recommend you read these chapters after the class/date they are listed by. I am pulling from the titles on the right (abbreviations in brackets). I urge you to read all of these books in the future.

1 (6-2) *ITW*: CH. 4–CHANGE / *OFD*: CH.2–WHERE TO PUT THE CAMERA?

2 (6-7) *St*: CH.14–CHARACTER / *ITW*: CH.13-14–CHARACTERIZATION...

3 (6-14) *ITW*: CH.11–SHOWING NOT TELLING, CH.15–DIALOGUE, CH.16–EXPOSITION, CH.17–SUBTEXT

4 (6-21) *ITW*: CH.8-9–SCENES / *St*: CH.7–SUBSTANCE OF STORY, CH.10–SCENE DESIGN / *WEI*: CH.8–WRITING GREAT SCENES

5 (6-28) *ITW*: CH.3–5-ACT STRUCTURE, CH.7–ACTS / *St*: CH.9–ACT DESIGN

6 (7-5) *WEI*: CH.6–RISING TENSION / *AS*: CH.3–KEEP IT MOVING

7 (7-12) *ITW*: CH.10–PUTTING IT TOGETHER

8 (7-19) *WEI*: CH.10–VIVID VOICES / *St*: CH.18–THE TEXT

HITCHCOCK by Francis Truffaut [**HITCH**]

ON FILM DIRECTING by David Mamet [**OFD**]

ADV. SCREENWRITING by Linda Seger [**AS**]

INTO THE WOODS by John Yorke [**ITW**]

STORY by Robert McKee [**St**]

WRITING FOR EMOTIONAL IMPACT by Karl Iglesias [**WEI**]

“Story as such can only have one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next. Conversely, it can only have one fault: that of making the audience not want to know what happens next.”

— E.M. FORSTER