

# Master of Entertainment Industry Management

## Carnegie Mellon University

<b>Course Information</b>	<p><b>Introduction to Writing for Television</b> Spring 2024 Course Number: 93.870 Semester Credit Hours: 9 14 sessions; Tuesdays, 6:30 - 9:20 pm; HBH 2003 Instructor: Emily Skopov <a href="mailto:eskopov@andrew.cmu.edu">eskopov@andrew.cmu.edu</a>, <b>(724) 759-5658 – if you need to reach me on short notice, please TEXT, DO NOT EMAIL</b></p> <p><b>1<sup>st</sup> class Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>, last class Apr. 23<sup>th</sup>; NO CLASS MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> DUE TO SPRING BREAK</b></p> <p><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> The class will meet both in-person and via zoom, alternating weekly. Unless you are ill, I will expect you to physically attend the in-person classes on campus. I would also appreciate it if you can keep your cameras on while on zoom. Recognizing that zoom fatigue is real, I will be giving 2-3 breaks during zoom sessions.</p> <p><b>IN-PERSON DATES:</b> 1/16, 1/30, 2/13, 2/27, 3/12, 3/26, 4/9, 4/23 <b>REMOTE DATES:</b> 1/23, 2/6, 2/20, 3/19, 4/2, 4/16</p> <p><b>OFFICE HOURS:</b> Tuesdays 4-6pm EST. Weeks when class is held in person, office hours will be conducted in HBH 1111, alternating with office hours via zoom during weeks when class is held remotely. If necessary, I will also offer more flexible meeting times via zoom.</p> <p><u>Zoom links, assignments, and materials will be available on Canvas.</u></p>
<b>Description</b>	<p>Television has become a constant in our lives. The variety of unique voices has produced some of the best storytelling in decades. Some critics have stated that television is going through a renewed golden age. The explosion of U.S. scripted content has increased the appetite for original stories both domestically and internationally. In addition, the expansion of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon have further expanded the global content market. As U.S. networks and distributors seek content, more opportunities for new voices and new points of view are welcomed. This introductory class will focus on the fundamentals of writing for television with an emphasis on pitching and writing a television pilot. In addition to covering style and format, emphasis will be given to story ideas, outlines, structure, and marketability.</p>

<b>Class Sharing</b>	<p>Two of the most fundamental characteristics of television scripts are that they are:</p> <p>1) ultimately intended to be produced by a large number of professionals, including actors, who will bring the dialogue and character behaviors to life;</p> <p>2) written to be read by others, and if the writer is lucky, the script will go on to be read by many people. Consequently, this class takes the view that anyone interested in learning the craft of writing for television must be at least minimally comfortable (or willing to accept) that the work will be shared with others as a critical and necessary part of the process.</p> <p>Though there is no expectation that you will perform dialogue, some of our assignments and in-class exercises might include having dialogue referenced aloud as part of a discussion. Work will be shared not only with the instructor but with one's classmates. <b>Anything less than complete respect for the work of every single student, regardless of experience level, will not be tolerated.</b> Sharing one's writing, <u>especially in an educational setting</u>, is an act of trust, and even the most seasoned professional must frequently conquer their own feelings of vulnerability. Giving and receiving notes on a script are fundamental aspects of the writing process. As such, feedback and critiques will be given -- and accepted -- with maturity, sensitivity, and in the positive spirit of wishing to help one another grow and improve. Regardless of the varying degrees of writing experience that each student brings to this class, the goal here is to advance beyond one's previous knowledge and capabilities while learning the fundamental aspects of the craft of writing for narrative television.</p>				
<b>Required Viewings &amp; Readings</b>	<p>TBD. No textbooks are required. Any readings will be provided by the instructor.</p>				
<b>Assignments</b>	<p>As this is an introductory class, lessons and assignments may build on one another, making it difficult to catch up if you fall behind. Additionally, the importance of the assignments will be more about allowing students to learn and experience the vocabulary, artistic and technical elements, and processes of television writing, as opposed to an emphasis on the quality of output. Effort, intention, and attitude, an interest in the creative aspects (and how they fit with the business issues), will be given more weight. This is an opportunity to tap into and explore your own creative impulses and vision, and you will be encouraged to enjoy the process of creating rather than stress about the final product. Check Canvas for the most current assignments and more detailed instructions.</p>				
<b>Learning/ Course Objectives</b>	<p>By the end of the course, students should be able to:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Learning Objective</th><th>How Assessed</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Identify the differences between writing for TV and writing for films</td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions</li> <li>• Written and oral pitches of individual series ideas.</li> </ul> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Learning Objective	How Assessed	Identify the differences between writing for TV and writing for films	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions</li> <li>• Written and oral pitches of individual series ideas.</li> </ul>
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	Analyze narrative television formats with an emphasis on dramatic series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions/exercises</li> <li>• Possible written assignments</li> </ul>
	Examine what makes marketable, compelling characters & stories; identifying different types of story and plot engines of episodic series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions and exercises</li> <li>• Original series idea assignment</li> <li>• Written and/oral pitch</li> <li>• Character breakdown, written deliverables of pilot treatment and outline, pilot script.</li> </ul>
	<p>Understand the role that character breakdowns, treatments, and outlines play in the development of a script, and how to create them.</p> <p>Understand the process of writing first drafts and how to revise them in response to feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions, exercises</li> <li>• Written character breakdown</li> <li>• Written treatment</li> <li>• Written outline</li> <li>• Completed 1st Act of a pilot script, with revisions</li> </ul>
	Analyze the content and structure of a pilot episode.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewings</li> <li>• Readings</li> <li>• In-class discussions</li> <li>• Original series idea</li> <li>• Pilot script (with revisions)</li> </ul>
	Overview of an entire season of a show, including character and story arcs, and how a good pilot lays the foundation for all that follows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class discussions</li> <li>• Written breakdown of what a season of your proposed series would look like in terms of each episode's logline</li> </ul>

**Evaluation  
Method**

The focus of the grading will be divided in the following areas.

<b>Assignment (More information is available on Canvas)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Informal/warm-up written dialogue assignments	5%
2. Premises for three original series	Mandatory; ungraded
3. Written proposals for: Original series & its pilot episode	Mandatory; ungraded.
4. Summary and analysis of a pilot script	5%
5. Fundamentals of screenwriting exercises	5%
6. Character Breakdown	10%
7. Pilot Treatment	15%
8. Pilot Outline	20%
9. POSSIBLE EXTRA CREDIT Series arc and target audience	TBD
10. 1 <sup>st</sup> draft, 20 pages of your pilot episode	20%
Final/revised draft (or, at instructor's discretion, individualized written assignment)	10%
11. Series Pitch Presentation	5%
12. Class participation, including completion of assigned readings and viewings.	5%

Class Participation Rubric	Grading for Class Participation				
		A Grade	B Grade	C Grade	D/R Grade
	Frequency and Quality	Attends class regularly (whether via zoom or in person, depending on instructor's schedule and current CMU policy) and <i>always contributes</i> to the discussion by raising thoughtful questions, analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, expanding the class's perspective, and appropriately challenging assumptions and perspectives	Attends class regularly (via zoom or in person, depending on instructor schedule and current CMU policy) and <i>sometimes contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways.	Attends class regularly via zoom but <i>rarely contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways and is at times disruptive and/or disrespectful to the ideas/opinions of others	Attends class regularly via zoom but <i>never contributes</i> to the discussion in the aforementioned ways and possible is disruptive and/or lacks respectful for the ideas and opinions of others
Grading scale	A+      99.0-100%    Exceptional A        94.0-98.9%      Excellent A-       91.0-93.9%       Very Good B+       88.0-90.9%       Good B        84.0-87.9%       Acceptable B-       81.0-83.9%       Fair C+       78.0-80.9%       Poor C        74.0-77.9%       Minimum Passing C-       71.0-73.9%       Failing				

<b>Plagiarism and cheating notice*</b>	<p>Plagiarism</p> <p>Plagiarism and other forms of academic misrepresentation are viewed as extremely serious matters. Misrepresentation of another's work as one's own is widely recognized as among the most serious violations. The violation is clearly flagrant when it occurs as plagiarism on a required paper or as cheating on an examination, including take-home as well as in-class examinations. The punishment for such offenses can involve expulsion from the MEIM Program and Heinz School.</p> <p>Cheating includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plagiarism (explained below);</li> <li>• Submission of work that is not the student's own;</li> <li>• Submission or use of falsified data;</li> <li>• Unauthorized access to an exam or assignment;</li> <li>• Use of a stand-in for an exam;</li> <li>• Use of unauthorized material in the preparation of an assignment or during an examination;</li> <li>• Supplying or communicating unauthorized information to another student for use in an assignment or exam;</li> <li>• Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment. Collaboration must be explicitly permitted by an instructor for it to be considered authorized.</li> <li>• Submission of the same work for credit in more than one course.</li> </ul> <p>Plagiarism is the failure to indicate the source of work either with quotation marks or footnotes. The source can be a phrase, a graphic element, a proof, specific language, or an idea derived from the work of another person. Note that material on the web is another person's work and is therefore equally subject to the rules on plagiarism and cheating as any other source material.</p> <p>Cheating and/or plagiarism on an essay assignment will result in a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment. The essay in which the cheating occurs will not be excluded from the offending student's assignments included in grade calculations; the points for that essay zero (0) will be factored into the grade.</p> <p>A cheating student's final grade will be impacted significantly. In addition, cases of cheating and plagiarism will be submitted to and reviewed by the Dean's Office; more severe penalties may be imposed, up to and including expulsion from the Heinz School.</p>
<b>Policy on use of AI</b>	<p>Certain assignments in this course will permit the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT. When AI use is permissible, it will be clearly stated in the assignment prompt posted in Canvas. Otherwise, the default is that use of generative AI is disallowed. In assignments where generative AI tools are allowed, their use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. For instance, if you generated the whole document through ChatGPT and edited it for accuracy, your submitted work would need to include a note such as "I generated this work through Chat GPT and edited the content for accuracy." Paraphrasing or quoting smaller samples of AI generated content must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, following the guidelines established by <a href="#">the APA Style Guide</a>. It is each student's responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any AI output that is submitted. You may not earn full credit if inaccurate or invalid information is found in your work. Deviations from the guidelines above will be considered violations of <a href="#">CMU's academic integrity policy</a>. Note that expectations for "plagiarism, cheating, and acceptable assistance" on student work may vary across your courses and instructors. Please email me if you have questions regarding what is permissible and not for a particular course or assignment.</p>

<p><b>Regarding Sensitive Materials and Potential Sources of Discomfort</b></p>	<p>Some of the films and TV shows we will be discussing (as well as those that students create) might examine issues related to race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, politics, violence, addiction, etc. If you find yourself uncomfortable with a particular topic and share this with me with enough advanced notice, I will endeavor to find alternative materials that are less upsetting or triggering. However, you will always be free to excuse yourself if for some reason a discussion (or viewing/reading) brings up personal discomfort. Our classroom is intended to provide a safe space for you to explore and discuss a wide range of topics and ideas, and you must do what you need to in order to take care of yourself and your classmates.</p> <p>Additionally, this class is designed for mature sensibilities. It is therefore expected that visual, oral, or written instances of issues such as nudity, sexual activity, use of alcohol or drugs, etc, will be perceived and/or discussed in a sophisticated manner that evaluates these issues in the context of their value to a particular story.</p>
<p><b>Diversity Statement</b></p>	<p>We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit.</p>
<p><b>Course Policies &amp; Expectations</b></p>	<p><b><u>Absences/Tardiness:</u></b> We have a lot to cover, so please do your best to attend as many classes as possible. Given the individualized nature of writing, I will likely be doing many individual meetings with many of you simply to provide feedback on your work and to address individual needs or concerns. I would like to avoid additional individual meetings that result from missed classes unless these absences are the result of unavoidable emergencies. If you know you are going to be late or must miss a class, please contact me prior to class via email. Barring a true emergency, absences will be penalized.</p> <p><b><u>Treating writing seriously:</u></b> This is a graduate-level course, and the standards will therefore be appropriately set at a professional level. All written submissions must be proofread thoroughly; <b>typos, grammar, and punctuation will be factored into the grading of assignments.</b> While no one will get points for submitting work that has clearly been proofread carefully, or that uses proper grammar and punctuation, <b>points will be deducted</b> for errors in these areas. While perfection is not expected, and points will not be deducted for the occasional small error, any submission that shows a general lack in the aforementioned areas will be penalized.</p> <p>If you are unsure of your proficiency with grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc, I strongly suggest you use all the technological tools at your disposal, such as spell check and programs like <b>grammarly</b>, the latter of which offers a free version: <a href="https://www.grammarly.com/?utm_source=google&amp;utm_medium=cpc&amp;utm_campaign=search-ad-ext&amp;utm_content=486649398677&amp;utm_term=grammarly&amp;matchtype=e&amp;placement=&amp;network=g&amp;qclid=CjwKCAiA_omPBhBBEiwAcq7smRjrrH0qP9BtOrX5ycX5azXnI95aeJ7WZRI_lwzW2CzYA9uRcRsIjhoCcOQQAvD_BwE&amp;gclid=aw.ds">https://www.grammarly.com/?utm_source=google&amp;utm_medium=cpc&amp;utm_campaign=search-ad-ext&amp;utm_content=486649398677&amp;utm_term=grammarly&amp;matchtype=e&amp;placement=&amp;network=g&amp;qclid=CjwKCAiA_omPBhBBEiwAcq7smRjrrH0qP9BtOrX5ycX5azXnI95aeJ7WZRI_lwzW2CzYA9uRcRsIjhoCcOQQAvD_BwE&amp;gclid=aw.ds</a></p>

<b>Mechanics of assignments and feedback</b>	<p>For the most part, feedback will be given as written notes. Additional feedback can be given during office hours, which I will be announcing shortly, or during individual meetings upon request and at mutually convenient times.</p> <p>Due dates may be adjusted as I become more familiar with what can be realistically expected from students in a given time frame and how long I require to read and provide the necessary feedback which will be helpful before moving onto subsequent steps in developing the pilot.</p> <p>Unless you are instructed otherwise, submissions will be uploaded to canvas. I will be providing further information on this soon, once I have our canvas site more organized.</p>
<b>Late Assignments</b>	<p>If an assignment is late by 24/48/72 hours, you are eligible for a maximum of 90%/80%/70% of the grade, unless the lateness is due to an emergency about which you have spoken to me. I will not accept assignments (ie you will receive a score of 0) beyond a 3<sup>rd</sup> day of lateness unless you have received my permission in advance.</p>

**A NOTE ABOUT THE PACING OF THIS COURSE: What follows is structured with topics broken into units rather than specific dates of class sessions. This framework will allow me to organically allot time and emphasis according to the areas in which they are most (and least) needed, based on my observations of student comfort and progress. Though I have due dates listed for many of the assignments, these are, and will remain, tentative and flexible so that I may adjust them as I feel is necessary.**

**I am of the opinion that it is more important that these lessons are learned in a way that best equips students to produce their best work, rather than strictly adhering to a predetermined timeline I've created, so long as we complete the most important assignments by the end of the semester.**



UNIT/TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS/PREP WORK (Due dates TBD & order of assignments given may differ from order in which they are presented below)
<p><b>INTRODUCTIONS</b></p> <p><b>GENERAL OVERVIEW, PROTOCOLS &amp; EXPECTATIONS</b></p> <p>My background and why I teach this class; your background, and why you've decided to take this course/what you hope to get out of this course.</p> <p>Goals of this class.</p> <p>Pacing of the class.</p> <p>Addressing fears of writing; writing is <b>rewriting</b>.</p> <p>Setting the tone for our class; the importance of trust, respect, and integrity.</p> <p>Review of syllabus and my <u>OBSESSIONS with proofreading, grammar, and punctuation</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ READ assigned pilot scripts; be prepared to discuss.</li> <li>➤ BEGIN THINKING about some ideas for an original series you'd like to create.</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE BASICS OF SERIES TELEVISION</b></p> <p>Differences between series TV and feature films</p> <p>Fundamental Characteristics and various types of Episodic TV Series, as well as terminology</p> <p>Streaming vs Network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WATCH pilot episodes (TBD) and be prepared to discuss</li> <li>➤ READ pilot scripts (TBD) and be prepared to discuss</li> </ul>
<p><b>FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION</b></p> <p>Overview of the process of getting a series idea sold, produced, and distributed</p>	
<p><b>APPROACHING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SERIES</b></p> <p>Fundamental Creative and Structural Elements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SUBMIT informal dialogue assignment #1. (Prompt TBD)</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT informal dialogue assignment #2 (Prompt TBD)</li> </ul>

<p>Business considerations</p> <p>What makes a tv series “good,” both from a buyer and viewer’s perspectives?</p> <p><b>PLOT VS CHARACTER VS THEME VS STORY</b></p> <p>Which is more important?</p> <p>The role played by each in various forms of narrative works in film and tv</p> <p>Differences between plot- and character-driven works.</p> <p>How to begin thinking about your own project.</p>	
<p><b>THE ROLE OF THE PILOT</b></p> <p>Expectations</p> <p>Basic requirements</p>	<p>➤ SUBMIT 3 original ideas for a 1-hour series you’d like to create</p>
<p><b>NARRATIVE STRUCTURE</b></p> <p>Acts</p> <p>A,B,C Storylines</p> <p>Obstacles, reversals</p> <p>Identifying your series engine</p>	<p>➤ SUBMIT summary and analysis of an assigned pilot script</p>
<p><b>REQUIRED DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p>Logline</p> <p>Character Breakdowns</p> <p>Treatments</p> <p>Beat Sheets</p> <p>Outlines</p> <p>Episode Breakdowns/Series Arc</p> <p>Pilot Script</p> <p>Eventual Bible</p>	<p>➤ READ examples of beat sheets, treatments and outlines; to discuss</p>

<b>YOUR SERIES &amp; PILOT</b>  Concept  Format  Genre  Target Audience  Characters  Plot of pilot episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SUBMIT description of the series for which you will write the 1st 20 pgs of your pilot.</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT Character Breakdown</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT description of pilot episode</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT Pilot Treatment</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT Pilot Outline</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT Pilot Script pages</li> </ul>
<b>SCREENWRITING BASICS</b>  Technical, formal aspects  Terminology  Differences from traditional narrative prose  Writing scenes  Dialogue  Handling exposition	❖ WRITTEN EXERCISES:  focus on dialogue  focus on action/descriptive text (esp. showing rather than telling)  focus on exposition
<b>PITCHING YOUR SERIES</b>  Visual and verbal components	🎨 CREATE AND PRESENT  A 7-10 minute pitch of your series, including PPT accompaniment