I. COURSE INFORMATION

Fall 2016
COMM 3345 – Media Scriptwriting - CRN# 16495

Required Text:

Producing and Directing the Short Film and Video, 5th Edition
By: David K. Irving; Peter Rea
ISBN-10: 0415732557
http://0-proquest.safaribooksonline.com.lib.utep.edu/9780415732550

Materials:

**Subscription to Celtx Standard**
($10/month) [www.celtx.com](http://www.celtx.com)
All-in-one video planning for individuals and small teams

Access to Blackboard
Short of the week account [www.shortoftheweek.com](http://www.shortoftheweek.com)
Google Drive – FREE 15 gigs
Portable USB 3.0/Thunderbolt hard drive – min. size 500 gigs.
Headphones.

II. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Ramón Villa
Office Location: Education Rm. 102C – Screenwriting Lab
Office Hours: W 1:30pm – 4:30pm or by appointment (via Blackboard)
Telephone Number: 915-747-5129 (leave message)
Email: [rvilla2@utep.edu](mailto:rvilla2@utep.edu) & via Blackboard email

III. COURSE CONTENT

A-Course Description
This basic cinematic pre-production course will emphasize the process of idea development, script development and the visualization of story into practical pre-production components. This course will focus on the three-act structure.

B- Course Objective
1. Breakdown the basic elements needed to tell a cinematic story
2. Learn the idea development process
3. Understand the basic principles of a three-act structure script
4. Critically evaluate short films based on story, theme, and production value
5. Collaborate with peers to share the audio-visual storytelling process.

C- Learning Outcomes
Demonstrate aptitude in storytelling techniques in terms of preproduction
1. Perform competency in conceptualizing, evaluating, and implementing story ideas into formatted scripts

D- ASSIGNED READINGS
Chapter 1 – 16 plus all the Appendix sections.
E. Assignments:
Attend class lectures; participate in class and online.

Blackboard
I will use Blackboard to post quizzes, grades, announcements, and other relevant information. Please look at this page everyday.

Production Projects
Students will receive further instructions and requirements for each project.

After completing each project, you will upload assignments via GDrive.

The assigned projects are listed below, subject to change:

Late work will not be accepted.

1. Individual Story Ideas (50 Points)
   10 total
2. Loglines (50 Points)
   10 total
3. Short of the Week Journal Entries (50 Points)
   10 total
4. Book Quizzes (100 points)
   10 individual & 10 Group
5. Book Group Work (3-5 minutes: 150 points)
   Chapter Discussions and Presentations

6. Idea #1 (85 points)
   Screenwriting Corkboard w 3 Acts
   Treatment (1-2 pgs.)
   Formatted Script (5 pgs.)

7. Idea #2 (130 points)
   Screenwriting Corkboard w 3 Acts
   Treatment (1-2 pgs.)
   Formatted Script (5-10 pgs.)

7. Idea #3 (185 points)
   Screenwriting Corkboard w 3 Acts
   B,S, S, A Corkboard
   Treatment (1-2 pgs.)
   Formatted Script (5-10 pgs.)
8. **Script Pre-Production – Any idea (100 points)**
   Breakdown Script, Storyboard, Shot List, Schedule (Production/Days),
   Budgeting
   All work will be turned in via Celtx

9. **Animated Storyboard (exactly 3-5 minutes: 100 points)**
   Scene, Sequence, and/or Act
   **Due Thurs. Dec. 8th before class begins.**
   **4:00pm – 6:45pm**

The media production projects will be graded based on these criteria: (a) implementing techniques (camera work, lighting, sound, editing, etc.), (b) originality, (c) participation, (d) cohesiveness of assigned topics and ideas, and (e) overall quality of production. **All scores will be evaluated individually.**

**Individual Story Ideas (50 points)**

Often times, inspiration strikes when you least expect it. Many screenwriters keep a journal of interesting events they witness, conversations they overhear, or people they meet.

Although these conceptual nuggets may not immediately pertain to a current project, they can be invaluable in the future.

Carry a small notebook with you and write down anything that you experience that you find interesting. Take particular note of:
- (a.) Interesting people you may meet or casually encounter - Did any person stand out or have an interesting quirk, dialect or mannerism?
- (b.) Interesting conversations - Perhaps you overheard a conversation, a joke or a saying
- (c.) Interesting story or event - take note of headlines and local events

Maintain this journal indefinitely as you never know when these little ideas can help you later when you’re experiencing writer’s block or simply need some creative inspiration.

You will turn in this assignment view Blackboard.
**These are due on Mondays by 11:59pm.**

Late work will not be accepted.

**Loglines (50 points)**

Write a 1-2 sentence logline that summarizes the plot.
1. A logline must have the following:
   a. The protagonist
   b. Their goal
   c. The antagonist/antagonistic force
2. Don’t use a character name (Instead tell us about character)
   a. An ex-cop
b. Mayor of a city
3. Use adjective to give a little depth to that character. (Helpful if characteristic will have something to do with plot)
   a. An alcoholic ex-cop
   b. A mute Mayor of a city
4. Clearly and quickly present the protagonist’s main goal (This is what drives your story and it will drive your logline too. Make sure that the goal is present early in the script)
   a. A mute Mayor wants to run for Senator
   b. Alcoholic ex-cop searchers for his daughter
5. Describe the Antagonist (The antagonist should be described in a similar, but preferably shorter, manner than the hero. If the hero faces a more general antagonistic force then make it clear that they are battling something, not just life’s bumps)
   a. A mute Mayor wants to fight off an ambitious rival to win a Senator’s seat.
   b. Alcoholic ex-cop searchers for his daughter after his demented former sidekick kidnaps her.
6. Make sure your protagonist is pro-active
   a. Drives the story
7. If you can, include stakes and/or a ticking time-bom
   a. To save his reputation an ex-cop must break into a jail to save his son who has been arrested on false charges before his son dies.
8. Setup (Some scripts operate in a world with different rules to our own and require a brief setup to explain, e.g. most science-fiction stories. Others have a protagonist whose personal or psychological history is crucial to the story and needs to be explained. Again, be brief.
   a. In a world where all children are grown in vats…
   b. Driven to a mental breakdown by an accident at work, an aquarium manager…
9. About the ending

Do not reveal the scripts supercool twist ending, even if it is the next The Usual Suspects. The story, and thus the logline, should be good enough to hold up by itself; a surprise ending should be a lovely bonus found when reading the script.

These are due Tuesdays before class begins.

SOTW – Short of the Week Journal Entries (50 points)
You will evaluate and write about short films online.

This information will be shared amongst your group. The website is at: www.shortoftheweek.com and you can also download the app online for your phone.

More info on Blackboard via SOTW link.

DO NOT watch the Documentary form, Experimental Form, Music Videos, and/or News
**Book Quizzes** (100 points)
These are designed to keep you on your toes, chapter to chapter. You will take an individual quiz on the assigned chapter online and then save your answers so you can take the quiz again as a group in-class. You will engage/discuss as a team to finalize your answers. The best way to study for these quizzes is to read the chapters. Each individual quiz is worth 5 points. Each group quiz is worth 5 points. Individual Quizzes are due on Mondays by 11:59pm. Group quizzes will be taken in class.

**Book Group Work** (100 points)
This will consist of each team member standing in front of the class discussing the assigned sections for the week. Please keep up with the reading. You will be required to take questions from other classmates for the understanding of the chapter sections.

This is NOT meant to be just a summary of the assigned reading. Rather, it should function as a guide to the pivotal issues raised in the readings and as a catalyst for generating class discussion, which may include bringing in your own relevant outside examples. Concentrate on three things you would like to discuss and/or highlight.

On the day you present, turn in a detailed outline of your presentation that clearly explains what you will talk about—who does what in what order, etc. Also hand in in other supplemental materials. Every group will choose a different person in the group to lead the discussion/presentation. This person will only do it once and give someone else a chance but must also be integral to the groups success. Each presentation is worth 10 points.

**Outlines are due Tuesdays before class begins.**
Late work will not be accepted.

**Idea #1, Idea #2, and Idea #3** (400 points)
These assignments require that you sign up for Celtx STANDARD. You will turn in your work via the website. More instructions will be given in class. **These are due Tuesdays before class begins.**

**Script Pre-Production – Any idea** (100 points)
You will choose any idea you have developed and use Celtx Standard to produce the pre-production components.

**Animated Storyboard** (exactly 3-5 minutes: 100 points)

*Scene, Sequence, and/or Act*

**Due Thurs. Dec. 8th before class begins.**
4:00pm – 6:45pm

**B. Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>900 – 1000 points</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
800 – 899 points  B
700 – 799 points  C
600 – 699 points  D
0 – 599 points     F
Incomplete         I
Withdrawn         W

1. Evaluation:
In order to achieve a grade of “C” for this class you must keep up with all the work assigned as an individual as well as group assignments.

Your grade for the class will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Story Ideas</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loglines</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOTW Entries</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Quizzes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Discussions/Presentations</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea #1 on Celtx</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea #2 on Celtx</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea #3 on Celtx</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Idea Pre-Production on CELTX</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animated Storyboard</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Total Points Possible 1,000 points

General Grading Criteria:
The following are general guidelines for grades. These are meant only as general statements and not intended to be directly applicable for grading projects.

A level work is strong conceptually, aesthetically, creatively, and technically. It adheres to guidelines and communicates strongly and clearly through the medium. The concept of the work is original and innovative and the technical execution of the idea is superior. A-level work takes creative and conceptual risks while maintaining coherence about the statement it is making.

B level work achieves success in some areas but not all: originality, concept, aesthetics, creativity, and technical execution. For example, sometimes it is technically strong but conceptually weak; other times it is highly original but not technically competent. Sometimes the work is creatively strong but has trouble holding together as a coherent piece with a particular message.

C level work typically may have small amounts of success in technical, creative, conceptual, and aesthetic areas, but has difficulty in multiple areas.

D level work and below fails to achieve success and competence in most
areas. It is typically conceptually weak, fails to deliver an original or coherent idea, has major technical difficulties, and takes little or no creative risk.

IV. RULES, CLASSROOM POLICIES/ ETC.

Lab Time: Attendance is mandatory for lab time unless otherwise specified. The lab time provides an opportunity to apply lessons and techniques to projects. Students have access to several postproductions labs on campus: COTT 307, EDUC 102, LACIT, and Library Rm. 300.

1. Read assigned materials/pages prior to meeting for classes.
2. Attendance and participation are mandatory.
3. No chatting/texting during lecture or presentations.
4. During class or lab time, do not use the iMacs to access Facebook, emails, etc. Points will be deducted.
5. Three (3) unexcused absences before the drop date will result in an automatic drop. Three or more totaled unexcused absences after the drop deadline will result in a lowered grade. The accumulation of absences excused/unexcused will lower your grade. You are considered absent once I pick up the attendance sheet and you have not signed in or if you have departed early.

    THE DROP DEADLINE IS Oct. 28th TO RECEIVE A “W” FOR THE COURSE!

    Late work will not be accepted.

A. Cheating/Plagiarism:

All of your work must be original. Plagiarism is defined in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary as; “to steal or pass off (the ideas or words off another) as one’s own; i.e., submitting someone else's work under your name or not citing the source of your information”. Cheating consists of obtaining information from someone other than the instructor during an exam, or on other assignments; or having someone else complete your assignments. The instructor and the college take cheating very seriously. At the very least a student will receive an “F” for the assignment if it has been plagiarized or if the student has cheated. The Student Code of Conduct addresses these issues. The instructor will deal with plagiarism and cheating on an individual basis. Consequences can range from receiving a failing grade on the assignment to being dropped from the course. The instructor will follow the Student Code of Conduct in dealing with these issues.

B. Attendance:

Attendance is taken at the beginning of the scheduled class time. If you are late and the attendance book is closed, you run the risk of not being counted present. If students have a documented illness or emergency they may be excused. It is the student's responsibility to attend class and be on time.

Unexcused absence is defined as any absence without any valid documentation to waive your absence.

Excused absence is defined as any absence that is waived by the instructor at his
own discretion. 

Two (2) late/arrivals/early departures will be considered as an unexcused absence. Three (3) unexcused absences before the drop date will result in an automatic drop.

C. Drops: 

The instructor reserves the right to drop any student who misses 2 class periods in a row without contacting the instructor and/or does not complete a major assignment with excessive absences (quizzes, discussions, presentations, & papers) and does not contact the instructor. The instructor will attempt to contact the student before dropping them. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor if they have a problem and need to be dropped. It is also the student’s responsibility to be aware of the drop date.

D. Conduct and Grievances: See the student handbook for the proper procedures for addressing student complaints. You are expected to conduct yourself in a courteous and respectful manner. You are required to turn off and stow away all technology including cell phones and laptops, which means NO TEXTING! It is distracting for your instructor and actually, the people around you as well. Your instructor has no problem calling this to your attention and asking you to leave if your use of technology disrupts the class. If you have an emergency arises please step outside.

The classroom as a safe haven: This classroom is a safe haven for all ideas. Respect not only your instructor, but also guest speakers and your peers as equals. We are all unique individuals entitled to our own opinions and beliefs. Therefore, any comments, jokes, or remarks that denigrate the worth of an individual’s physical or mental ability, physical appearance, religion, race, creed, ethnic background, sexual preference, or gender are inappropriate and detract from your effectiveness as a speaker and from your credibility as a person.

Disruptive Behavior

• Walking in late to class.
• Lack of supplemental materials.
• Leaving electronic devices on during class.
• Taking credit for a thought, opinion and knowledge from sources and claiming them as your own (plagiarism).
• Chatting or talking during a presentation.
• Using vulgarity.
V. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University of Texas El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

VI. CASS POLICY

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT:

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES MUST BE FOLLOWED BEFORE ANY PROJECT MAY BE SUBMITTED FOR A GRADE:

• All work will be submitted via CELTX STANDARD. It is your responsibility to sign up. No exceptions.

Presentations: The purpose of most content produced is to share with others and presentations are an excellent way to showcase individual and team efforts. Presentations of each project will occur during class time, which makes it mandatory attendance. Points will be deducted from a student’s final grade for each missed viewing. In addition to receiving praise for projects, students will be given constructive criticism by fellow peers and me.

        On presentation days: Do not be late nor power-on the iMacs!