

**WR 2530B: Writing for the Television Industry
Winter 2023****Time: Monday 2:30-5:30****Room: UC 3110****Instructor: Professor Freeborn****Email: Please use OWL Message****Office Hours: UC 1426 Th. 3:30-5:30****or by appointment****COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course teaches students how to write and subsequently and credibly to pitch creative projects that reflect the four current television broadcast models: network, basic cable, premium cable, and Over the Top (OTT). By exploring a variety of both scripted and unscripted approaches traversing the genres, this course will introduce students to the skills required for careers in paid writing and production in the TV industry in both Canada and the United States. Students will also be introduced the different funding models and development processes between the two countries, including the use of agents, unions, production companies, and studios. Classes will consist of a lecture based on the required reading plus a tutorial/screening session.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Neil Landau. *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Alan Sepinwall and Matt Zoller Seitz. *TV: The Book*. New York: Grand Central, 2016.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Value	Deadline
In-class Quizzes (4 x 10%)	40%	Weeks 3, 5, 8, 10
One-Pager for unscripted project	20%	Week 7
Bible for scripted project	30%	Week 12
Attendance, peer editing, and in-class workshops	10%	

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT, SUBMISSION, and DEADLINES

In this course, you will be required to submit the final version of each of your assignments electronically through OWL to turnitin.com.

All assignments are to be typed, using a twelve-point font unless otherwise specified. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and the professor's name on the first page.

When using sources in an assignment, you will follow CMS standards for documentation, detailed in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, seventeenth edition (online edition available through Western Libraries).

Assignments are due via OWL and in PDF format no later than 5:30 p.m. on the date specified on the class schedule and displayed under the "assignments" tab on OWL. Late assignments will receive a penalty of 5% per day, and they will not receive comments. To qualify for an extension, you must have a valid reason and contact your instructor at least twenty-four hours before the deadline. Please see the medical accommodation policy below.

Do not fax or email assignments. You must keep copies (electronic, paper, or both) of all assignments submitted.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. A ledger is circulated in each class requiring that students confirm their attendance in writing for tracking attendance and punctuality. Regular attendance is expected, and simply signing the register in each class will not ensure a strong class work grade on its own. Regular and informed participation in class discussions and workshops is your best method to excel in this area of the grading rubric.

Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy for this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That is, the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.
- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g., an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g., an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g., if you've missed three hours and need or want to miss another class meeting), discuss these reasons with your instructor within one week of that

absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors. See also: **Medical Accommodation Policy** below.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time, for late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

Note: a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of make-up class in another course **will** count as non-attendance, and **will** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario **shall not require** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student's other scheduled class times. If you are asked or "required" to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean's office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

CLASSROOM POLICY

You will be expected to read the chapters assigned from your textbook before coming to class. I will not summarize the required reading. Instead, I will explain the salient issues arising from a particular chapter. Also, expect intermittent lessons on unassigned topics in response to repeated writing errors.

EMAIL POLICY

When you contact me using OWL Message, you can expect a response within twenty-four hours. If you email me using Outlook/Western email, you can expect a response within one week. If you email me using a non-UWO account, you will not receive a response. If I foresee that I cannot respond to emails within times listed above, I will post an announcement on OWL. Please keep in mind that you should use email to arrange appointments, to inform me that you will miss a class, and to ask relatively simple questions (i.e., questions that I can answer in one or two sentences).

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES, INCLUDING PLAGIARISM

"Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, which can be found here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf"

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently Western and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>”).

Prerequisites [check]

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student’s record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Senate language requires all requests for accommodation for a grade component of 10% or more to go to academic counselling. That same section, however, allows for (and encourages) instructors to deal directly with accommodation requests for grade components less than 10%. Here’s the relevant Senate language:

“Accommodation by Instructor for work worth less than 10% of the overall grade in a course: Instructors are encouraged, in the first instance, to arrange participation requirements and multiple small assignments in such a way as to allow students some flexibility. A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

In arranging accommodation, instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment for all students. Instructors must indicate on the course outline how they will be dealing with work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. In particular, instructors must indicate whether medical documentation will be required for absences, late assignments or essays, missed tests, laboratory experiments or tutorials, etc. Where medical documentation is required, such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Academic Counselling/Dean’s office, who will make the determination whether accommodation is warranted. Given the University’s Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/privacy.pdf), **instructors may not collect medical documentation.**”

MEDICAL ACCOMMODATION POLICY

“The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean’s office (the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student’s file and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University’s Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean’s Office in consultation with the student’s instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note—it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.”

Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics

A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Documentation from Student Health Services

At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.”

Please note that individual instructors **will not under any circumstances** accept or read medical documentation directly offered by a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds or for related reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an ‘Attendance’ policy in the course). **All medical documentation must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of a student’s home Faculty.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT

All instructor-written materials (e.g., PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students’ personal use within the course and remain the instructor’s intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the

course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 9): Course Introduction & the Role of Writers

Read Landau Introduction & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Week 2 (January 16): Dominant Broadcast Models & the Evolution of Television

Read Landau chapters 1 and 10 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Week 3 (January 23): In-Class Quiz 1

No readings

Week 4 (January 30): Writing for Scripted & Unscripted Genres

Read Landau chapters 4 and 13 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Ken Basin. "Unscripted Television." Chapter 10 of *The Business of Television*. pp. 221-25.

Available online through Western Libraries.

Week 5 (February 6): In-Class Quiz 2

No readings

Week 6 (February 13): Writing Pitch Documents Part I; Peer-Review Session for Assignment 1 (One-pager for unscripted project)

Read Landau chapters 7 and 11 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

(February 20): READING WEEK: NO CLASSES

Week 7 (February 27): Writing Pitch Documents Part II

Read Landau chapters 3 and 8 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

One Pager for unscripted series due via OWL by 5:30 p.m. on February 27, 2023

Week 8 (March 6): In-Class Quiz 3

No readings

Week 9 (March 13): Writing into the Production Process

Read Landau chapter 2 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Week 10 (March 20): In-Class Quiz 4

No readings

Week 11 (March 27): Pitching Your Project

Read Landau chapter 14 & review Sepinwall & Seitz as needed

Week 12 (April 3): Writing Workshop; Peer-Review Session for Series Bible

No readings

Week 13 (April 10): No class unless attending for makeup quiz

Bible for pilot episode of scripted series due via OWL by 5:30 p.m. on April 10, 2023