

WESTERN UNIVERSITY

**2530b: Writing for the Television Industry**

Winter 2026

**Section: # 001****Email****Time/Room:****Office:****Professor: Dr. Michael Arntfield****Office hours:****Course Objectives**

This course teaches students how to write and subsequently and credibly 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 also help prepare students for careers in paid writing and production in the TV industry in both Canada and the United States. Students will also learn how to navigate the different funding models and development processes between the two countries, including the use of agents, production companies, and studios. This course is delivered entirely online through streaming episodes posted to Brightspace.

**Required Texts**

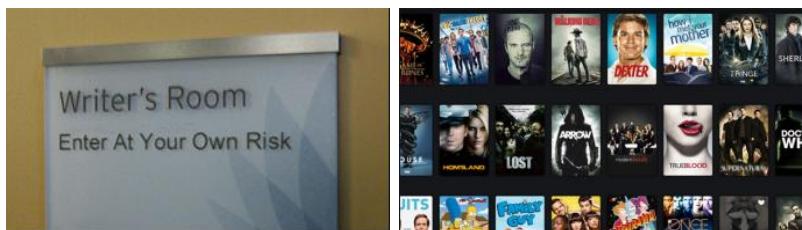
✉ Landau, Neil (2022) *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Focal Press.  
List price: \$78.50 (2nd edition required for exam content).

✉ Sepinwall, Alan & Matt Zoller Seitz (2016) *TV: The Book*. New York: Grand Central.  
List price: \$24.99

Of note, only the mid-term and final exam will have questions related to the required readings, and which are minimal.

**Course Assignments**

1. (40%) – Online quizzes x 4 (Weeks 2, 4, 9 & 11)
2. (20%) – Online mid-term exam (Week 7)
3. (40%) – Online final exam (Week 13)



## **Course Delivery Model and Format**

This is an entirely online asynchronous course that will emulate a streaming series, with highly cinematic, documentary-style classes that you can watch and re-watch anytime over the course of the term. Each week where there is a new lecture (see Course Schedule below), the Vimeo link to the episode will be posted to OWL Brightspace under “New Episodes” on the home page; you will also receive an email notification that a new episode has landed. For the purposes of this course, a “week” runs from Monday morning to Monday morning. On those weeks where there is an online quiz or exam (which you can write at any point during the week) there is no additional lecture material to watch or associated readings.

## **Discussion Forum**

Like any streaming series, the idea here is to generate further online discussion and community after viewing. It is also essential in a course like this that students stay connected and be able to actively participate and engage in discussion as you would if this class was held on campus.

In addition to watching each week’s episode, you must therefore “attend” class (defined as logging into our Brightspace section) and participate by introducing yourself and then responding to one or more of the several on-screen questions/discussion prompts that will appear in each episode. This means contributing at least two separate posts during each of those weeks where there is a new episode. At least of these posts must be an original contribution and the second can be a response to an existing thread, if you so choose. You will not be able to post replies until you first make an original contribution. You also do not need to post anything during the weeks where there is a quiz, exam, or over Reading Week. Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the Brightspace discussion forum for more than a full week, must be coordinated with/approved by me before the week is over to avoid penalties.

Postings on the Discussion Board must have the following characteristics:

- Must relate to one or more of the discussion prompts listed in that week’s class/episode;
- Must contribute something meaningful to the board;
- Must support your opinion with sufficient examples;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful, insulting, or offensive language;
- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week’s topic or the prompts you will see on-screen in the episode;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. “I agree with you” or “nice comment.”

**Note:** Attendance as defined in this section is **mandatory**. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements as defined above for any week where there is Discussion Forum will result in your earned final grade in this course being reduced by 3%. That penalty is cumulative to a maximum of five weeks. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements for **five or more weeks where there is Discussion** will therefore result in your earned final grade being reduced by a full 15%.

Posts must also be made contemporaneously (the same week as) with the associated episode. You cannot backfill entries later in the course after having neglected to make contributions in real-time during the relevant weeks.

## **Course Schedule**

### **↳ Week 1: Introduction & Industry Overview**

Read: Sepinwall & Seitz pages x-xxi  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 2: Online Quiz #1 (10%) – New Lecture Content Only. 20 Questions**

### **↳ Week 3: Writing Roles in the TV/Streaming Industry**

Read: Landau pages 245-248 & Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 4: Online Quiz #2 (10%) – New Lecture Content Only. 20 Questions**

### **↳ Week 5: Pitching & Writing Scripted vs. Unscripted TV**

Read: Landau pages 1-13 & 49-86 Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 6: Writing Premise vs. Non-Premise “Pilots”**

Read: Landau pages 211-244 & Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

## **Reading Week – No Content or New Readings**

### **↳ Week 7: Mid-Term (20%) – Includes All Lectures & Readings. 30 Questions**

### **↳ Week 8: Pitching & Developing Scripted “Bibles”**

Read: Landau pages 312-330 & Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 9: Quiz #3 (10%) – New Lecture Content Only. 20 Questions**

### **↳ Week 10: Writing for Spin-Offs & Franchises**

Read: Landau pages 87-109 & Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 11: Quiz #4 (10%) - New Lecture Content Only. 20 Questions**

### **↳ Week 12: Understanding Intellectual Property (IP) & Getting Paid**

Read: Landau pages 14-48 & Sepinwall & Seitz as related to specific series cited/screened.  
Discussion Forum contributions x 2

### **↳ Week 13: Final Exam (40%) – Includes Entirety of Course Content. 40 Questions**



### **Academic Accommodation**

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests through the Student Absence Portal, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:  
[https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic\\_considerations/index.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html)

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation, which may include a Student Medical Certificate. Recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

In this course, because not all elements of the quizzes (only two of three quizzes get counted) are required in the calculation of the final course grade, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for missed quizzes.

**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](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](#).

### **Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence**

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### **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 materials 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 and/or 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 for further investigation as appropriate.