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## WRITING FICTION FOR TELEVISION in Fall 2019 (CM2018)

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| <b>Course Code</b>    | CM2018                  | <b>Professor(s)</b>     | Marie Regan                           |
| <b>Prerequisites</b>  | None                    | <b>Office Number</b>    | GL20                                  |
| <b>Class Schedule</b> | T: 16:55-19:50 in G-207 | <b>Office Hours</b>     | Tues 3:00-4:30<br>appointment is best |
| <b>Credits</b>        | 4                       | <b>Email</b>            | mregan@aup.edu                        |
| <b>Semester</b>       | Fall 2019               | <b>Office Tel. Ext.</b> | 621 (best to email)                   |

## Course Description

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Some of the best screenwriting (and production) today is happening on television or online. This course will train you to write screenplays (from formatting to dialogue, character development, visualizing action and story structure) and focus that writing around creating our own 'show'. Working in the series structure, we will work as a 'writing room' to analyze best practices in series screenwriting and then create our own series (shorter form but along the same model), developing the series bible, arc and character outlines together, then each student will write their own episode. In doing the work of this class together and individually you will develop a clearer written voice on the page, and richer collaboration skills as we all work to strengthen our 'show'. You will finish the semester with a stronger sense of your own dramatic voice, a better understanding of three-act structure, screenwriting as a visual language. We will take advantage of Paris and experiential immersion as part of this course.

## Course Learning Outcomes

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Aesthetic Inquiry and Creative Expression: Students will engage with artistic or creative objects (e.g., visual art, theatrical works, film) in different media and from a range of cultural traditions. (CCI LO2)

Exploring and Engaging Difference: Students will think critically about cultural and social difference; they will identify and understand power structures that determine hierarchies and inequalities that can relate to race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, religion, or class. (CCI LO3)

Create a series 'bible and assess and develop narrative arcs over multiple episodes.

Demonstrate knowledge and mastery of screenwriting form (for short form and feature).

Write expressive screenplays with correct and effective use of screenwriting craft.

Work creatively with other students (in large groups and small) to develop character, conflict, plot, theme, setting, dialogue, subtext, style, tone, genre, scene, sequence, act development, visual storytelling and other elements of the well-crafted screenplay.

Receive and give constructive feedback and revise effectively alone and as part of a collaborative team.

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# General Education

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## Integrative Inquiry Outcomes

- Aesthetic Inquiry and Creative Expression (LO2): Students will engage with artistic or creative objects (e.g., visual art, theatrical works, film) in different media and from a range of cultural traditions. (GLACC LO2)
- Exploring and Engaging Difference (LO3): Students will think critically about cultural and social difference; they will identify and understand power structures that determine hierarchies and inequalities that can relate to race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, religion, or class. (GLACC LO3)

## Course Outline

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**CLASS SCHEDULE:** *Please note: this syllabus may change as class progresses*

01 – Tues 3 Sept. – FORMATTING + FILM ON THE PAGE + IDEAS DRIVING THE CORE

In class three act structure, formatting, tv form, dramatic compression.

Read: *Breaking Bad* pilot script

Watch: *Breaking Bad* pilot

Read: *Little Miss Sunshine* and fill out three-act structure worksheet. Print bring to class.

Watch & type 60 seconds: Watch a favorite tv episode and choose a one minute (60 sec) piece of it. Type it up in screenplay format. Print 3 copies and bring to class next week.

02 – Tues 10 Sept. – DRAMATIC COMPRESSION + WRITING GREAT DIALOG + CHARACTERS + BIBLES

In class three act structure, dramatic compression review + best dialog writing + introducing characters

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Read: *The Wire* series bible.

Read: *The Wire* pilot script

Breakdown, write and bring in: Fill in handout (Blackboard) re: the ways the pilot enacted the show bibles.

Show/location/ideas worksheet Print and bring to class.

### 03 – Tues 17 Sept. – TELEVISION EPISODE STRUCTURES + ARC BUILDING + BIBLES + OUR IDEA + CHARACTERS SITUATIONS

Assignment 1: Take your favorite TV show, try to write a bible for it. Take one season's episode summaries and see explain how each episode is taking a new angle on what the show is deeply about. Be specific.

Assignment 2: Write a one-page scene in proper, expressive screenwriting format, around our location and core idea. In the scene,

- 1)the action and physical world must connect to the deep core idea and
- 2)something has to happen and be reacted to,
- 3)someone has to speak and be responded to with action.

### 04 – Tues 24 Sept. - BIBLE CREATION FROM PARAMETERS — WRITERS ROOM – DIALOGUE – PITCH OVERVIEW

Scene review, Season development, action, obstacle, formal tone, silence, obstacles that could get at our bible, class sets up CORE IDEAS to be explored in each episode and season.

Assignment: Write up at least one pitch of an episode that takes on and explores our core ideas, locations and parameters (see handout for exact scene by scene parameters and be read to pitch it in class).

### 05 – Tues 1 Oct. – POWER PITCHES – POSSIBLE EPISODES FROM OUR CORE IDEAS

In class scenes and story lines: location, character, action development in small groups. New parameters for format and creative expression.

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Assignment: Each student writes full first draft episode based on class feedback to pitches.

Assignment: Meet with your group of six. Brainstorm as a group so all key core ideas (and missing elements needing expansion for the series) are integrated into the six scripts in your group and in your arc. Re-write, expand and alter your individual scripts based on small group shape, feedback and new critique elements. Before class, meet as a group of six to create your brief pitch that includes step by step scene by scene of each of the six scripts in your group.

06 – Tues 8 Oct. - BIBLE CREATION – LOCATIONS, SHARED CHARACTERS, WHAT IS MISSING, ARC GROUPS

In class screenplay peer review with new parameters for format and creative expression.

OUTSIDE CLASS BEFORE NEXT CLASS MEETING: Meet with your group of six. Brainstorm as a group so all key core ideas (and missing elements needing expansion for the series) are integrated into the six scripts in your group and in your arc. Re-write, expand and alter your individual scripts based on small group shape, feedback and new critique elements. Before class, meet in your small group create your brief pitch that includes step by step scene by scene of each of the six scripts in your group.

07 – Tues 15 Oct. – (Class will go 20 minutes over tonight) WRITERS' ROOM PITCHING SESSION – DETAILED PITCH OF THREE SEASONS – SCRIPT BY SCRIPT - REFINING BIBLE

Assignment: Each student write your full script for your group. Revise it based on the handout/checklist. Upload to class folder by SATURDAY 5pm. Everyone in the group reads them before class and fills out detailed worksheet for each one online.

08 – Tues 22 Oct. – EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING DAY – DISPERSED CLASSROOMS - SMALL GROUPS WRITERS' ROOM – DRAFT FEEDBACK REVIEW

Small groups follow procedure, one by one, giving feedback on new drafts. Writer takes notes one feedback. Group talks overall arc and balance and decides how to apportion those changes over all the scripts.

Assignment: 1) Everyone revise their episode scripts based on critique.

2) First Six Scripts post refined drafts as PDF online URL links by Sunday 10am 1 Nov. No exceptions.

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Reading: Everyone read the first eight scripts before class! Print out and make notes according to new critique elements.

09 – Tues 29 Oct. –FIRST HALF SCRIPTS CRITIQUE SESSION! (Group 2 bring snacks!)

Write: Everyone write and revise their scripts better every week.

Assignment: Second group integrate notes and movements from first series into their scripts (meet as a group to disperse) then revise their own scripts and post as PDF online by Sunday 10am 8 November.

Assignment: Everyone read the second season eight scripts before class! Print out with notes, following exact critique format and bring those to class.

10 – Tues 5 Nov. –SECOND HALF CRITIQUE SESSION (Group 1 bring snacks!)

(weekend American Fringe mandatory attendance) – Revisions of prior group's script due to me.

Write: Everyone write and revise their scripts better every few days.

Assignment: **Everyone spend two weeks writing and developing your drafts based on new worksheet development and feedback. Post PDFs of your revised almost perfect NEWLY revised expressive scripts to me by 3pm Tues Nov 27 – name them as follows: YOURFIRSTNAME\_Season#\_Episode#\_Title**

No class Nov 12 2019 HOLIDAY (Each student reviews and rewrites their script)

11 – Tues 19 Nov. (online with written uploads and audio class feedback)– BIBLE REVISION - NEW ARCS – GROUPS + DEPTH, PUNCH AND POLISH TIPS - (Group 2 bring snacks!)

Deep class work – group Bible Revision session – Small Group reading and critiquing sessions.

Assignment: Small groups post scripts to

1) Re-read the Show Bible – what might need to change or get stronger? Add at least three suggestions to your own script from revised SB.

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2) Revise in your script according to new notes and upload your PDFs to me (must be polished, developed, proof read deeply improved and named YOURFIRSTNAME\_Season\_Episode\_Title UPLOADED to OneDrive and link shared added our class URL link list by 10am on Sunday 1 Dec !!

Reading: **Read everyone's scripts and make notes based on new critique parameters by class time – bring to class.**

12 – Tues 26 Nov. – BIBLE REVISION + IN CLASS CRITIQUE + ARC SHIFT

In class deep critique session, show bible revision and new notes for all.

Assignment: Revise your team's six-script arc, assign partners for deep polish critique and proofing.

13 – Tues 03 Dec – TABLE READ and FINAL REVISION

All class members arrive at our location on time fulfill their roles.

Assignment: Revise your final episode script by SATURDAY December 15th at 10am. Post as PDF - named as: FW\_S#\_E#\_Title\_FirstName and I'll upload for all to read before the final..

Reading: Everyone read all scripts and make notes on them and bring to FINAL EXAM meeting.

Reading: **Read everyone's scripts and make notes based on new critique parameters by class time – bring to class.**

FINAL EXAM: Dec 18, 2018 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm What we've learned, finalizing the show bible and scripts.

BIBLE AND PILOT READING - Everyone bring notes on the scripts and elements best mastered.

## Textbooks

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This course doesn't have any textbook.

## Attendance Policy

### ATTENDANCE:

Because the course includes collaborative work, it is expected that all students will attend all classes. Each unexcused absence will lower your course grade by 1/4 grade.

Overall AUP attendance is important in class so that you can better grasp the material and can contribute to the conversation. . Absence will impact understanding and impact your grade. Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation and to contact other class members to get course work. Only illness is accepted as a permitted absence. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses. The Film Department follows the policy that three absences constitute failure in the course. In this course, each unexcused absence will decrease your grade as above.

**Attendance at all exams is mandatory.** In all cases of missed course meetings, the responsibility for communication with the professor, and for arranging to make up missed work, rests solely with the student.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level. Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.*

## Grading Policy

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### GRADING:

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Engaged attendance with all weekly assignments done (30%)

Format, screenwriting rules, bible construction exam (20%)

Group session contributions (10%)

Final script (10%)

A- to A 90 - 100 *Exceptional*

B- to B 80 - 89 *Good to Very Good*

C- to C+ 70 - 79 *Adequate*

D+ 60 - 69 *Poor*

F 59 - below (or 3+ absences) = Failure

## Other

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### **STUDENT LEARNING GOALS:**

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to

- Demonstrate mastery of screenwriting form (for short form and feature).
- Write expressive screenplays with correct and effective use of screenwriting craft.
- Create a series 'bible and assess and develop narrative arcs over multiple episodes.
- Work in small groups with your season and with the larger class group to give feedback to develop shared characters, ideas.
- Receive and give constructive feedback according to course terms and revise effectively.

### **METHODS**

Class time will be divided into lecture, in-class and outside of class writing exercises and story pitches, script writing, revising and work-shopping.

### **CLASS CONDUCT RULES**

- We'll treat our class as a true writer's room, modeling the class on the way a writer's room really works. Just like in a professional writer's room, you must show up on time and prepared. Lateness, cell phone use, texting etc. will not be tolerated and will lower your participation score.



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- Because it is a collaborative course, each unexcused absence will lower your course grade by 1/4 grade.
  - Because of the cumulative nature of the workshop, late work will not be accepted. You must bring in what you have each week in the state that it is in. Your weekly assignments count as part of the in the 1/4 of points of the class.

### **Assignments and Daily Writing**

A screenwriter practices their craft by writing – you will be expected to feast on scripts and series and to work on your own writing exercises several days each week. Sometimes I will ask for paper copies in class – other times I will ask for PDFs to be uploaded to class folders.

### **Materials Needed**

You will need a notebook to write in, something to write with, a folder for scripts and hand-outs, printed copies or equivalent of film scripts, index cards and colored pencils (these last two are not needed until later in the semester). You will need to download and use a Screenwriting program (like Celtx or Final Draft but always proofread for format) to write your screenplays. Both can be downloaded for free. Bring all your screenwriting to the class each week.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Take advantage of office hours *at least once* to vet individual scene and structural progress or ask questions that need more clarification.

\*\*This syllabus may change to suit class needs. Please seek the current syllabus on Blackboard.\*\*\*