

WRITING THE ONE-HOUR TELEVISION SPEC SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an intensive ten week program and will take each student on the entire “writer’s journey,” from concept to rough draft of an hour-long spec script. Writers will create story loglines, beat sheets, an outline and script pages. Because of the amount of work and time it takes to produce a script, students will be required to turn in work from the first class.

In-class critiques will focus on story structure and character development. The class design will mirror how a writers’ room operates. As such, students will comment and help problem-solve not only on their own scripts but on their fellow classmates’ work as well. All of this is to help prepare students for an actual writers’ room, as writers must learn to act as a cohesive unit on a television show.

Each student will write an hour-long television script of an existing show (no more than 60 pages). The script will follow the classic three-act structure of storytelling, but it will be divided into acts that mirror the show’s format.

Students should come to the first class with three ideas (loglines of one or two sentences maximum) for three different shows. After pitching their ideas to the class, each student will select an idea to turn into a five sentence pitch. This idea will be workshopped and developed from treatment to outline and finally to script.

The final class will be a one-on-one meeting with the instructor for a thorough critique of the script on many dimensions including story structure, character development and dialogue.

OBJECTIVES

1. To complete a rough draft of a spec script, which the student can continue to develop and use for script contests and seeking work/representation.
2. To develop skills in analyzing and critiquing one’s own writing as well as others’ work, a fundamental set of skills needed to thrive in the writers’ room.
3. To learn how to write under a hard and short deadline.

READING LIST

Required reading: *The Writer’s Journey* by Christopher Vogler

Required viewing: *Breaking Bad*, Season One, Episode One

Suggested reading: *Shakespeare for Screenwriters* by J.M. Evenson

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class	Topics	Assignments due for this class
WEEK ONE	<p>Brief breakdown of the course and class introductions.</p> <p>Explanation of three-act structure for an episode of scripted television.</p> <p>Students pitch their three loglines. Group discussion of the logline ideas. The group will suggest ways to refine them. By the end of class, each student will pick one of their logline ideas to develop into a spec script.</p>	Three loglines for potential episodes (one or two sentences each).
WEEK TWO	<p>Class group critique each other's story synopses and timelines.</p> <p>In-class exercise to develop how supporting characters represent facets of the main character.</p>	One-page synopsis for the "A" storyline.
WEEK THREE	<p>Class group critique of each other's treatments and story beats.</p> <p>In-class exercise to define the student's personal connection to the material (why they have personal insight into it).</p> <p>How to use story structure templates.</p>	<p>Five-page treatment for the spec.</p> <p>One-page bios for each main character.</p> <p>Five pages of developed beats for the A and B stories.</p>
WEEK FOUR	<p>In-class group critique of the outlines.</p> <p>In-class exercise in index card writing ("carding").</p>	10-page outline for the A and B stories, but with the outlines for A and B kept separate.
WEEK FIVE	<p>Class group critique of revised outline ideas.</p> <p>In-class exercise on ordering scenes using carding technique.</p>	<p>Revised and fully developed 12-15 page outline.</p> <p>Loglines for each scene in the outline on index cards per "carding" rules.</p>

Class	Topics	Assignments due for this class
WEEK SIX	Class group critique of the first ten pages.	Revised merged outline. First 10 pages (teaser) of the spec (teaser)
WEEK SEVEN	Class group critique of pages 11-20 and loglines.	Pages 11-20 of the script (ACT ONE) Loglines for each scene and the desired purpose of each scene.
WEEK EIGHT	Class group critique of pages 21-32 and loglines.	Pages 21-32 of the script Loglines for each scene and the desired purpose of each scene.
WEEK NINE	Class group critique of pages 33-44 and loglines	Pages 33-44 of the script (ACT THREE) Loglines for each scene and the desired purpose of each scene.
CLASS TEN	Class group critique of pages 45-60 and loglines.	Pages 45-60 of the script. Loglines for each scene and the desired purpose of each scene.
PRIVATE MEETING	Individual meeting for thorough review of completed script	Send completed script plan to show

Course Protocol in Regard to Confidentiality and Possession of Ideas

This course is a class committed to the free exchange of ideas and opinions. It must be understood, however, that the ideas expressed in this classroom are not "free" in the sense that anyone is free to use them. All persons -- students, faculty and guests -- must treat all information disclosed or discussed by other participants in the class as strictly confidential, for discussion and use within the classroom itself and as a part of course work sessions held outside of class, but nowhere else. Everyone participating at any level in this course is obliged to honor the confidential and privileged nature of what is discussed in this class. "Borrowing," "adapting," "integrating" -- or other euphemisms for stealing -- someone's ideas is unethical and illegal, and must have no place in this course.

