Script to Screen I
DEVELOPING AND WRITING THE PILOT
Tue 3:00-5:50PM Comm 2216

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Office Hours: M and Th, 1p-4P or by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Script to Screen I is a creative and intense course in which you will develop an original idea into a TV program and write the pilot script for that program. We will look at the structure and form of Television series and shows, noting both character and story development.

The first part of the course will concentrate on Program Development—a creative and intense process that will take you from the germ of a story idea to a fully thought-out series.

In this part of the semester, you will complete a series of exercises that will eventually become a “bible” for a new original series. You will create characters—and the backstories for those characters. You will create story lines, characters arcs, and decide where you want your show to air. These are among many other decisions and creations.

In the second half of the semester, you will write a pilot script for your original series. Along the way, you will also complete exercises to learn about dialogue, character, story and narrative arcs. Your first draft will be read in class, and critiqued, and then, you will complete a second draft.

Throughout the semester, you will bring your ideas, scenes, and scripts to our writers’ table, just as writers do in television production offices. And like those writers’ tables, you will get constructive critiques from your fellow writers. And you will critique their work when they present it. Giving criticism should be helpful to your peers’ writing process—as well as help you in yours. We should all be learning from one another.

You will present your work to your colleagues and me to enhance your skills in storytelling, dialogue and plotting.

READING MATERIALS

There is no text. Readings will be posted on D2L or provided in class.
What you’ll do:

**Watch television**—TV is the best place to start your education in this course! We will watch, in class, various TV shows—including pilots and regular episodes of both sitcoms and dramas.

**Write . . . Write . . . and Read** — In the first half of the course, you will create a series bible from your original idea. Various assignments—character outlines and episode log-lines—will be completed along the way and become part of that bible. The second half of the course will be devoted to writing a step outline for a pilot script, writing the script, reading first drafts in class, participating in critique discussions and using the suggestions to write the second draft.

**Major Assignments:**
- Program Pitch, in class
- Series Bible
- Pilot first draft, read in class
- Pilot second draft

**Writing Exercises**—There are a few short writing assignments throughout the semester. These assignments are always due in the next class after they are assigned. You may present your exercises in class for discussion and critiques.
## Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments/Pitch</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot Script (both drafts)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>400</td>
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For Final Grade: 360-400 points A  
320-359 points B  
280-319 points C  
240-279 points D  
below 239 points F

## How You Are Graded

What I’ll be looking for in the assignments and presentations.


"Good dialogue is the expression of good ideas and complex feelings. It grows out of ideas, it isn't decoration you add at the last minute."

~ David Hare
Pitch: Confidence and comfort (they go hand-in-hand.) Knowledge of characters and their arcs, story, episodes and arc of the season. The hook . . .

Bible: Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation. Revision and rewrites: how suggestions and criticisms were incorporated. (If not, you should be prepared to talk about why not . . .). Neatness. Believability. Truth to show’s reality.


Pilot, second draft: Revision and rewrites: how suggestions and criticisms were incorporated. Strength of changes/revisions including story, structure, character, dialogue . . . and words.

Attendance and participation: active and consistent participation. Tone, of suggestions and critique.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

• Come to class on time and be prepared to participate!

• The discussions we will have are immensely important to the course goals; if you’re not here or not paying attention, you’re not learning those skills or getting “the Big Picture.” And the discussions are to help your fellow writers. All discussions must be constructive. Negative comments like “I hate it” or “That’s stupid” are verboten. Give criticism that is intelligent and helpful—like the criticism you would like to get.

• Turn off all cell phones! Computers can only be used for taking notes or for reading a script. I will check to make sure you are not playing Scrabble or emailing.

• Be ready to write and rewrite! Surviving in the TV industry as a creative worker requires intense familiarity with the medium on a variety of levels, as well as understanding the industry itself; to that end, small writing exercises will get you there. And of course, writing a script of any kind demands writing and drafting and rethinking it all...over and over. This class will push you to do so and also provide you with a supportive environment for entering into the writer’s mindset.
• Stay on top of things! Writing and reading assignments are due in class when they are due and you will lose ten (10) points each day it is late. One of the priorities of the class is to help you develop professional standards acceptable within the television industry: You would never show up to a meeting without your materials, nor would you email a treatment that you forgot at home. Treat the class as if we are in an industry setting, where missing a deadline can cost you a job!

• You can miss up to two (2) lectures without penalty. If you miss more than two lectures, your final grade will automatically be lowered a full letter grade per additional lecture missed. Additionally, you will be marked "late" if you are not in class when attendance is taken. Two "lates" equal one absence.

• Make sure you are grammatically correct in your writing. And that you haven't misspelled anything.

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

8/26 WEEK ONE
Discussion: Course Overview
    Why are you here?
    What do you watch?
    Our TV Viewing

Screening: Transparent

*Reading Assignment: Procrastination, Loglines, The Concept, Malcolm in the Middle script

*Writing Assignment:
Write two or three original series ideas/concepts.
See Your Series Ideas assignment on D2L

9/2 WEEK TWO
Discussion: Your Loglines
    Character: Journeys, Inner conflicts/Outer Action

Screening: Sense8

*Reading Assignment: “Finding Your Story,” “How about this guy?”, “Always Quit”
*Writing assignment:* Expand your series ideas into a two to three page overview of your show.

*Listening Assignment:*

9/9 **WEEK THREE**
Discussion: More About Character
Character Analysis: Traits, Identifiers, Heroes and Villains

*Reading assignment:* “Creating Characters,” “Character Inner Life”

*Writing assignment:* Create your four major characters, describing each in a paragraph (or two)

9/16 **WEEK FOUR**
Discussion: Structure, Sitcoms and Dramas: Types, Arcs, A-D Stories, Themes
Screening: *Grey’s Anatomy* pilot

*Writing Assignment:* Expand your main character description to two pages.

9/23 **WEEK FIVE**
Discussion: Plot, Setting, Location
Pilots: Opening scenes

*Writing Assignment:* Settings/Locations Description

9/30 **WEEK SIX**
Pitch your show! Group 1 and 2

10/7 **WEEK SEVEN**
Pitch your show! Group 3 and 4

10/14 **WEEK EIGHT**
*Revised Series Bible DUE*
Discussion: Dialogue

*Writing Assignment:* Dialogue Exercise

*Reading assignment:* “Writing the Pilot”

10/21 **WEEK NINE**
Discussion: Step Outlines--Group 1
+1
10/28  WEEK TEN
Discussion:  Step Outlines:  Group 2  +1

11/4  WEEK ELEVEN
Discussion:  Step Outlines:  Group 4  +1

11/11  WEEK TWELVE
Table Reads, first drafts:  Group 1

11/18  WEEK THIRTEEN
Table Reads, first drafts:  Group 2

11/25  THANKSGIVING
No Class!

12/1  WEEK FOURTEEN
Table Reads, first drafts:  Group 3

12/9  WEEK FIFTEEN
Table Reads, first drafts:  Group 4

12/16  Finals Week
Individual Meetings, if necessary
Pilot second draft due, all groups, by Fri, Dec 18, at 5PM

DUE DATES
Program Pitch:
   Group 1 and 2:  Sep 30
   Group 3 and 4:  Oct 7

Series Bible:  Oct 12

Step Outlines:
   Group 1 +1:  Oct 21
   Group 2+1:  Oct 28
   Group 4+1:  Nov 4

Original Pilot first draft, to be read in class:
   Group 1:  Nov 10
   Group 2:  Nov 17

Syllabus is subject to change . . .
Group 3: Dec 1
Group 4: Dec 8

Original Pilot second draft:
All groups: by Fri, Dec 17, at 5PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Braden</td>
<td>Lindsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>Holden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiara</td>
<td>Alex</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rory</td>
<td>Eric</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Peter</td>
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“You are lucky to be one of those people who wishes to build sand castles with words, who is willing to create a place where your imagination can wander. We build this place with the sand of memories; these castles are our memories and inventiveness made tangible. So part of us believes that when the tide starts coming in, we won’t really have lost anything, because actually only a symbol of it was there in the sand. Another part of us thinks we'll figure out a way to divert the ocean. This is what separates artists from ordinary people: the belief, deep in our hearts, that if we build our castles well enough, somehow the ocean won't wash them away. I think this is a wonderful kind of person to be.”

— Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

**Building Emergency Response Protocols for Syllabus:**
**University’s Emergency Procedure Clause:**

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at [www.bert.siu.edu](http://www.bert.siu.edu), Department of Public Safety’s website [www.dps.siu.edu](http://www.dps.siu.edu) (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.
Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

**Students With a Disability:**

Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist students with a disability safely out of the building. Students with a disability will stay with the instructor and communicate with the instructor what is the safest way to assist them.

**Tornado:**

During the spring semester we have a **Storm Drill**.

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to a safe area of the basement. No one will be allowed to stay upstairs. Stay away from windows. The drill should not last more than 10 minutes. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. Students need to be quiet in the basement as the BERT members are listening to emergency instructions on handheld radios and cannot hear well in the basement.

**Fire:**

During the fall semester we have a **Fire Drill**.

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to either the North or South parking lot depending on what part of the building your class is in. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. As soon as the building is all clear, you will be allowed to return to class.

These drills are to train instructors and the Building Emergency Response Team to get everyone to a safe place during an emergency.

**Bomb Threat:**

If someone calls in a bomb threat, class will be suspended and students will be asked to pick up their belongings, evacuate the building and leave the premises. Do not leave anything that is yours behind. We will not allow anyone back into the building until the police and bomb squad give us an all clear. **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES.** Some bombs are triggered by a cell phone signal.

**Shooter in the Building:**
If it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building away from where the shooter is located. If anyone has any information about the shooter, please contact the police after they have gone someplace safe.

If it is not safe to leave, go into a room, lock the door and turn out the lights. Everyone should spread out and not huddle together as a group. Don't stand in front of the door or in line of fire with the door. Students' chair and desks should be piled in front of the glass and door as a barricade and the teacher's desk, podium and anything movable can be pushed against the door. This is intended to slow down any attempts to enter the classroom. If it looks like the shooter is persistent and able to enter, make a lot of noise and have the students use everything in their backpacks to throw at the shooter to distract him.

Silence all cell phones after one person in the room calls the police and informs them of their location and how many people are in the room. **Be quiet and wait for the police to arrive.** The police are looking for one or more shooters, and they have no way of knowing if the shooter is in the room people are hiding in. For this reason, when the police enter the room, no one should have anything in his/her hands and each person **MUST** raise his/her hands above his/her head.

**Earthquake:**

In the event of an earthquake, you are advised to take cover quickly under heavy furniture or crouch near an interior wall or corner and cover your head to avoid falling debris. Outside the building are trees and power lines and debris from the building itself that you will need to stay away from. In the building, large open areas like auditoriums are the most dangerous. Do not try to escape on a stairway or elevator. Do not hide under a stairway. We do not recommend that you stand in a doorway because the door could shut from the vibrations and crush your fingers trapping you there.

**Rave Mobile Safety Alert System:**

We recommend that you sign up for the Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. It is a new system that replaces the WENS system to alert you through emergency text messages on your cell phone and emails for emergencies on campus, weather reports and emergency school closures. You have to sign up. If you were signed up for WENS it does not roll over. You have to sign up for Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. Go to Saluki Net, go to my records tab, under SIUC Personal Records, click on View My SIUC Student Records, Under Main Menu click on Personal Information, click on View and Update Addresses and Phones, in the middle of the page click [Update Addresses and Phones], under phones click Primary: This will take you to Update Addresses and Phones – Update/Insert, under primary phone number for this address put in your cell phone and submit. For more information, visit dps.siu.edu, contact SalukiTech at 453-5155 or salukitech@siu.edu.
CPR/Defibrillator and First Aid Class:

If you would like to take a CPR/Defibrillator and/or First Aid class, contact LaVon Donley-Cornett, lavong@siu.edu or call 453-7473.

Women's Self Defense Classes are offered to female students faculty and staff by the Department of SIU Public Safety. For more information contact Officer Mary Stark marys@dps.siu.edu.