

# TV WRITING WORKSHOP

## 4355-501

## FALL 2021

**Class:** Monday's (7-9:45PM) ATC 1.305

**Instruction:** Let's make a go of it in person! The world may force our adaptation☺

**Professor:** Paula Goldberg

**Email:** [paula.goldberg@UTDallas.edu](mailto:paula.goldberg@UTDallas.edu) (BEST WAY TO CONTACT ME)

**Office hours:** By Appointment online

*"I don't even own a TV because I think it's the devil"* – Cameron Diaz

*"Welcome to hell my darlings!"* – Paula Goldberg

### **Required Materials:**

Laptop or chromebook or at the very least your phone and a pen and notebook. We may sometimes be writing in class, and we often will be sharing our writing in class.

Final Draft Screenwriting Software or a screenwriting software program of your choice.

There is no textbook, but you will be reading informational docs and TV pilots I provide. They will either be in a folder on blackboard, or I will give you links.

### **Suggested Reading:**

Read TV Scripts. Read Pilots from shows you love and shows you loathe. It is the best way for you to understand story and plot, theme and character development. Here are a few excellent resources to find TV scripts and feature screenplays. If there is something you are particularly interested in reading but cannot find – reach out. I may have a way to find it.

<https://sites.google.com/site/tvwriting/>

[www.simplyscripts.com](http://www.simplyscripts.com)

<https://www.imsdb.com>

<http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/dircut.html>

<http://www.dailyscript.com/movie.html>

<http://www.awesomefilm.com>

<https://scriptpdf.com/full-list/>

## **Class Materials**

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student Access Ability accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## **Course Description:**

To explore the skills, the art, and the craft of writing an original TV PILOT SCRIPT including idea generation, series concept, character development, structure, and format.

You will create:

### **Pitch of Series idea**

**Treatment/Bible** (this will include what the story is about (theme), characters, plot, and character arcs)

**Beat Sheet of Pilot** (breakdown of A, B and C storylines)

### **Pilot Script**

The class will be collaborative as we jointly read and analyze each other's creative assignments/scripts and breakdown TV structure in a workshop environment.

The final exam will be a practical application of our study—each student will complete either a half-hour comedy or dramedy pilot script or a one-hour drama pilot. The page count for a half-hour is generally between 25 and 35 and for a one-hour 52-64 pages. Writing Comedy is HARD, so the page count disparity might seem easier to go with a half-hour. Not always the case. It will depend on your interest and skill set.

I also will offer some real time conversations with working writers, directors, and actors about creating and working with scripts. I am still nailing down commitments but will let you know when guests will join our class via zoom.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

The primary objective of this course is to develop an original idea for a TV series by organizing it in the form of a treatment/bible, creating an outline of the first episode and writing the pilot script.

This overall objective will be achieved through 4 specific learning outcomes:

1. **BECOMING PROFICIENT AT IDEA GENERATION:** Exploring the creative process of generating, developing, and communicating your TV SERIES world and characters.

2. **BECOMING PROFICIENT AT STORY ORGANIZATION:** In my home office reads the sign “if you don’t execute your ideas, they die”. Once you have an idea, you need to be able to effectively communicate that idea. Organizing your thoughts into scenes and sequences, choosing the best moments, deciding on the most dynamic characters to face the challenges of your TV pilot through the creation of a SERIES TREATMENT AND PILOT EPISODE OUTLINE.
3. **BECOMING PROFICIENT AT TV SCRIPT FORMAT AND EXECUTION:** TV writing is based on 5 act or 4 act structures depending on format. You’ll know which fits which and master the format on your own written project.
4. **ESTABLISHING YOUR OWN VOICE AS A WRITER:** We are all creative people. But the types of stories that interest us, and the way we choose to express our storytelling establish our unique voice. HOW IS THE WORLD AND CHARACTERS IN YOUR PILOT UNIQUELY YOUR POINT OF VIEW?

### **Grading:**

You will be evaluated on three critical areas. Each is important and not entirely independent of each other.

Attendance, Class Participation & Progress (25%)

Assignments (25%)

Term project (TV PILOT) (50%)

The above categories will be assessed as follows:

### **Attendance and Participation:**

90 percent of success in life is showing up. I made a commitment to you, and you made a commitment to this class. The bare minimum is being here once a week for 3 hours with an open mind and a willing heart.

Participation includes doing all the assignments, being engaged in the class either through active discussion or thoughtful evaluation of other classmate’s work – which will not be graded individually but speak to your effort and engagement.

### **Progress:**

My sense of how you change over the length of the class in terms of the stated learning objectives for the course. This includes storytelling techniques and the ability to give and process feedback. In this category you are graded only against yourself, someone who comes in with significant more experience or knowledge and doesn’t show growth will receive a lower score than someone who knows nothing to start and learns a lot, even if true “proficiency” is not attained. This will also include work on the final project – from pitched idea to outline to

final pilot script. You do not have to incorporate all suggestions – but should show evolution based on professor and student feedback and your own thought process.

### **Assignments:**

Completed, handed in on time and meeting the requirements listed (see below my thoughts on the subjective nature of evaluation).

### **Term Projects (screenplays):**

Creative projects are in some ways subjective, but your script will be evaluated for the most part by the following criteria: correct format, spelling/grammar, creativity, compelling world and characters, effective dialogue, showing vs. telling, logical flow of events, good set up and satisfying ending that shows the promise of future episodes. **If you do not hand in a final pilot TV Script, you will fail this course, even if your attendance, participation, assignments are perfect.**

Writing is a creative endeavor and therefore by its nature is subjective. However, attendance, handing in assignments legibly and on time, participating frequently and reaching out to me for help if you are struggling are tangible elements that you control and will be rewarded.

This may be your first attempt at TV writing. It is an opportunity for exploration, to risk and fail and try again. Therefore, if the effort is evident, the attempt sincere and willingness is shown to dig deep and expose – you cannot come away disappointed with yourself or your grade.

I will be required to qualitatively evaluate your writing. Sensible people can disagree and I am always open to discuss the reasons why I gave a particular grade on an assignment, however if you are uncomfortable having your writing and process graded or by the fact that it is inherently subjective, then you should not take this class.

**Course Calendar: SUBJECT TO CHANGE** – the calendar is going to be fluid, as we are treating this as “the writer’s room”, meaning once you start writing your pilot script, you will be sharing pages on deadlines and bringing in the pages for reading and discussion. Sometimes we’ll run out of time and must continue reading and discussions will be pushed into the next week, sometimes we’ll get to everyone and utilize the rest of the time by watching or reading established pilots. I may have industry guests pop in via zoom to discuss their process. My goal is to have you gain feedback on pages and have time to revise before your final submission.

### **WEEK 1: MONDAY AUGUST 23, 2021**

Welcome! Getting to know all of you in person! Go over syllabus and class expectations.

Creative Exercise

Breaking down the types of TV Programs and structure of acts.

Watch “Chuckles Bites the Dust”, break it down and discuss first homework assignment (due next class)

**WEEK 2: MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2021**

Discussion of homework assignment.

Examples of ½ hour comedy/dramedy and 1 hour shows.

**Homework: Come in on the 13<sup>th</sup> prepared to pitch your series idea!**

**OFF LABOR DAY, SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**

**WEEK 3: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2021**

**PITCH IDEAS FOR SERIES!**

**Homework: Create treatment of idea (we'll go over this in class) DUE OCTOBER 4th**

**WEEK 4: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 2021**

READ ESTABLISHED ONE HOUR PILOT SCRIPT IN CLASS/BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE

**WEEK 5: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2021**

READ ESTABLISHED HALF HOUR PILOT SCRIPT IN CLASS/BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE

**WEEK 6: MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021**

**DELIVER TREATMENT/BIBLES**

Class discussion on treatment/bibles (no longer than 3 pages)

**Homework: Create Beats sheet Outline of Pilot due October 18<sup>th</sup>.**

**WEEK 7: MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2021**

PILOT SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSION

**WEEK 8: MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021**

**DELIVER BEAT SHEET OUTLINE OF PILOT**

**WEEK 9: MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2021**

**DELIVER FIRST 10 PAGES**

**WEEK 10: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2021**

**DELIVER NEXT 10 PAGES**

**WEEK 11: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2021**

**DELIVER FINAL 10 (Half-hour), NEXT 10 DRAMA**

**WEEK 12: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021**

**FINAL DRAMA PAGES**

**WEEK 13: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2021**

**READING REVISED WORK<WHATEVER PART YOU WANT TO SHARE**

**OFF FOR THANKSGIVING**

**\*WEEK 14: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2021**

**FINAL PILOT SCRIPT DUE.** (READ SCENES FROM COMPLETED PILOTS)

**WEEK 15: MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2021**

Class autopsy

Cont'd READ SCENES FROM COMPLETED PILOTS!

**FINAL EXAM:**

**There is no mid-term or final exam. Your completed pilot is your final exam.**

**NOTE: This calendar is a living document** – Throughout the semester, I may make changes to the schedule and due dates as I feel it is necessary. These, as well as other class information, will be communicated via email. Hence you **MUST have a working email**, and should **check it at least once a day**. Updated versions of the syllabus, assignments, and so on will be posted regularly to Blackboard; since I may not update Blackboard every day, the latest emailed information will be considered the final word if it differs from the website or handed-out info.

**Technical Requirements**

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage.

**Course Access and Navigation**

This course can be accessed using your UT Dallas NetID account on the [eLearning](#) website.

Please see the course access and navigation section of the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage for more information.

To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The [eLearning Support Center](#) includes a toll-free telephone number for immediate assistance (1-866-588-3192), email request service, and an online chat service.

**Communication**

This course utilizes online tools for interaction and communication. Some external communication tools such as regular email and a web conferencing tool may also be used during the semester. For more details, please visit the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage for video demonstrations on eLearning tools.

Student emails and discussion board messages will be answered within 3 working days under normal circumstances.

**Distance Learning Student Resources**

Online students have access to resources including the McDermott Library, Academic Advising, The Office of Student AccessAbility, and many others. Please see the [eLearning Current Students](#) webpage for more information.

**Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties**

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online [eLearning Help Desk](#). The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

### **University Policies**

**Please review the official UT Dallas policies and procedures online:**  
<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

### **Comet Creed**

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

*“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”*

### **Academic Support Resources**

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students.

Please go to [Academic Support Resources](#) webpage for these policies.

### **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies.