

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 202 Story for Film & TV: Fall 2017
SOC Room 010
Wed. 4:15 - 6:45 p.m.

Instructors: Gar Hoover and Beth Hoover

E-mail: ghoover@luc.edu and bhoover3@luc.edu. Always email both instructors. Please allow 24 hours for a response to your question. Any emails received over a weekend or holiday will be answered the next weekday. *Please use your @luc.edu account when sending us email inquiries.*

Office hours: Wed. 3PM - 4PM, Water Tower Campus. **Please make an appointment by email.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to story concept, structure and character development for film and television. Through in-class exercises, analysis of scripts and films/series, and writing assignments focused on storytelling fundamentals, students will learn what makes a compelling story, how to create characters we truly care about, and effective ways to build a narrative for the big or small screen.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, students will have created detailed story outlines for both an original short film and a spec episode (main “A” plot) for an existing half-hour sitcom. Using these tools, students will draft a short script (~15 pgs.) the first half of the semester, and draft one or more key scenes (3-5 pgs.) of a TV sitcom that will receive a live reading in our final class.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS & MATERIALS

- *Cut to the Chase: Writing Feature Films with the Pros*, by Linda Venis
- *Inside the Room: Writing Television with the Pros*, by Linda Venis
- Scripts & other materials placed on SAKAI, handed out in class, or sent via email.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

- Adobe Acrobat: **You will submit all assignments as PDFs.** No Word docs or other files.
- Free screenplay formatting software (sign up now using your @luc.edu email address):
 - Final Draft Trial (18 weeks free): <http://bit.ly/trialfinaldraft>
 - Adobe Story Free: <http://bit.ly/freadobestory>

You can also use Word or Pages and set the screenplay format yourself using the margins and tabs laid out in [the Oscars guide](#). Whichever way you go, **submit each assignment as a PDF.** Note that, especially early on in the semester, many COMM 202 assignments will not require screenplay format (bios, synopses, etc.). Submit this work in 12 pt. Courier, doubled spaced.

GRADING & EVALUATION

100-95	A	94-90	A-	89-87	B+
86-83	B	82-80	B-	79-77	C+
76-74	C	73-70	C-	69-67	D+
66-65	D	Below 65	F		

Your final grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Weekly writing assignments:	20%	Short film script (~15 pgs.):	20%
In-class exercises/workshops:	20%	TV spec episode story outline:	15%
Mid-term review:	10%	TV scene(s) for read (3-5 pgs.):	15%

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

All student work must be wholly original. Academic dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism, will result in a failing grade. Please read the SoC [Statement on Academic Integrity](#) (linked here).

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The focus of this course will be on developing stories for an original screenplay and a TV spec.

<u>FIRST HALF OF TERM: FILM</u>	<u>SECOND HALF OF TERM: TV</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original story concept for a short film• Title, genre, theme, synopsis and logline• Detailed bios for your main characters• Identifying your story's turning points• Mapping out your story on index cards• Executable step outline (beat sheet)• Complete draft of short film script	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original "spec" story for existing comedy• Analysis of premise, characters, formula• Episode idea, summary, title and theme• Identifying your spec's 7 Plot Elements• Mapping out your "A" story's Six Scenes• Detailed TV outline of your "A" story• Polished key scene(s) for class table read

Each student will develop his/her concepts through a series of cumulative assignments:

All assignments must be typed in 12 pt. Courier, double spaced, and **emailed in a PDF by 9 pm the Monday before class (48 hrs.) to both bhoover3@luc.edu & ghoover@luc.edu**. Type your full name, assignment description (e.g. "logline") and due date at the top of the first page of each assignment. ***** Please, always start your PDF filename with your LAST NAME. *****

DEADLINES

The work in this class is cumulative, with every assignment building upon the last. Students are expected to complete all of the assigned readings and writing projects on time. Late work not only holds you back, but holds the class back because of the collaborative nature of the course. **Late work will be automatically penalized five points for each day past the original due date.** Moreover, *assignments will not be accepted more than five calendar days past due.*

ATTENDANCE

This class meets once a week. Because of the sheer amount of material covered in each session, attendance is critical. Consequently, **no absence will be excused unless it is because of the death of a loved one, or due to serious personal illness or injury. A note is required.** Each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 2.5 points; beyond two excused absences will do the same. *Any in-class work missed due to absence cannot be made up. Do not email the instructors asking for assignment details.* It's your responsibility to obtain notes from classmates.

COMPUTER USE

Please be aware the occasional software bugs, viruses, human error and/or hardware failure can result in damaged, corrupted or deleted files. Therefore, **it is your responsibility to routinely back up project files** throughout your writing process and to deliver readable, uncorrupted files in the required PDF format. *Computer failure is no excuse for lost work or late assignments.*

*** The instructors reserve the right to revise or change anything in this syllabus as the need arises. Work created in or for this course can be used by the instructors with other classes.**

COMM 202 AT-A-GLANCE SCHEDULE: FALL 2017 (Subject to change. Updates will be posted.)

NOTE: Email homework by 9PM on due date listed (48 hr. advance) + BRING a copy to class for workshop use

- Class 1**
08.30.17 **Course overview.** Intro to story principles, course expectations. Whiteboard demo of class-created story. **Due 9/4:** READ: CTTC textbook Ch. 1-2 + handouts. WRITE: Watch a feature film of your choice & i.d. its “major turns” w/ Hauge chart/p. 113 of CTTC. Pick 3 scripts to analyze. PDF.
- Class 2**
09.06.17 **Generating a good idea.** In-class workshop: study buddy breakout - what if/logline exercise. **Due 9/11:** READ: CTTC text Ch. 3 + handouts. WRITE: Story concept worksheet on the short you’d like to write (genre, hero, goal, obstacle), your 4 hero questions (p. 11-12 CTTC); Script #1 logline sheet.
- Class 3**
09.13.17 **Strengthening your concept.** Conflict & dramatic need. Workshop: study buddy story pitch/class share. Fleshing out students’ initial story ideas on whiteboard. **Due 9/18:** READ: CTTC Ch. 4 + handouts. ANALYZE: Script #2 turns. WRITE: *your* revised logline, working title, synopsis, turns.
- Class 4**
09.20.17 **The hero’s journey.** Creating memorable people we care about. In-class: Watch Hero’s Journey. Breakout to build complex characters per Davis’ 8 steps. **Due 9/25:** READ: CTTC Ch. 5 + handouts. WRITE: bios (1 pg. each) on your hero, main antagonist + one other character as discovery; name & thumbnail intro for each (CTTC p. 77); i.d. archetypal role each serves in your story. Submit as PDF.
- Class 5**
09.27.17 **Building your story using index cards.** Using sequences of scenes to efficiently beat out a narrative that’s logical yet unpredictable, with rising action and stakes, setups/payoffs. Workshop: discover your opening. **Due 10/2:** READ: CTTC Ch. 6 + handouts; WRITE: 1) map your story’s sequences on cards (DVD headings), turns in bold, to create outline; 2) draft opening in format (2-3 pages). PDF.
- Class 6**
10.04.17 **The spine of your story.** Instructor one-on-ones plus writing lab to give everyone the time and opportunity to flesh out their sequences into individual story beats and leave class with a solid screenplay treatment. **Due 10/9:** WRITE: revised opening + first half of your script (through midpt.)
- Class 7**
10.11.17 **Story/structure review.** MID-TERM REVIEW test (first half hour of class). In-class workshop: study buddy script swap and feedback on your script-in-progress, plus instructor help to troubleshoot. **Due 10/16:** WRITE: full draft of short script (~ 15 pages) w/ final title & logline on cover.
- TV BEGINS**
- Class 8**
10.18.17 **Story for TV intro.** Spec vs. pilot. 2-act structure, 6-scene template. Whiteboard story demo. **Due 10/23:** READ: Assigned ITR Ch 1&5 + EB p. 25-45. WRITE: Choose & analyze show (watch eps/read scripts) you want to spec. Execute the premise/main character/formula exercise in EB p. 44-45.
- Class 9**
10.25.17 **Seven Plot Elements.** In-class show screening & 7 elements demo. **Due 10/30:** READ: ITR Ch. 5; EB p.47-79. WRITE: Watch/analyze 2 episodes of your chosen series and execute Plot Elements exercise in EB p.77-79. Next, come up with an original episode story idea (see ITR p. 107-109 for help) that works within the premise, characters & formula of your series and summarize in 1-2 grafs.
- Class 10**
11.01.17 **Structuring your story.** In-class: refine your episode idea and main character driving it. Developing *your* episode’s 7 plot elements to begin beat sheet. **Due 11/6:** WRITE: Use cards to i.d. the Seven Plot Elements for yr spec: follow EB p. 47-48 format & test them using EB p. 78-79. Submit as PDF.
- Class 11**
11.08.17 **Six-Scene template.** **Due 11/13:** WRITE: Convert your plot elements into scenes using the process shown on EB p. 66-69. Include Act & Scene numbers, settings, and brief summaries of each scene’s action. This is a rough cut of your episode’s “A” story beat sheet; come up w/ yr episode’s title. PDF.
- Class 12**
11.15.17 **Ready to write.** Discussion: scene, dialogue, script format. Workshop: Use a study buddy to help you i.d. your 1-2 BEST scene(s) (3-5 mins. run time) and get a solid outline/scene notes wrestled down in class. Remember: it’s a comedy, so *funny is good*. Conflict is a given. **Due 11/29:** WRITE: 1) Draft your scene(s) in format, bring to next class. 2) What’s your episode’s theme/message/truth?
- THANKSGIVING *** No Loyola classes held Nov. 22-25 for T-day break. COMM 202 will not be meeting Nov. 22. *****
- Class 13**
11.29.17 **Reworking, revising.** Workshop/lab: get feedback on your drafted scenes from at least two students. Troubleshoot with instructors. **Due 12/6:** WRITE: Revise/polish your 3-5 pg. scene(s) for the read.
- Class 14**
12.06.17 **TABLE READ** of each student’s TV scene(s). **BRING HARD COPY** to turn in. Distribute hard copies (or e-access) to your actors. Table read. Q&A re: next steps for your projects. This is our last class. **THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR COMM 202. Your Final Projects serve as your final.**