

**MCM 375 Scriptwriting** Spring 2008

Sam Houston State University, Dan Rather Communications Building, Room 105  
MWF 1 :00-1 :50

**Instructor: Dr. Anthony Friedmann**

**Office :** Room 115, DRCB

Phone 936 294-1522      Email : aef005@shsu.edu

**Office hours:** *DRCB Room 115 W 2-3pm, TTh 2 :30-3 :30* and by appointment

A sign up sheet is on the door for you to book a time. You should have a conference about your work at least once during the semester. You are encouraged to discuss difficulties, plans, and interests in person. I will respond to email but not always on weekends and probably not so well to voice mail.

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** This course emphasizes the study of style, format, principles and techniques of writing for radio, TV and film. The process of writing fiction and non-fiction will examine the development of the script from research to marketing. Prerequisite: MCM 132. Credit 3.

**ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION:** The intention of the course is to understand the difference between writing and scriptwriting, or visual writing. We learn to write not to be read but to be made into program content by a production team. This involves a shift of understanding from conventional writing of prose. We look at writing for PSA's, corporate, documentary, TV and film narrative, and interactive media.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- To understand the purpose and function of a script in the production process
- To learn and understand the script terminology and abbreviations
- To learn and understand the stages of development in script writing
- To learn and understand the various script formats that are accepted in the different sectors of the media business such as film, television, radio, corporate and interactive
- To understand and practise visual writing that describes a media experience to be produced
- To stimulate and engage the creative imagination by writing concepts, treatments and scripts for various types of media

To succeed in this class, need to read assigned chapters, use the DVD that supplements the book, and, guess what, write. We write for every class usually. You cannot get behind or you invite a train wreck. Work must be handed in on time. One class late loses a letter grade, two classes late two letter grades. Any later, forget it.

**Required Texts:** *Writing for Visual Media*, 2nd edition, by Anthony Friedmann (Focal Press), 2006.

Students are expected to have the assigned textbook from day one. If you are not ready to begin the course, you are not fulfilling your responsibilities as a student. No excuses will

be accepted for not being able to complete reading, do assignments, or otherwise perform in the class. There will be an assessment of performance from day one.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance, being in class, is the premise on which a university course is based. You do not get credit for attending. However, you do get penalized for not attending. . Absence is not an excuse for not being prepared or not handing in assignments. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with reading and find out assignments from the syllabus, from Blackboard or from a classmate, or by emailing the instructor. Note: if you attend only part of any one day's class, you are counted one third of an absence for the full class, except in dire emergencies by prior approval. Medical appointments should be made at times other than the time the class meets. If the instructor can do it, so can you.

There is no such thing as an excused absence. This implies that one kind of absence is better or worse than another. There are just absences. Credit for the course is based on 15 weeks of instruction as set by the accrediting body that grants the university the authority to award a degree. Credit for a course is based on performance, one component of which is attendance. The only question is to ask at what point absence compromises instruction and learning to the point of invalidating credit for the course. That limit is 3 weeks of contact. You are responsible for managing your attendance. This is not an invitation to cut up to 3 weeks. It is a warning to avoid absence so that you have a reserve to cover real emergency. If you miss classes and then have an emergency, any penalty is not for the emergency but for the absences you took prior to the emergency. An emergency does not extend your entitlement to cut class. So there are no excused or unexcused absences. You may be absent for a maximum of 3 contact hours or one week of classes in the semester without penalty. The next absence will reduce your final grade by 2.5% and again for each contact hour after that regardless of the reasons for the absences. This means that you will eventually fail the course due to poor attendance, which will negate other aspects of your performance. After 3 weeks absence, for whatever reason, a student will receive a failing grade. However, loss of grade points may induce failure before that point.

Entering a class late disturbs the class, both the instructor's teaching and the other students' learning. Class begins at the scheduled starting time and the instructor reserves the right not to admit late comers by locking the door. See [www.time.gov](http://www.time.gov) for the correct time--the time on your watch or cell phone may not be accurate. Students not answering the roll call will be marked absent. If you are late, it is your responsibility to remind the instructor that you came in after roll call. The instructor's record is the only admissible record and will not be adjusted in retrospect. Lateness is counted a third of an absence. If you are late three times, you have earned an absence. The record of your attendance, week to week will be posted on Blackboard. Please be seated and ready to go to work by the time the class roll is called. After any absence you are responsible for all work assigned for the next class.

There is no privilege extended to students who register late. Students who register late for the course and miss classes are counted absent. Missing the beginning of a class causes problems for student and instructor.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism, cheating, and/or other dishonest acts will not be tolerated under any circumstances. When you use a source for information, you must cite the source (check APA manual for style regarding direct quotes, etc.). Plagiarized work will be given a zero and cause failure of the course. Papers will be submitted to turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. Remaining in this course indicates your acceptance of the system used that incorporates the use of turnitin.com. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experience both in and out of the classroom. See Student Handbook for complete guidelines.

**Exams:** There may be a midterm test, and there will be a final exam on Blackboard. The final will be in a window that conforms to the university final exam schedule. The date and time of the exam for each course are determined by the Registrar. That is when the exam will be given. If a student makes an interview appointment or any other kind of arrangement that conflicts with this date and time, that problem belongs to the student. This instructor will not provide exams or tests at alternative times or make up exams. Organize your life around the published academic calendar of the university and the syllabus, or suffer the consequences, which may include not earning a passing grade.

**Grading Plan :** All grades are posted on Blackboard as soon as the work is graded. There is a cumulative grade showing you what you would get if you were to continue scoring the grades already registered. All assignments are not equal in weight in calculating the final grade. For this reason, an important assignment can alter the estimated course grade strongly in a positive or a negative way. The weight is indicated in the Blackboard column.

For this course, the final grade is made up in the following way :

Final Exam 15%

**Additional Class Policies :** It is not appropriate to bring children or animals to classes. If you sleep in class, eat, read the paper or carry on private conversations, you will be asked to leave and counted half an absence. No beepers, cell phones, palm-pilots, MP-3 players, or anything that otherwise beeps, vibrates or makes a noise allowed in class. Do not do work from other classes in my class. Students who wish to use laptops must sit in the front row. If you surf, do email, or any other function unrelated to the class, you will lose your laptop privileges. Generally, students will refrain from behavior that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process.

This class runs on Blackboard. All assignments will be posted on Blackboard. If you do not have a working logon id for the Sam Mail and Blackboard system that is your problem to fix with computer services. The instructor makes all class announcements by email through the Blackboard email function. If you are unable to read that email, you will be handicapped and no allowance made for your not bothering to sort out your system communications from day one.

All written assignments will be posted on Blackboard. All written work must be submitted electronically to the Blackboard Assignment Page in a standard format such as MS Word of a text file or a Rich Text Format. Microsoft Works is not an acceptable format. You must save work as a text file or and .rtf file. Work will be returned electronically with comments and a grade. Work submitted later than the due date will be penalized a letter grade or 10 points for each class day late. All work is due as assigned; the instructor guarantees no opportunities to ever accept late work even with penalty. Students are expected to keep up with assigned reading and be prepared to answer questions in class. Bring your textbook to every class and be sure you have done all required reading by the date noted on the course outline.

You are expected to have read assigned chapters before the day they are to be discussed in class--see outline. You must have your own textbook and bring it with you to class every day. If in-class work is assigned using your book, you will receive a zero for the work if you do not have your own text.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1 8/20-24	CHAPTER 1: Describing One Medium Through Another CHAPTER 2: Describing Sight and Sound Exercise due
Week 2 8/27-31	CHAPTER 3: The Stages of Script Development CHAPTER 4: A Seven Step Method for Developing a Creative Concept PSA Concept/ Treatment
Week 3 9/5-7	CHAPTER 5 : Ads and PSAs : Copywriting for Visual Media PSA script
Week 4 9/10-14	Radio PSA
Week 5 9/17-21	CHAPTER 6: Corporate Communications Corporate concept/Treatment
Week 6 9/24-28	CHAPTER 8: Documentary and Nonfiction Narrative Midterm test Corporate script
Week 7 10/1-4	CHAPTER 9: Dramatic Structure and Form Dramatic concept/ Treatment
Week 8 10/7-11	CHAPTER 10: Writing Techniques for Long Form Scripts Dramatic script Act 1
Week 9 10/14-18	CHAPTER 11: Writing Techniques for Adaptation Dramatic script Act II
Week 10 10/21-25	CHAPTER 12: Television Series, Sitcoms and Soaps Dramatic script Act III
Week 11 10/28-11/1	CHAPTER 13: Writing and Interactive Design Interactive Concept
Week 12 11/5-9	CHAPTER 14: Writing for Interactive Communications Interactive Treatment/Design Concept/ Flowchart
Week 13 11/12-16	CHAPTER 15: Writing for Interactive Entertainment

## Interactive Concept

Week 14 11/19

Thanksgiving Break 11/21-25

Week 15 11/26-30 Interactive Treatment

Week 16 11/30-12/5 CHAPTER 16 : You Can Get Paid to Do This

Week 17 Reading Day 12/7

12/8-13

Final Exams scheduled by SHSU Registrar

**University Policies:**

Americans with Disabilities Act: According to University Policy, requests for accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner. Every semester that the student requires accommodations, it is the student's responsibility to complete a Classroom Accommodation Request Form at the SSD office and follow the stated procedure in notifying faculty. Accommodations for disabled students are decided based upon documentation and need on a case-by-case basis by the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays: University policy states that if a student is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day, the student may take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. Students in this class should follow standard policies for the class regarding notifying the instructor and making arrangements for make-up hours and work.

Q Drops: Students will be allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop the class, the student will be required to remain in the class. This limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit. Neither will Q-drops from other universities. NOTE: A Q-drop is a drop made after the last day for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of 'F' as published in the Academic Calendar.

**Additional Information :**

University Goals, as published by Sam Houston State University

Compact With Texans (click to go to this location on the SHSU site)

The Sam Houston Writing Center is currently located in Farrington 111. The Writing Center is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., and Sunday from 2 until 7 p.m. Writing tutors will work with you one-on-one to help you generate a draft, organize a draft, or revise a draft of any assignment. You can just drop by to work with a tutor or call 294-3680 to schedule and appointment.

The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments and changes to the syllabus and schedule when they are warranted in the interests of the course objectives and the responses of students.

Your decision to remain in this class is your tacit acceptance of the criteria and guidelines listed in this syllabus.