

**UCLA DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION & DIGITAL MEDIA
PRECOLLEGE WRITING FOR TV SUMMER INSTITUTE**

Example Syllabus. *The syllabi posted are general syllabi for students and alumni who wish to find out the topics generally covered in these courses*

**FTV 37: Introduction to Writing for TV: Big Ideas for the
Small Screen**

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS: Students will learn how to create an original pilot for a television series. Structure and formats will vary depending on platforms, so we will cover network, basic cable, premium cable, and streaming shows. Goal is to learn how the process of the writers' room works, in order to:

- Choose a TV series with a story that can continue on for many seasons
- Develop and deepen characters
- Service your voice, tone, and style
- Service the franchise of your original series
- Fit into the network's "wheelhouse" and meet their expectations
- Create a Beat Sheet and Outline (4-5 pages) for the pilot episode
- Create a Series Document (2-3 pages), covering the world of the show
- Write and revise the Teaser (3-5 pages) of the pilot episode
- Give and receive constructive feedback on your work and the work of your peers

All assignments due at least one hour prior to the class in which they are due. Please email to the instructor in PDF.

RECOMMENDED READING:

-*Writing the TV Drama Series*, by Pamela Douglas
-*The TV Showrunner's Roadmap*, by Neil Landau
-*TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution*, by Neil Landau

REQUIRED PILOT SCRIPTS (links to scripts will be provided):

-*Stranger Things*, by The Duffer Brothers

-*Black-ish*, by Kenya Barris
-*Breaking Bad*, by Vince Gilligan
-*Grey's Anatomy*, by Shonda Rhimes
(Plus, read every successful pilot you can, especially in the genre, style, and tone that relate to your script. Links to many additional scripts will be provided.)

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1

LECTURE 1: Introduction to the course and syllabus. Discuss structure; premise, theme, conflict, characters; the difference between writing screenplays and episodic TV; episodic pilot vs. premise pilot vs. hybrid; servicing the "franchise" and story arcs; how to prepare a cohesive, viable pitch and logline.

Assignment: Prepare 2 brief (3-5 minute) pitches for your pilot episode, covering the world of your show and the main characters.

LECTURE TWO: A, B, and C storylines. Review of story structure and teleplay format.

Discussion: Go over pitches and receive feedback. Select an idea for your original pilot episode.

Assignment: Come up with 2 sets of possible A/B storylines for your pilot.

LECTURE 3: Writing compelling characters: goals, flaws, quirks. Character arcs, active protagonists, and antagonists.

Discussion: Go over A/B storylines and receive feedback. Choose which storylines you will use for your pilot.

Assignment: Write character bios for two of your main characters (one page total). Write a short scene in teleplay format with your two characters (1-2 pages).

WEEK 2

LECTURE 4: How to write a Beat Sheet and Outline. We will look at examples from selected network and cable pilots.

Discussion: Go over character bios and short scenes.

Assignment: Write a Beat Sheet for your pilot (2-3 pages).

LECTURE 5: How to expand the Beat Sheet into an Outline. The studio and network notes process. Unifying theme and compelling act breaks.

Discussion: Feedback on Beat Sheets.

Assignment: Expand your Beat Sheet (by 2-3 pages) to create an Outline. Outline should be 4-5 pages total.

LECTURE 6: How to write an effective Teaser. Writing great dialogue. Scene structure. Writing memorable scenes.

Discussion: Feedback on Outlines.

Assignment: Write your Teaser (3-5 pages).

WEEK 3

LECTURE 7: Establishing the world of your show, as well as tone and voice. Drafting the Series Document with character arcs for each principal character for season one, as well as central questions/mysteries, series mythology, and end game.

Discussion: Table read of Teaser pages. Receive notes.

Assignment: Revise script pages based on notes. Begin your Series Document.

LECTURE 8: Writing a Series Document. We will look at examples from *Homeland*, *Fargo*, *True Detective*, *Stranger Things*, and *Grey's Anatomy*.

Discussion: Table read of revised script pages.

Assignment: Complete your Series Document (2-3 pages). Prepare a short pitch for your show. **Final draft of Series Document and Teaser script pages are due last class.**

LECTURE 9: Rewriting strategies. Editing. Polishing. Discussion about the draft to be "published" and distributed to the director, actors, and all department heads. Pre-production, production, and post-production processes: the production board and call sheet. Staffing season. Finding opportunities as a television writer.

STATEMENT OF GRADING: Grading breakdown:

Attendance/Class Participation:	20%
Homework Assignments:	20%
Beat Sheet/Outline:	20%
Series Document:	20%
Teaser script pages:	20%

90% and above	= A+/-
80% and above	= B+/-
70% and above	= C+/-
60% and above	= D+/-
Anything below 60%	= F

GRADE DEFINITIONS:

A = Superior Achievement

B = Satisfactorily demonstrates potential for professional achievement

C = Passed but work does not indicate potential for professional achievement

F = Failure

S = Satisfactory (achievement at grade B level or better)

U = Unsatisfactory

I = Incomplete

IP = In Progress (for multiple-quarter course)

DR = Deferred Report

For all students, the grades A, B, C, and D may be modified by a plus (+) or minus (-) suffix, to raise or lower the student's grade point average. The one exception is the A+ grade, which will not raise a student's grade point average because it carries the same number of grade points as the A grade. An F grade yields no unit or course credit.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION:

Two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Please carefully proofread your work and turn in assignments on time. Please arrive to class on time.

All ideas discussed in class are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with others outside of class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT: With its status as a world-class research institution, it is critical that the University uphold the highest standards of integrity both inside and outside the classroom. As a student and member of the UCLA community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, when accusations of academic dishonesty occur, The Office of the Dean of Students is charged with investigating and adjudicating suspected violations. Academic dishonesty, includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the presentation of another author's words or ideas as if they were your own. If you have any questions about documentation, quotations, and related matters, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor before submitting your work.

Please also refer to the UCLA Rules of Student Conduct at the below website:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Student-Conduct>

STATEMENT OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:

University of California Diversity Statement

Adopted by the Assembly of the Academic Senate May 10, 2006

*Endorsed by the President of the University of California
June 30, 2006*

The diversity of the people of California has been the source of innovative ideas and creative accomplishments throughout the state's history into the present. Diversity - a defining feature of California's past, present, and future - refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more.

Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees. The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to qualified students from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State.

Diversity should also be integral to the University's achievement of excellence. Diversity can enhance the ability of the University to accomplish its academic mission. Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Ideas, and practices based on those ideas, can be made richer by the process of being born and nurtured in a diverse community. The pluralistic university can model a process of proposing and testing ideas through respectful, civil communication. Educational excellence that truly incorporates diversity thus can promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all to foster innovation and train future leadership.

Therefore, the University of California renews its commitment to the full realization of its historic promise

to recognize and nurture merit, talent, and achievement by supporting diversity and equal opportunity in its education, services, and administration, as well as research and creative activity. The University particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.