

Fall 2015

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS

SCRIPTWRITING
COM 111 - CRN# 3198 - 3 Credit Hours

INSTRUCTOR

BARBARA CARROLL ROGERS

Office hours by appointment

Phone: 860-657-6188 (cell or text)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This is an introductory course designed to teach students how to write scripts for radio, television and film with brief exposure to non-broadcast media writing. Students will learn the basic requirements for writing PSAs, commercials, news copy, interview/talk shows, documentary and dramatic features. This course will teach standard formats and techniques used by professional scriptwriters including preliminary proposals, outlines, treatments, screenplays and scripts, as well as key terms and concept development and analysis.

Students must be prepared to write extensively both online and outside of class and be willing to have their writing analyzed and critiqued by fellow students. On-time submissions and participation in class exercises and discussions are essential. The ability to write and/or analyze a script is an essential skill for anyone who desires a career in Broadcast Communications or any area of the media, whether you want to be a writer or not.

PREREQUISITE

Students must have completed ENGLISH 101 or have equivalent writing ability.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, 11th edition, by Robert L. Hilliard

Making a Good Script Great, 3rd edition, by Linda Seger

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

An English grammar text, dictionary and thesaurus.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

- A word-processing program such as MS Word
- Script formatting software such as: celtx.com (free, version 2.7) or story.adobe.com or Final Draft and/or Final Draft A/V (pay)
- PDF software such as: PDF995.com (free for Windows), Skim (free for Mac OS 10) at <http://skim-app.sourceforge.net/> or Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Reader
- QuickTime

GRADE BREAKDOWN

	Total Points	Percentage
TWICE WEEKLY EXERCISES AND RESPONSES		
22 Graded Exercises (10 points each)	308	20
First 2 Required Responses (4 points)		
Additional response(s) (1 bonus point)	22	
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS		
3 questions (10 bonus points each)	30	
SECTION ASSIGNMENTS:		
	700	
Radio PSA (100 points)		12
News Script (100 points)		12
Commercial (100 points)		12
Non-Fiction Concept/Treatment (100 points)		12
Narrative Plot/Concept (50 points)		6
Treatment (50 points)		6
Narrative Script (200 points)		<u>20</u>
TOTAL	1000 points	100 percent
	+ 52 bonus points	

DISCUSSION BOARD EXERCISES

Writing exercises and peer review discussions are important elements of this class. Exercises are due on Wednesdays and Sundays by midnight except for the last week of classes (Wednesday and Friday). To receive timely and constructive feedback you must post exercises to the discussion board by the date and time due. ALL exercises must be in proper format. These exercises may be rewritten as many times as you wish to attain 10 points. In addition, by the following due date you must read at least two other exercises by fellow classmates and respond or critique for additional 4 points. These responses must be at least a paragraph in length and show depth and insight to receive the full score. Reading and responding to more than two submissions will earn an additional bonus point.

Three Discussion Board Bonus Questions are spaced throughout the semester. These will be on days when there is no exercise due. I hope you will respond to these questions to create a lively and informative discussion.

SECTION ASSIGNMENTS

These seven writing assignments will constitute the majority of your grade. They show how much you have learned in every important area of scriptwriting. These should be submitted to the Assignment drop box in PDF format as an attachment. These assignments may be rewritten as many times as you wish to attain additional points. Section Assignments are not available for peer review. NOTE: LATE NARRATIVE FINAL SCRIPTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

REWRITING EXERCISES AND SECTION ASSIGNMENTS

Students are strongly encouraged to rewrite their weekly exercises and section assignments and resubmit for an improved grade by Friday, December 11. No rewritten or late exercises will be accepted after this date. Late exercised should be posted to the discussion board, and late section assignments should be posted to the appropriate drop box. Rewritten Exercises and Section Assignments should be emailed to me through Blackboard. Try to rewrite the exercises and assignments as soon as possible so you don't get jammed up at the end of the semester.

ADDITIONAL GRADING FACTORS

It is important to proofread your submissions carefully. Misspellings and incorrect grammar and formatting are unprofessional, indicate sloppy thinking, as well as making your material hard to read and comprehend. They are not tolerated in the industry. Two misspelling or grammar mistakes in an exercise will lower your grade by 2 points. More than two mistakes will lower your grade 3 points or more. Incorrect formatting will lower your grade by up to 5 points.

Two mistakes in a 100 point Section Assignment will lower your grade by 20 points. More than two mistakes will lower your grade 30 points or more. Use the spell check feature of your software, but you should not rely totally on it. If you are a bad speller have someone else read your submissions. Incorrect formatting will lower your grade by up to 50 points. Section Assignments worth 50 and 200 points will have the same proportional deductions.

Read and print out the document entitled: Tips on Formatting and Submitting Exercises and Section Assignments. This will give you instructions on using the Celtx program as well as the proper identification of your submissions.

EMAIL REQUIREMENTS

Blackboard Learn has an alert when you have a message, so please check your email every time you log into the program. I use email to return graded assignments. Look at these as soon as you receive them. Email me if you have any questions especially if you cannot open my notes (stickies). General questions can be posted to the discussion board or the Q and A section.

MOVIE VIEWING REQUIREMENTS

The second half of the semester will concentrate on writing scenes and scripts for film or television. We will be using two study films, *My Cousin Vinny*, and *The Verdict*. Please watch them prior to Week Ten. They are available through the MxCC library (ask at desk), your local library or Netflix.

CLASS DECORUM

Peer review is an important element of this class. It is instructive for the reader as well as the writer, so please read and review as many submissions as possible. When critiquing fellow students please be considerate, constructive and professional. Please do not be disparaging or offensive. I expect professional behavior at all times. Always reread your responses and emails before hitting send.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

You may withdraw from this class any time before the end of the 11th week of the semester, Friday, November 13. A completed and signed withdrawal form must be on file in the Records Office by the deadline in order to receive a "W" on your transcript. If you fail to complete this process on time, you will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester, which will include zeroes for any work not submitted. Course withdrawals may affect financial aid and veteran's benefits. Please make this decision carefully and with the help of your advisor. See the Academic Calendar and the College Catalog for specific dates and procedures regarding the withdrawal process

IMPORTANT COLLEGE POLICIES!! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

For information about the college's policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, accessibility/disability services, attendance, audio-recording in the classroom, grade appeals, plagiarism, religious accommodations, weather and emergency closings, and more, please go to the following website: www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/ or scan the QR code with your smart phone. Also, please become familiar with the policies regarding nondiscrimination, sexual misconduct, and general student conduct at the following website: www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/.



Note: Since this is an online class I will not cancel due dates due to weather unless there is a major power outage in our area.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Middlesex Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or genetic information in its programs and activities. In addition, the College does not discriminate in employment on the additional basis of veteran status or criminal record.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries or complaints regarding non-discrimination policies and practices:

- Primary Title IX Coordinator
Dr. Adrienne Maslin
Dean of Students/Title IX and Section 504/ADA Coordinator
amaslin@mxcc.edu; 860-343-5759; Founders Hall Room 123I
- Secondary Title IX Coordinator
Ms. Queen Fordham
Coordinator of the Meriden Center Welcome Desk
qfordham@mxcc.edu; 203-608-3011

SCRIPTWRITING COURSE OUTCOMES**CONTENT**

- Students will learn to write in an aural style
- Students will be able to identify good broadcast writing style and recognize the characteristics of a well-written script
- Students will learn the importance of research
- Students will learn to effectively express their creative ideas into script form by writing PSA announcements, news copy, commercial copy, Documentary treatment, and a film script
- Students will learn how to address the needs of the producer/sponsor as well as the needs and wants of an audience
- Students will learn the role of a writer in a broadcast or film and how a writer interacts with other personnel and production elements.

MECHANICS

- Students will learn correct formatting for radio announcements and commercials; TV news and commercials; concept statements, treatments and scripts for narrative and non-narrative scripts
- Students will learn the use of the storyboard

PROCESS

- Students will learn the process of scriptwriting from idea to concept statement, to outline, to treatment, to script and rewriting.

BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM OUTCOMES FOR SCRIPTWRITING

Students will demonstrate knowledge and proficiency in the analysis, development and creation of audio and video content for a variety of media used in mass communications industries:

CONTENT

- Students can express ideas using the aesthetic elements used in film and broadcast media (photography, mise en scene, editing, audio, scriptwriting, acting, etc.)

- Students develop and express ideas and information into finished scripts using proper narrative structure and style for a variety of filmed applications
- Students can develop a thesis and perform research in preparation for creating scripts and producing programming for broadcast journalism, documentary and entertainment programs
- Student can storyboard and structure scenes in preparation for shooting scripts
- Students effectively communicate ideas through the production process using aesthetic elements and tools used in the industry
- Students will be able to create programming using the three main techniques used in broadcast media for various applications:
 - Techniques: electronic news gathering, electronic field (film) production and studio/remote studio production
 - Applications: news, sports, documentary, talk show, situation comedy, drama.
- Students can create programming using industry standard technology
- Students use critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate program content and quality
- Students use critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate program content and quality to improve their writing and production skills

ORGANIZATION

- Students will organize research in preparation for program creation
- Students will understand how program creation is organized: Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production
- Students will organize script content

MECHANICS

- Students can create scripts and proposals in acceptable formats using proper software
- Students can understand the use of the storyboard

FORM

- Students write scripts in differing formats for various applications (news, announcements, narrative, documentary, voice over)

STYLE

- Students learn how varying production conditions and specific techniques such as lighting, audio, varying editing, adding effects, can develop a unique visual and personal style

PROCESS

- Students use various processes--from idea, script, pre-production, production and post-production to successfully complete projects.

This course is important because it will strengthen your critical thinking writing and oral communication skills. Additionally, COM 111 meets all general education core competencies but one: Mathematical Reasoning.

- Communication: The interactive process through which there is an exchange of verbal and/or nonverbal information.
- Cultural Awareness: Acknowledgement that society is diverse with groups of individuals possessing differing beliefs, values, attitudes, and customs that are shared from one generation to the next.
- Social and Civic Responsibility: Behavior that demonstrates adherence to legal/ethical standards established by society.
- Critical Thinking: Modes of reasoning including analyzing data, evaluating alternatives, setting priorities, and predicting outcomes.
- Mathematical Reasoning: Determination of approach, materials, and strategies necessary to solve a problem.
- Technology Utilization: Use tools of the trade to achieve a specific outcome.

These core competencies are important personally, academically, and professionally.

The outcomes, as stated in the syllabus, are covered in this course. This course is required for an Associate's Degree in Broadcast Communications.

GRADING SCALE

Based on 1000 points (not including 52 bonus points)

A	940 – 1000
A-	840 - 939
B+	740 - 839
B	640 - 739
B-	540 - 639
C+	440 - 539
C	340 - 439
C-	240 - 339
D+	140 - 239
D	50 - 149
F	below 50

NOTE: TO RECEIVE A FINAL PASSING GRADE YOU MUST HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED 75% OF THE WEEKLY EXERCISES (18) AND 5 OUT OF 7 SECTION ASSIGNMENTS, INCLUDING THE FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week/Due Dates Chapter Reading, Lectures, Exercises and
Section Assignments and Handouts

(H - Hilliard's *Writing for Television, Radio and New Media*)

- | | | |
|----|---------|---|
| 1. | SEP 2 | Welcome and Introduction
Download all software |
| | SEP 6 | Lecture - TIPS ON FORMATTING AND SUBMITTING EXERCISES
AND SECTION ASSIGNMENTS
Exercise 1: Greeting (no grade) |
| 2. | SEPT 9 | Lecture – INTRODUCTION
Exercise 2: Monologue Introduction (no grade)
ASSIGN SECTION ASSIGNMENT #1: RADIO PSA SCRIPT |
| | SEPT 13 | “The Mass Media” (H-CH 1)
Lecture – CH 1
Exercise 3: Scripted Program Critique |
| 3. | SEPT 16 | “Basic Elements of Production” (H-CH-2)
Lecture – CH 2
Bonus Question #1 |
| | SEPT 20 | “Format and Style” (H-CH 3)
Lecture – CH 3
Handout – Format Universal Truths
Exercise 4: Monologue Script for television |
| 4. | SEPT 23 | “News and Sports” (H-CH 5)
Lecture – CH 5, PART I - Pages 147-162
Exercise 5: News #1 Analysis
ASSIGN SECTION ASSIGNMENT #2: NEWS SCRIPT |
| | SEPT 27 | Lecture – CH 5, PART II - Pages 162-172
Exercise 6: News #2 Script
Section Assignment #1: RADIO PSA SCRIPT DUE |
| 5. | SEPT 30 | Lecture – CH 5, PART III - Pages 172-196
Exercise 7: News #3 Script
NY Times Academic Pass Instructions
Demo News Script |
| | OCT 4 | PPT – CH 5, PART IV - Pages 196-206
Exercise 8: News #4 Script |

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – CONT'D

6. OCT 7 “Commercials and Announcements” (H-CH 4)
 Lecture – CH 4, PART I - Pages 73-91
 Exercise 9: Effective/Ineffective Commercials
 **ASSIGN SECTION ASSIGNMENT #3: COMMERCIAL TV/RADIO
 COMMERCIAL SCRIPT**
- OCT 11 Lecture – CH 4, PART II - Pages 91-127
 Exercise 10: Diner Ad Script and Storyboard
7. OCT 14 “Features and Documentaries (H-CH 6)
 Lecture – CH 6, PART I - Pages 193-247
 Exercise 11: Feature/Documentary Analysis
 **ASSIGN SECTION ASSIGNMENT #4: NON-FICTION
 CONCEPT/TREATMENT**
- OCT 18 Lecture – CH 6, PART II - Pages 248-262
 Exercise 12: Reality Analysis
 SECTION ASSIGNMENT #2: NEWS SCRIPT DUE
8. OCT 21 “Corporate, Educational and Children’s Programming”
 (H-CH 9)
 Lecture – CH 9, PART I – Pages 323-376
 Exercise 13: Educational Program Concept Statement
- OCT 25 Lecture – CH 9, PART II – Pages 377-383
 Exercise 14: Educational Program Treatment
9. OCT 28 Discussion Board Bonus Question #2
 **SECTION ASSIGNMENT #3: COMMERCIAL TV/RADIO
 SCRIPT DUE**
- NOV 1 “Interview and Talk Programs” (H-CH 7)
 Lecture – CH 7
 Exercise 15: Interview Script

NOTE: MUST WATCH *THE VERDICT, MY COUSIN VINNY*

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – CONT'D*(S – Seeger’s Making a Good Script Great)*

- 10.** NOV 4 “Introduction” and “Gathering Ideas” (S-CH 1)
Lecture – S-CH 1
Suggested Reading: “The Play” (H-CH 10)
Exercise 16: Ted Scene
ASSIGN SECTION ASSIGNMENT #5: FINAL NARRATIVE
SCRIPT PLOT/CONCEPT; SECTION ASSIGNMENT #6:
FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT TREATMENT; SECTION
ASSIGNMENT #7: FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT
- NOV 8 “Three Act Structure” (S-CH 2)
Lecture – S-CH 2
Exercise 17: Three Word Dialogue Scene
**SECTION ASSIGNMENT #4 NON-FICTION
CONCEPT/TREATMENT DUE**
- 11.** NOV 11 “What Do Subplots Do?” (S-CH 3)
Lecture – S-CH 3
Exercise 18: Marry Me or Else Scene
- NOV 15 “Act Two” (S-CH 4)
Lecture – S-CH 4
Exercise 19: Nighthawks Three Scene Sequence Treatment
**SECTION ASSIGNMENT #5: FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT
PLOT/CONCEPT DUE**
- 12.** NOV 18 “Creating The Scene” (S-CH 5)
Lecture – S-CH 5
Exercise 20: Nighthawks Three Scene Sequence Script
- NOV 22 “Creating a Cohesive Script” (S-CH 6)
Lecture – S-CH 6
**SECTION ASSIGNMENT #6: FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT
TREATMENT DUE**
- 13.** NOV 25-28 **THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- NOV 29 “Making It Commercial” (S-CH 7)
Lecture – S-CH 7
Exercise 21: First 5 pages of Final Narrative Script

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – CONT'D

14. DEC 2 “Creating the Myth” (S-CH 8)
Lecture – S-CH 8
“Motivation To Goal” (S-CH 9)
Lecture – S-CH 9
Discussion Board Bonus Question #3
- DEC 6 “Finding The Conflict” (S-CH 10)
Lecture – S-CH 10
Exercise 22: Acts One & Two Final Narrative Script
15. DEC 9 “Creating Dimensional Characters” (S-CH 11)
Lecture – S-CH 11
“Character Functions” (S-CH 12)
Lecture – S-CH 12
Exercise 23: MxCC Three Scene Sequence Script
- DEC 11 (Friday) “On The Road To the Academy Awards” (S-CH 13)
Lecture – S-CH 13
“Professional Opportunities” (H-CH 11)
Lecture – H-CH 11
Exercise 24: Acts One, Two and Three Final Narrative Script
**ALL SCRIPT REWRITES AND LATE EXERCISES AND
SECTION ASSIGNMENTS DUE BY MIDNIGHT**
16. DEC 17 (Thursday) **SECTION ASSIGNMENT #7: FINAL NARRATIVE SCRIPT
FINAL DRAFT DUE NO LATER THAN MIDNIGHT
LATE SCRIPT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

Grades posted on DECEMBER 22.