



**UNSW**  
AUSTRALIA

Faculty of Arts  
& Social Sciences

---

School of the Arts and Media

**ARTS2066**  
**Writing for the Screen**  
**Course Guide 2016**



**Frame grab, *Sunset Boulevard* Billy Wilder, 1950**

## **CONTENTS**

- Class locations and times
- Staff Contact Details
- Attendance requirements
- Essential information for FASS/SAM students
- Course details: aims, outcomes, teaching including
  - i. Course summary
  - ii. Aims of the course
  - iii. Student learning outcomes
  - iv. Graduate attributes
  - v. Rational for student content
  - vi. Teaching approaches and strategies
  - vii. Course readings and materials
  
- Assessment
  - i. Information about assessment tasks
  - ii. Submission of assessment tasks
  - iii. Late submissions and extension procedures
  - iv. Special consideration
  - v. Academic honesty and plagiarism
  
- Course schedule/course at a glance
- Detailed week by week course schedule
- Expected resources for students
- Course evaluation and development

### **Class locations and times**

Lectures (2 lectures per week: weeks 1-4)

Monday and Wednesday 10-11am, Webster 327 (Theatrette) (K-G14-327)

### **Tutorials**

#### **Monday and Weds**

Class 1370, Tutorial 1: 11:00-13:00, Webster 136 (Multimedia Lab) (K-G14-136)

Class 1371, Tutorial 2: 13.30-15.30, Webster 138 (Multimedia Lab) (K-G14-136)

Class 1433, Tutorial 3: 11:00-13:00, Webster 136 (Multimedia Lab) (K-G14-138)

### **Staff Contact Details**

Position	Name	Email
Course Convener	Dr. Teresa Rizzo	<a href="mailto:t.rizzo@unsw.edu.au">t.rizzo@unsw.edu.au</a>
Lecturers and Tutors	Dr. Teresa Rizzo	<a href="mailto:t.rizzo@unsw.edu.au">t.rizzo@unsw.edu.au</a>

### **Consultation Times**

Dr. Teresa Rizzo (room TBA)

Monday 13:00-13:30

Wednesday 13:00-13:30

### **School Office**

School of English, Media and Performing Arts, Room 311U

Level 3, Sir Robert Webster Building

Email: [sam@unsw.edu.au](mailto:sam@unsw.edu.au)

Phone: (02) 9385 4856

When contacting the School or course staff by email you must use your UNSW email address. You should regularly check your mail to this address for communication about the course. You should also include the course code (ARTS2066) in the subject of the email.

### **Attendance Requirements**

- Students are expected and required to attend all class contact hours. Please note this includes lectures, screenings, and tutorials.
- Attendance is recorded at all tutorials. Please ensure that your name has been marked off.
- A student who attends less than 80% of class contact hours without justification may be awarded a final grade of UF (Unsatisfactory Fail).
- A student who arrives more than 15 minutes late may be penalised for non-attendance.
- If a student experiences illness, misadventure or other occurrence that makes absence from a class/activity unavoidable, they should seek permission from the Course Authority. The application should be accompanied by an original or certified copy of a medical certificate or other form of appropriate evidence.
- A Course Authority may excuse a student from classes for up to one month. A student seeking approval to be absent for more than one month must apply in writing to the Dean.
- A student who has submitted the appropriate documentation but attends less than 66% of the classes/activities will be asked by the Course Authority to apply to discontinue the course without failure.
- For more information about the FASS attendance protocols, see the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

### **Essential Information for FASS/SAM Students**

For essential student information relating to: *attendance requirements; requests for extension; review of marks; occupational health and safety; examination procedures; special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure; student equity and disability; and other essential matters, see the SAM Policies and Guidelines webpage:*

<https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

### **Course details: course summary, aims, outcomes, teaching strategies**

This course is worth 6 Units of Credit. The course is made up of 8 lectures and 8 tutorials. It runs over 4 weeks with 2 lectures and 2 tutorials a week. Lectures and tutorial run from weeks 1 to 4. You are required to attend all of the 8 lectures and tutorials.

### **Summary of the Course**

This course introduces students to the study and practice of storytelling for screen media. The course provides students with a framework through which to recognise and critically analyse key elements of the screenwriting process and through practical exercises, students will develop fundamental skills in the art of writing for the screen. The course will approach this skills

development through a study of a variety of screenwriting forms including feature films, non-fiction film, television and emergent fields such as the web series and digital storytelling formats. Emphasis will be placed on processes of ethical emulation and adaptation in the development of these skills.

### **Course Aims**

This course aims to:

1. Provide students with a framework by which to recognise and critically analyse key elements of the screenwriting process.
2. Introduce students to fundamental skills and techniques of storytelling for screen media.
3. Encourage students to experiment with a variety of different screenwriting styles and genres.
4. Develop collaborative writing, editing and review skills through group work and peer-feedback.

### **Student learning outcomes**

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and implement the fundamental elements and techniques of screenwriting.
2. Engage critically and reflectively with critical and conceptual scholarship on screenwriting.
3. Compose, draft and revise a piece of screen writing.
4. Link creative production with theoretical and critical knowledge.
5. Collaborate in a collegial process of peer review

### **Graduate Attributes**

1. An understanding of the methods of analysis and thinking specific to the discipline of film studies (through course learning outcomes 1&2)
2. The skills to analyse and interpret written screenplays (through course learning outcomes 1&2)
3. The ability to link creative writing with theoretical and critical knowledge (through course learning outcomes 4)
4. The conceptual and organisational skills required to undertake self-directed learning (through course learning outcomes 3)
5. The organisational and communication skills required for effective and creative collaborative work (through course learning outcomes 5)
6. Skills in scholarly research as applied to and appropriate for the field of film studies (through course learning outcome 1 & 4)

### **Teaching approach and strategies**

This course has been structured in a way that will enable you to develop an understanding of the critical literature and issues sounding the field of scriptwriting. The tutorials are structured around practical exercises that will help you learn the fundamentals of writing and analysing scripts. Each week's topic builds on the material and ideas covered in the previous weeks and as such, it is important to keep up to date with the readings and the discussion. If you *do* slip behind one week you should catch up as soon as you can so that you can fully engage with class discussion and so that you can get the most from (and do your best in) the course assessment tasks.

Central to our approach to teaching in this course is ensuring that all students are given opportunities to actively engage in the course learning activities and topics through tutorial activities and 'from the floor' questions in lectures. We have also structured this course in such a way that tutorial preparation and tutorial activities directly feed in to assessment tasks. This helps ensure that key course material is adequately covered, and that there are plenty of opportunities for students to discuss concepts and material in class prior to being assessed on this knowledge.

Testing and applying concepts are particularly productive ways to develop both your understanding of the field and your analytic skills and for this reason critical discussion and debate around concepts and terms will play a key role in this course. While tutorials provide the primary forum for debate and discussion in this course, you are also encouraged to ask questions at the lectures and there will be time set aside for questions in each lecture.

Taking responsibility for your learning, both through class participation and through your own course research and class preparation, is important for developing your work skills and your ability to manage projects. During this course we will discuss effective ways of organising your study to enable you to get the most out of this course and so that you can also identify the analytic and research skills that you're developing.

Independent learning will play an invaluable role in your study. Each topic comes with suggested extra readings and if there are particular areas or topics that you would like to pursue further, please see me for suggested resources.

Please note your tutor will expect you to come to each class prepared.

Tutorial prepared means:

- (1) that you have attended the lecture and taken notes
- (2) that you have consulted the Moodle page for this class/topic and
- (3) that you have done the set reading (and ideally, extra reading too!)

### Course Materials And Resources

**This course uses Moodle.** Please visit it every couple days for updates and to access the course material. There is **no** course text for this course as links to all the readings have been uploaded to the course **Moodle** site or printed copies will be handed out in the lecture. Please bring hard or soft copies of the readings to tutorials. Extra readings are held in the High Use Area in the library. To access the items in HUA (some of which can be downloaded electronically), go to the Library website and enter the course code for this course (ARTS2066). You are also encouraged to use the **film and video collection** in the **UNSW library**. You are also encouraged to pursue your own research interests and read as widely as possible; a reading list and useful links can be found on the Moodle site. The Moodle site will also contain information regarding assessment tasks and how to approach them; research resources; essay writing resources; links to relevant databases and online archives; tutorial topics for discussion; and events that may be of interests to students.

### Assessment

Assessment task	Length	Weight	Graduate Attributes	Due date
<b>Character Exercise</b>	2 to 3 pages	25%	2,3,4,6	5pm Tues the 12 <sup>th</sup> January
<b>Peer Script Assessment</b>	600 words	30%	3,4,5,6,	5 pm Friday the 29 <sup>th</sup> January
<b>Script and exegesis</b>	15 page script 500 word exegesis	45%	2,3,4,5,6	5pm Friday the 5 <sup>th</sup> of February

#### **Assessment Task One: Character Exercise – 25%**

Write two versions of the Act 1 of a short film using your news article for inspiration (2-3 pages each). Using the work of by Steven Price, one version needs to employ a novelistic approach to writing character and the other needs to employ a structuralist approach. Read Francis Ford Coppola's script for *The Godfather* for an example the novelist approach and David Mamet's screenplay for *State and Maine* for an example of the structuralist approach.

#### Assessment criteria

- Capacity to distinguish between the novelistic and structuralist approaches to writing character.
- Clear character development through dialogue and action.

- Strong, engaging 1<sup>st</sup> act.

### **Assessment Task Two: Peer Script Assessment — 30%**

By mid-way through the course, students will be required to submit a draft script. In this assessment task, student will be required to provide conceptual, creative and editorial feedback on the work of two other students. The assessment should be no more than 1-2 pages. They will be assessed on their knowledge of the conventions of screenwriting and quality of feedback given, including productive suggestions for further development. The written report will approximate the role played by a script assessor and develop skills in critical and collegial peer review. A framework for the script assessment will be provided in class.

#### Assessment criteria

- Critical strength of feedback
- Clarity of feedback
- Quality of suggestions and constructive feedback

### **Assessment Task Three: Script and exegesis– 45%**

In this final assessment task, students will submit a 10 page completed script for a short fiction film or a comprehensive treatment for a documentary, including a log line and synopsis. The script must be written in the correct script-writing format. Created in CELTX. The script will be accompanied by a 500-word exegesis in which will draw on the critical and conceptual literature introduced during the course.

#### Assessment criteria

- Development of original ideas and technical writing skills
- Clarity of narrative and character development
- Consistent and clear structure
- Genre specificity
- Feasibility

## **Submission of Assessment Tasks**

The assessments are be submitted electronically on the course Moodle site. ***Please note, you must submit all written work in 12-point font, double-spaced and paginated.*** Please make sure that you keep an electronic and hard copy for yourself. If you have any **problems submitting**, send your Convener a word.doc version of your assignment immediately, together with an explanation of the



problem you are encountering. You should then follow the protocol outlined at the following site:  
<http://teaching.unsw.edu.au/moodle-students-help>

Advice about whom to contact is given when you log in to Moodle. Such advice includes the following:

*If you have trouble logging in, or you cannot see your course once you login, please contact the IT Service Centre for assistance.*

For enrolment and login issues contact: IT Service Centre Email: [itservicecentre@unsw.edu.au](mailto:itservicecentre@unsw.edu.au)  
Internal: x51333/ External: (02) 9385-1333/ International: +61 2 9385 1333

Please do not send your Course Conveners a copy of your assignment unless you are unable to submit via Turnitin. Once you have submitted you will receive a receipt to confirm that you have successfully submitted. Keep this receipt as proof of the date and time that you lodged your assignment. If you do not receive such notification, you must ask your Convener, by email, to check whether your upload was successful.

### **Late Submission**

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE RULES APPLY FOR ALL COURSES IN SAM.

If your assignment is submitted after the due date, a penalty of 3% per day (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) will be imposed for up to 2 weeks. For example, if you are given a mark of 72 out of 100 for an essay and your essay were handed in two days late, it would attract a penalty of 6% and the mark would be reduced to 66%. If the same essay were handed in seven days late (i.e. a penalty of 21%) it would receive a mark of 51%. If your assignment is not submitted within 2 weeks of its due date, it will receive a mark of 0. For more information on submission of late work, consult the FASS assessment protocols at

<https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

### **Extension Procedure**

- A student seeking an extension should apply through the Faculty's online extension tool available in LMS before the due time/date for the assessment task.
- The Course Authority should respond to the request within two working days.
- The Course Authority can only approve an extension of up to five days. A student requesting an extension of more than five days should complete an application for Special Consideration.
- The Course Authority advises their decision through the online extension tool.

- If a student is granted an extension, failure to comply will result in a penalty. The penalty will be invoked one minute past the approved extension time.
- A student who missed an assessed activity held within class contact hours should apply for Special Consideration via myUNSW.
- This procedure does not apply to assessment tasks that take place during regular class hours or any task specifically identified by the Course Authority as not subject to extension requests.
- For more information, see the FASS extension protocols on the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

### **Special Consideration**

In the case of more serious or ongoing illness or misadventure, you will need to apply for Special Consideration. For information on Special Consideration please go to this URL:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

Students who are prevented from attending a substantial amount of the course may be advised to apply to withdraw without penalty. This will only be approved in the most extreme and properly documented cases.

### **Academic honesty and plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement. UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

**Copying:** using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.

**Inappropriate paraphrasing:** changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit. It also applies to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without referencing and a student's own analysis to bring the material together.

**Collusion:** working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's

work or seeking payment for completing academic work.

**Duplication:** submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Details of what plagiarism is can be found on the Learning Centre's Website [Plagiarism & Academic Integrity website \(http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism\)](http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism), in the myUNSW student A-Z: Guide <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Plagiarism.html> and in Appendix A of the [Student Misconduct Procedure \(pdf-https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf\)](https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf).

The Learning Centre also provides substantial education written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example:

- Correct referencing practices;
- Paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing and time management
- Appropriate use of and attribution for a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

## Course At A Glance

Links to example scripts and short films will be posted on Moodle each week.

<u>Weeks</u>	<u>Lecture date</u>	<u>Lecture topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
Week 1 lecture 1	Monday 4/1	Critical literature on screenwriting	Steven Price Steven Maras
Week 1 lecture 2	Wednesday 6/1	Writing the short film	Linda Cowgill Pat Cooper & Ken Dancyger
Week 2 lecture 3	Monday 11/1	Traditional story structure in feature films	J.J. Murphy Kristin Thompson
Week 2 lecture 4	Wednesday 13/1	Alternative story structure in feature films	Ken Dancyger Linda Aronson
Week 3 lecture 5	Monday 18/1	Writing dialogue and speech	Tom Chiarella Dan Gurskis
Week 3 lecture 6	Wednesday 20/1	Contemporary television series	Jason Mittell
Week 4 lecture 7	Monday 25/1	Writing for multiplatform environments	John Birmingham Fingleton, Dena and Wilson
Week 4 lecture 8	Wednesday 27/1	Editing and refining the script	Dan Gurskis

## Course Schedule Week By Week

### Topic 1: Critical literature on screenwriting (Dr. Teresa Rizzo)

#### Tutorial Readings

- Steven Price, 'Character in the Screenplay Text', *Analysing the Screenplay*, ed. Jill Neldes, London: Routledge, 2011, 202-216.
- Steven Maras, 'The Film Script as Blueprint' *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*, London and New York: Wallflower press, 2009.
- Screen Australia, 'What is a Synopsis? An Outline? A Treatment?'  
<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/cmspages/handler404.aspx?404;https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au:443/getmedia/d4e1476e-33e5-4aad-b9d9-9696819b4b98/WhatisaSynopsis.pdf>

### Topic 2: Writing the short film

- Linda Cowgill, 'Chapter Two: Starting Out—What's it About', *Writing Short Films: Structure and Content for Screenwriters*, New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2005, 13-33.
- Pat Cooper and Ken Dancyger, 'Chapter Nine: Visualization Strategies' *Writing the Short Film*, Amsterdam: Focal Press, 2011, 101-112.

### Topic 3: Traditional story structure in feature films

- J.J. Murphy, 'Introduction' *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*, New York: Continuum, 2007, 1-24.
- Kristin Thompson, 'Chapter One: Modern Classicism' *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Techniques*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999, 1-49.

### Topic 4: Alternative story structure in feature films

- Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush, 'Chapter 6: Narrative and Anti-Narrative: The case of the Two Stephens', in *Alternate Scriptwriting: Successfully breaking the Rules*, Burlington: Focal Press, 2013, 58-75.
- Linda Aronson, 'Six Types of Parallel Narratives' on line at  
<http://www.lindaaronson.com/six-types-of-parallel-narrative.html>

#### Topic 5: Writing dialogue and speech

- Tom Chiarella, 'Chapter Seven: Using Dialogue to Create Stories', *Writing Dialogue*, Cincinnati: Story Press, 1998, 116-129.
- Dan Gurskis, 'Chapter Seven: Format', *Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*, Thomson: Course Technology, 2006, 135-160.

#### Topic 6: Contemporary television series

- Jason Mittell, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television', *The Velvet light Trap*, 58, 2006, 29-40.

#### Topic 7: Writing for multiplatform environments

- Kathryn Millard, 'Conclusion: Sustainable Screenwriting', *Screenwriting in a Digital Era*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 178-185.
- John Birmingham, 'New Players Enter the Art World', Sydney Morning Herald, 02/04/2010. [http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.acjsessionid=35FF125462EC9DD914223CACBF0A9626?sy=afr&pb=all\\_ffx&dt=selectRange&dr=1month&so=relevance&sf=text&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=brs&cls=340&clsPage=1&docID=SMH100402203N1753U4E](http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.acjsessionid=35FF125462EC9DD914223CACBF0A9626?sy=afr&pb=all_ffx&dt=selectRange&dr=1month&so=relevance&sf=text&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=brs&cls=340&clsPage=1&docID=SMH100402203N1753U4E)
- Fingleton, T. Dena, C. Wilson, J. 2008, The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure, Sydney, Australia Council for the Arts, (except) <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide>

#### Topic 8: Editing and Refining the Script

- Dan Gurskis, 'Chapter Six: Production', *Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*, Thomson: Course Technology, 2006, 113-128.

#### **Course Evaluation And Development**

Periodically student evaluative feedback on the course is gathered, using among other means, UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) Process. Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. Previous student feedback about the course readings and assessment tasks have been addressed in this version of the course.