



LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION  
 1400 TANYARD ROAD, SEWELL, NJ 08080  
 856-468-5000

COM 319	Film Scenario Writing
LECTURE HOURS/CREDITS: 3/3	

**Prerequisite:** COM210 Film History and Appreciation I, COM212 TV History and Appreciation, COM217 Applied Media Aesthetics, COM219 The Television Industry  
**Co-requisite:** None

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course covers the basic technical requirements for writing movie scripts and the problems of adapting material to screen and script analysis. By viewing contemporary movies and studying plotting, point-of-view, character creation and dialogue, students learn how a film script is put together and write an original script.

**TEXTBOOK AND COURSE MATERIALS**

Writing the Short Film by Pat Cooper and Ken Dancyger. 3rd edition, Focal Press 2005. Celtx (freeware at [www.celtx.com](http://www.celtx.com)) is fine for this course. The industry standard program is Final Draft (\$99 w/student discount), Because of the cost involved, I am not "requiring" it for this course.

It is the **responsibility of the student** to confirm with the bookstore and/or their instructor the textbook, handbook and other materials required for their specific course and section.

*Please see current textbook prices at <http://rcgc.bncollege.com/>*

**EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT**

**Grading Distribution**

Individual instructors may include the following assessments. Grading to be determined by individual instructors.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Writer's Journal</li> <li>• Assignments</li> <li>• Film Critiques</li> <li>• Participation &amp; Attendance</li> <li>• Final Script</li> </ul>	<p>10%</p> <p>30%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>40%</p>
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### **Grading Scale Example**

The grading scale for each course and section will be determined by the instructor and distributed the first day of class.

## **DESCRIPTION OF WORK**

### **Daily Writer's Journal**

You will carry this notebook with you at all times. You want to write in it every day! This notebook is where you think, question and create.

### **Assignments**

**THE OBSERVATIONAL/DIALOGUE SCRIPT** Go to a location you know well, and record on paper the sounds and dialogue you hear. Go to a **SECOND** location you do not usually go to. Observe its physical appearance. Is it crowded? What is its architecture? The quality of light? Who is there? Use the sounds and strings of dialogue you observed in location 1, and bring them into location 2. Complete a 3-page screenplay with no more than two or three characters and a single location. Upload to your group's page on Blackboard.

**INSTANT ADAPTATION - A TEAM WRITING ASSIGNMENT** I will provide each team with a short piece of writing to be adapted into a screenplay. These materials may include a newspaper article, song lyrics, or some other form of writing. The goal of this assignment is focus the team on quickly identifying the basic narrative components in the material and moving from an outline into a finished first draft within a single class period. The team must work quickly and produce the best short screenplay they can in the allotted time period.

### **Film Critiques**

**TWO SHORT FILM CRITIQUES** Go to the website [www.shortoftheweek.com](http://www.shortoftheweek.com). You will have the second half of the semester to complete two critiques of short films of your choice. Critiques must include 1) A log line 2) A tagline 3) A brief synopsis 4) your short analysis.

### **Participation & Attendance**

Student participation and discussion are essential to a beneficial course experience. You will be graded for your participation in production-related projects, your preparation for the class (i.e. reading chapters of text prior to the class discussed, completion of required assignments, etc.) and your attendance (frequent absences or classroom disruptions will greatly affect your participation grade).

### **Final Script**

- **OUTLINE/BEAT SHEET**  
You will learn to properly outline your story idea by major story beats.

- **THE FIRST DRAFT PROPERLY FORMATTED**  
Using your outline, write a full eight to twelve (8-12) page first draft screenplay.
- **REVISION 1 and 2**  
Review any notes you took during the workshop's responses to your drafts. Taking all of these responses and suggestions into account, now rewrite your screenplay. You can rewrite as much as you want, up until the submission deadline during the last week of the semester.

## ROWAN COLLEGE OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY CORE COMPETENCIES

(Revised 2014)

This comprehensive list reflects the *core* competencies that are essential for all RCGC graduates; however, each program varies regarding competencies required for a specific degree. Critical thinking is embedded in all courses, while teamwork and personal skills are embedded in many courses.

<b>1</b>	<b>Written and Oral Communication</b> Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.
<b>2</b>	<b>Quantitative Knowledge and Skills</b> Students will use appropriate mathematical and statistical concepts and operations to interpret data and to solve problems.
<b>3</b>	<b>Scientific Knowledge and Reasoning</b> Students will use the scientific method of inquiry, through the acquisition of scientific knowledge.
<b>4</b>	<b>Technological Competency</b> Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.
<b>5</b>	<b>Society and Human Behavior</b> Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.
<b>6</b>	<b>Humanistic Perspective</b> Students will analyze works in the fields of art, history, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language
<b>7</b>	<b>Historical Perspective</b> Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.
<b>8</b>	<b>Global and Cultural Awareness</b> Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples.

<b>9</b>	<p><b>Ethical Reasoning and Action</b> Students will understand ethical issues and situations.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Information Literacy</b> Students will address an information need by locating, evaluating, and effectively using information</p>

### **CORE COMPETENCIES**

This course focuses on three of RCGC's Core Competencies:

**Written and Oral Communication**  
**Humanistic Perspective**  
**Society and Human Behavior**

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

<b>Successful completion will help students:</b>	<b>RCGC Core Competencies</b>	<b>Evaluation / Assessment (Additional means of evaluation may be included by individual instructors)</b>
Students will develop or improve their writing habits by engaging in a process of daily writing and rewriting. Students will keep a daily journal and complete weekly screenwriting assignments.	Written and Oral Communication Humanistic Perspective Society and Human Behavior	Daily Writer's Journal Assignments Film Critiques Participation & Attendance Final Script
Students will learn the basic format and dramatic structure of writing for the screen. Through exercises in observation, research and adaptation, students will learn to develop short	Written and Oral Communication Humanistic Perspective Society and Human Behavior	Daily Writer's Journal Assignments Film Critiques Participation & Attendance Final Script

<p>screenplays from a variety of sources beyond personal experience.</p>		
<p>Students will gain a better understanding of the short film form through a series of screenings and discussions that focus on classic and recent festival award winning shorts. Our discussions will also serve as an analysis of the structural differences between short and long form screenplays.</p>	<p>Written and Oral Communication Humanistic Perspective Society and Human Behavior</p>	<p>Daily Writer's Journal Assignments Film Critiques Participation &amp; Attendance Final Script</p>
<p>Students will gain a better understanding of film industry practices including the ability to give and take notes in script meetings. Other topics will investigate the avenues toward launching a career in screenwriting, directing, or working in story development. Students will begin to identify the range and limitations of their current writing and to initiate a plan for further developing their ability to express their creative ideas.</p>	<p>Written and Oral Communication Humanistic Perspective Society and Human Behavior</p>	<p>Daily Writer's Journal Assignments Film Critiques Participation &amp; Attendance Final Script</p>

## CLASS POLICIES

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Class attendance and participation in class discussions are essential to this course. Students are responsible for all materials during class absence and should make arrangements **with other students** to acquire class notes. If you are aware in advance of a class, you must miss please notify the instructor and make arrangements to make up the work you will miss.

**PLAGIARISM:** Please refer to the online syllabus for definitions of plagiarism. The first instance of plagiarism will result in a zero (0) for that assignment and require a student instructor conference. A second offense will result in an F for the course. In addition, a second offense will be reported to the Dean of Liberal Arts and the Director of Student Affairs.

**DEADLINES:** Project deadlines must be met. If your project is not finished at the scheduled time, it will affect your grade, unless you have made special arrangements with your instructor.

**(Please check with individual instructors for their class policies and expectations)**

## **GIVING AND RECEIVING PROJECT CRITICISM**

One of the most difficult aspects of the course for many students is the critical nature of project evaluation. The real-world media production environment—including RTF, journalism, and advertising—requires a thick skin and keen evaluative skills to sustain success. My goal as an instructor is to emulate that climate in a safe environment (i.e. an environment where you won't be fired for your mistake) and encourage development of the critical skills needed in practically any field. Use the points below for a starting place on developing those skills.

### **Receiving Criticism:**

Double (and triple) check your work. After you've finished, and before you submit it as a polished project, make sure that you've watched it multiple times with a critical eye – and corrected anything that you and your teammates can find. If you haven't watched it until you're sick of it, you haven't watched it enough times. Going over everything beforehand can help you avoid careless mistakes that needlessly lower your grade, and allow the feedback to focus on real learning.

Accept that you are not perfect. No project that you submit will be flawless, and I don't expect perfection from your projects (although it may seem to you like I do at times). The most important thing is that you recognize you will make mistakes, give a lot of effort to try to avoid them, and then learn from them so you don't make them again in the future.

Don't take it personally. If your instructor or fellow students have feedback for you, remind yourself that it is your work being criticized, not you. Remember that they aren't criticizing your work out of spite, but in order to ensure you do the best work possible.

Listen carefully. If you ignore criticism, you're likely to repeat the same mistakes. Be sure to take notes on your feedback, and think of how to correct the problems specified. Ask for suggestions on how you can improve that aspect of your project. Admittedly, this is a difficult task as it requires you to take responsibility for your own errors. Don't interrupt or digress; this is an opportunity to learn about your progress.

Don't be defensive. Try not to be defensive about what you are hearing, or to justify your actions or reject the information. You don't have to agree with what you hear, but it is important to hear it.

Don't hold a grudge. Staying angry/upset about criticism can affect your future work. Put the mistakes out of your mind and focus on doing the best job possible on the next task.

Clear the air. If you are upset or believe the criticism is unfair, come see me to discuss it outside of class. We can clear up any lingering bad feelings and discuss ways to improve your work in subsequent projects. If you're not sure about certain points, ask for clarification. Don't get discouraged; constructive criticism is a key part of any job.

### **Giving Criticism:**

Participate fully. Nothing is more troubling than a lack of participation, or superficial participation. Remember that the learning you can get from this class is directly tied to your participation. The more you watch other projects with a critical eye, the better your own projects will be.

Pay objective attention. Try to look at each project for its merits/flaws. Don't compare it to your own project. Pay attention to all aspects of the project, including technical, aesthetic, and thematic.

Be specific rather than general. Providing specific examples helps the recipient understand exactly what the issue is. Take notes as you view each project to refer back to.

Describe, don't accuse. Use active listening to defuse the emotion in the situation. Make sure you are communicating a specific point rather than assigning blame.

Don't just offer opinions, offer solutions. Point out flaws in the project when coupled with a possible solution. Merely pointing out audio problems (for example) in a project is of limited utility; sharing techniques for correcting/avoiding those audio problems in the future will be of much greater benefit to the entire class.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE

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### WEEK 1

In class:

1. Introduction to course
2. Introduction to the short film: What is it? Why a film?
4. Screenings (Journey vs. "Ritual Occasion")

Outside of class:

1. Begin Daily writing journal - 10 to 15 minutes per day
2. Read Intro and Chapter One
3. First Writing Assignment - page 15

Write two brief descriptions in present tense (one Journey and one Ritual Occasion) Submit on our eLearning page as a PDF and bring a paper copy to class.

### WEEK 2

In class:

1. Read assignments, discussion
2. Formatting Lecture
3. Screening: "Les petits sablés," "Black Hole"

Outside of class:

1. Continue Daily Writing in Journal (10 to 15 minutes per day)
2. Complete Assignment #2 - Rewrite one of your stories in proper screenplay format
3. Submit on our eLearning page as a PDF and bring a paper copy to class.

### WEEK 3

In class:

1. Read formatted assignment 2.
2. Characterization (bone structure) and Dialogue
3. Biographies
4. Inspiration through dialogue: Gregory Crewdson et al.



Outside of class:

1. Complete bios for a protagonist and his/her antagonist. Be sure to define each of their story and life goals.

#### **WEEK 4**

In class:

1. Reading of Bios
2. Using sound
3. Outlining (including tag line and log line)

Outside of class:

1. Complete “observational/dialogue” assignment.
2. Begin outlining for final project

#### **WEEK 5**

In class:

1. INSTANT ADAPTION - Writing as a group based on source material.

Outside of class:

1. Finish 1st draft of adaptation as group via celtx studio and submit a PDF on our eLearning page.
2. Complete final project outlines and upload to our eLearning page.

#### **WEEK 6**

In class:

1. Read Instant Adaptations

Outside of class:

1. Comment on all outlines on our eLearning page.
2. Continue working on observational scripts.

#### **Week 7**

In class:

1. Group 1 - 1st Draft Readings

Outside of class:

1. Group 1 revise scripts based on notes received in class.
2. Groups 3 & 4 submit observational scripts to our eLearning page.

### **Week 8**

In class:

1. Group 2 - 1st Draft Readings

Outside of class:

1. Group 2 revise scripts based on notes received in class.
2. Groups 3 & 4 comment on your group's observational scripts

### **Week 9**

In class:

1. GROUP 3 - 1st Draft Reading

Outside of class:

1. Group 3 revise draft based on notes received in class
2. Groups 1 & 2 submit your observational scripts to our eLearning page.

### **WEEK 10**

In class:

1. GROUP 4 - 1st Draft Reading

Outside of class:

1. Group 4 revise draft based on notes received in class
2. Groups 1 and 2 comment on your group's observational scripts.

### **Week 11**

In class:

1. Group 1 - 2nd drafts

Outside of class:

1. Group 1 revise draft based on notes received in class
2. Groups 3&4 submit short film critique #1 on our eLearning page.

**Week 12**

In class:

1. Group 2 - 2nd drafts

Outside of class:

1. Group 2 revise draft based on notes received in class
2. Groups 3&4 submit short film critique #2 on our eLearning page.

**Week 13**

In class:

1. GROUP 3 - 2nd drafts

Outside of class:

1. Group 3 revise draft based on notes received in class
2. Group 1&2 submit short film critique # 1 on our eLearning page.

**Week 14**

In class:

1. Group 4 - 2nd draft

Outside of class:

1. Polish of Second Drafts for Finals Week Submission
2. Groups 1&2 submit short film critique #2 on our eLearning page.

**Week 15**

Final draft of screenplay must be polished, properly formatted version and submitted on eLearning.

Paper copies must be submitted as well on our final class meeting day.

### **Affirmative Action Statement**

The Board of Trustees is committed to providing an educational and workplace environment free from unlawful harassment and discrimination. All forms of employment and educational discrimination and harassment based upon race, creed, color, national origin, age, ancestry, nationality, marital or domestic partner or civil union status, sex, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, disability, liability for military service, affectional, or sexual orientation, atypical cellular or blood trait, genetic information (including refusal to submit to genetic testing) are prohibited and will not be tolerated.

For questions concerning discrimination contact Almarie J. Jones, Executive Director, Diversity and Equity, Affirmative Action/Title IX Officer at 856-415-2154 or [ajones@rcgc.edu](mailto:ajones@rcgc.edu).

For disability issues, contact Dennis M. Cook, Director, Department of Special Services, ADA/504 Officer at 856-415-2265 or [dcook@rcgc.edu](mailto:dcook@rcgc.edu).

### **Department of Special Services**

The Department of Special Services, located in the Instructional Center, room 425A, welcomes students of all abilities. The staff members in Special Services are committed to providing support services and ensuring equal access to eligible students with documented disabilities as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act with Amendments Act (ADAAA).

To maximize the potential of eligible students who self-identify, the Special Services staff provides an array of support services which may include extra time for tests and quizzes, testing in a separate location, advisement, interpreters, scribes, tutors, assistive technology (such as magnification devices and audio amplification), touch screen computers, audio books and note-taking assistance.

As students embark on their academic journey, they are encouraged to meet with staff members to identify, develop and implement support services that are in accord with their individual academic needs. Students are also encouraged to make use of other college support services that are available to all RCGC students currently enrolled in credited academic courses, such as tutoring services and the college library, which offer online information research and other materials needed to complement their studies.

Students registered with the Department of Special Services and who plan to earn an associate degree, further their education and transfer to a four-year institution, or enter the workforce, are encouraged to choose a corresponding program of study (college major) as soon as possible. The Special Services staff assists enrolled students with additional support that focuses on advancing students through their selected programs of study towards a goal of graduating.

Students who request academic support from the Department of Special Services can be assured that confidentiality will always be maintained. Accommodations are provided to address the special needs of individuals with disabilities under Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 together with the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). Under these acts, the office advocates a user-friendly campus for accessibility and a learning-friendly campus for academic success.

For more information or to schedule an appointment to meet Special Services staff, please call 856-415-2265 or visit [RCGC.edu/SpecialServices](http://RCGC.edu/SpecialServices).

## To Register with Special Services

Students must follow these steps:

- Complete and submit the Student Profile form. Access the [Student Profile Form](#).
- Submit documentation detailing the student's disability. Support services will not be granted without documentation specifying the student's disability. Documentation should include the following information:
  - a. Diagnosis with written evaluation of current disability;
  - b. Date the student was diagnosed;
  - c. Tests used to reach diagnosis;
  - d. Credentials of the medical professional conducting evaluation; and
  - e. How the disability affects daily activities and/or academic performance.
- By clicking on the following links, students can download the [Special Education Records Release Form](#) and/or Medical Release Form to present to their medical care professional.
- Contact the Special Services office to schedule a meeting with a staff member.
  1. Students should schedule a meeting after submitting the [Student Profile Form](#), proper documentation and completing the College's placement test. (Click on [Special Accommodations for Placement Testing](#) to determine whether student should arrange his/her placement test through the Special Services office or the general Testing Center.
  2. During the meeting, the student and staff member will discuss his or her disability and determine eligible accommodations.

## Accommodations

Students who qualify for accommodations are encouraged to register with the Department of Special Services at RCGC before they begin their academic career at Rowan College. This allows students to take advantage of any special accommodations and auxiliary aids that they might need and be eligible to receive.

- **Special accommodations** include but are not limited to extended time on tests, private test rooms to complete tests with the assistance of a reader or scribe, as well as a distraction-free test room.
- **Auxiliary aids** include but are not limited to note takers, tape recorders, large display calculators, interactive calculators, desktop magnifiers, large-screen computer monitors, touch-screen computer monitors, touch-screen laptop computers and JAWS® software. More information about adaptive technology can be found on the [technology](#) link. Students are responsible for identifying which accommodations and auxiliary aids they require for academic support.

## Confidentiality

Students who register with the Department of Special Services are assured that their information is kept confidential.

In addition, the student's transcript will not indicate that the he or she is registered with the Department of Special Services. The student's specific special need is not disclosed to the student's instructors. However, accommodation letters are sent to each of the student's professors if the student needs testing accommodations or accommodations in the classroom. It is the student's choice whether or not to disclose the specifics of his or her special need.