



Communication and Creative & Performing Arts Division  
1400 Tanyard Road, Sewell, NJ 08080  
856-468-5000

## **COM 319: Film Scenario Writing**

Syllabus

Lecture Hours/Credits: 3/3

### **Catalog Description**

*Prerequisite: COM 210; COM 212; COM 217; COM 219*

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**

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.

Click here to see current textbook prices at [rcgc.bncollege.com](http://rcgc.bncollege.com).

### **Evaluation Assessment**

#### **Online Proctoring**

All courses offered at RCSJ, whether they are web-enhanced, hybrid, or fully online, may include assessments that make use of Online Proctoring. To find out more about Online Proctoring, and to learn about the minimum technical requirements, visit [rcsj.edu/elearning/online-proctoring](http://rcsj.edu/elearning/online-proctoring).

### **Grading**

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

## Rowan College South Jersey Core Competencies

(Based on the NJCC General Education Foundation - August 15, 2007; Revised 2011)

This comprehensive list reflects the core competencies that are essential for all RCSJ 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.

1. **Written and Oral Communication:** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.
2. **Quantitative Knowledge and Skills:** Students will use appropriate mathematical and statistical concepts and operations to interpret data and to solve problems
3. **Scientific Knowledge and Reasoning:** Students will use the scientific method of inquiry, through the acquisition of scientific knowledge.
4. **Technological Competency:** Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals
5. **Society and Human Behavior:** Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.
6. **Humanistic Perspective:** 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
7. **Historical Perspective:** Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.
8. **Global and Cultural Awareness:** Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples.
9. **Ethical Reasoning and Action:** Students will understand ethical issues and situations.
10. **Information Literacy:** Students will address an information need by locating, evaluating, and effectively using information.

### COM 319 Core Competencies

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

- Written and Oral Communication
- Humanistic Perspective
- Society and Humanistic Behavior

## Student Learning Outcomes: Film Scenario Writing

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Successful Completion of COM 319 will help students:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RCSJ Core Competencies</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evaluation / Assessment</b> (Additional means of evaluation may be included by individual instructors)</p>
<p>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</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 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 screenplays from a variety of sources beyond personal experience</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 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>

## **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.

### **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**

### **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 a work and academic environment that maintains and promotes affirmative action and equal opportunity for all employees and students without discrimination on the basis of certain enumerated and protected categories. These categories are race, creed (religion), color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, sex (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), marital status, domestic partnership or civil union status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for military service, or mental or physical disability, including AIDS and HIV related illnesses.

For questions concerning discrimination, contact Almarie J. Jones, Special Assistant to the President, Diversity and Equity/Title IX and Compliance, 856-415-2154 or [ajones@rcsj.edu](mailto:ajones@rcsj.edu) or (Cumberland) Nathaniel Alridge, Jr., JD, Director, Diversity and Equity/Title IX and Judicial Affairs, 856-691-8600, ext. 1414 or [nalridge@rcsj.edu](mailto:nalridge@rcsj.edu). For disability issues or any barriers in the learning or physical environment related to a document condition/disability please contact: Gloucester campus – Dennis M. Cook, Director, Department of Special Services, ADA/504 Officer at 856-415-2265 or [dcook@rcsj.edu](mailto:dcook@rcsj.edu); or Cumberland Campus – Meredith Vicente, Senior Director, Physical & Learning Disabilities, Center for Academic & Student Success (CASS) at 856-691-6900 ext. 1282 or [mvicent1@rcsj.edu](mailto:mvicent1@rcsj.edu)

### **Department of Special Services**

The Department of Special Services is located in the Instructional Center, room 425A. The Special Services Department is 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. If you are an eligible student with a documented disability please visit our website at [RCSJ.edu/SpecialServices](http://RCSJ.edu/SpecialServices) or call the office at 856-415-2265 or 856-415-2247 to speak to the Assistant Director Carol Weinhardt, [cweinhar@rcsj.edu](mailto:cweinhar@rcsj.edu).

## Reporting Allegations of Sexual Assault and Resource Referrals (8/2020) Gloucester Campus

There are multiple safe places for students to report allegations of sexual assault, both on and off campus. Reports of sexual assault can be made to any of the following offices listed in the chart below.

All students are encouraged to report alleged crimes on campus. Crimes that pose a threat to the campus community must be reported to 9-1-1, Security, the Sheriff's Office or the Deptford Township Police Department. All employees, including Security staff, must report incidents of discrimination, harassment or sexual misconduct to the Title IX Officer.

Service	Resource	Phone Number/Location/Website
<b>Non-Confidential Reporting</b>  Local Law Enforcement	Gloucester County Sheriff's Office Deptford Township Police Dept. Gloucester Co. Prosecutor's Office Sexual Assault Response Team	<b>856-681-2200</b> <b>856-845-2220</b> <b>856-384-5500</b> <b>856-384-5555</b>
<b>Non-Confidential Reporting</b> <b>9-1-1</b> and <b>Campus Security</b>	<b>9-1-1</b> Gloucester County Emergency Management Dispatch  Campus Security <b>Blue Light Emergency Phones OR ext. 4444 from any campus desk phone</b>	<b>9-1-1</b> or push <b>RED</b> button on Campus <b>Blue Light</b> Emergency Phones  <b>856-681-6287</b>
<b>Non-Confidential</b> On-Campus Reporting Support Services	Almarie J. Jones Special Assistant to the President <b>Diversity and Equity/Title IX and Compliance</b>  John F. Ryder Director <b>Student and Veteran Affairs</b>	<b>856-415-2154</b> <b>College Center, Room 116</b> <a href="mailto:ajones@rcsj.edu">ajones@rcsj.edu</a>  <b>856-468-5000, ext. 6456</b> <b>College Center, room 202</b> <a href="mailto:jryder@rcsj.edu">jryder@rcsj.edu</a>
<b>Confidential</b> On-Campus Counseling and Support Services	Lois Y. Lawson-Bridgell, Ph.D. MSW, LSW, Director <b>Counseling &amp; Wellness Services Center</b>  William Leonard, Ph.D. <b>Intervention Teams Consultant</b>  Crystal Noboa, LSW, MSW Director, The Center for <b>People in Transition (PIT)</b>  Diane Mussoline, EdS, LMFT <b>Director of Behavioral Services</b>	<b>856-464-5236</b> <a href="mailto:llawsonb@rcsj.edu">llawsonb@rcsj.edu</a> <b>College Center, Room 206</b>  <a href="mailto:wleonard@rcsj.edu">856-415-2119 wleonard@rcsj.edu</a> <a href="#">College Center, STEM Office C-168</a>  <b>856-415-2264</b> <a href="mailto:cnoboa@rcsj.edu">cnoboa@rcsj.edu</a> <b>Workforce Development Bldg., room 809</b>  <b>856-494-5665</b> <a href="mailto:dmussoli@rcsj.edu">dmussoli@rcsj.edu</a> <b>College Center, Room 200A</b>
<b>Confidential</b> Off-Campus Full-Service Support	<b>Center for Family Services/ Services Empowering Rights of Victims (SERV)</b>	<b>1-866-295-7378</b> <b>Camden and Gloucester counties</b> <a href="http://centerffs.org/serv">centerffs.org/serv</a>
<b>Hospitals with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners</b>	<b>Inspira Medical Center</b>  <b>Jefferson Washington Township Hospital</b>	<b>700 Mullica Hill Rd.</b> <b>Mullica Hill, NJ · 856-508-1000</b>  <b>435 Hurffville-Crosskeys Rd.,</b> <b>Turnersville, NJ · 856-582-2500</b>