Disclaimer: This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered in the course and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as needs arise.

Professor Robert Johnson, Jr.
Email: rjohnson1@framingham.edu
Office Hours: By appointment
Credit: 4
Teaching Hours: 60
Time: 2 hours/day, Mon-Fri

Prereq: ENGL110 Essentials of Writing or permission of instructor


*Public Relations Writing* by Robert Rayfield, et al. *The Poetics* by Aristotle


*Story: Substance, Structure, Style and Principles of Screenwriting* by Robert McKee

*Byte-Sized Television: Create Your Own TV Series For The Internet* by Ross Brown

Course Description: This course is a study and practice of writing for all forms of digital and electronic mass communication. Students study various approaches to, and formats and techniques for, writing for the Internet, broadcast news, public and media relations, commercials, comedy, and drama. Using theoretical models and case studies, students develop unique and creative solutions for a variety of “real-world” writing and communication problems. (Students will have a practical writing task every week of this course with emphasis placed on research, teamwork, and creativity. A series of graded exercises will precede each major group project. Several assignments will be presented orally to the class. All assignments are deadline-oriented. Where feasible, students will be allowed to rewrite and re-submit assignments for a final grade.)

Course Policies:

- Attendance is mandatory. A student with two, unexcused absences anytime during the semester will have their final course grade lowered by one full step (for example, an earned final grade of A must be lowered to B--if a student has two unexcused absences). In the event you are not present for personal or medical reasons that exceed 3 or more days I will ONLY accept written excuses that are signed and dated from CASA or the Dean of Students Office—no exceptions.

- Class begins five minutes after the scheduled meeting hour. Anyone arriving after this grace period will be considered "late". Two "lates" count as one absence. In the event you know you will be late for class CALL my office or shoot me an email well before the class meeting hour begins. Beware-----leaving a message 5 to 15 minutes before class begins will not excuse your lateness.

- Should it be necessary for you to leave class early, please seat yourself as near to the door as possible so as to minimize any disturbance to the class, films, or lectures. As with Late Excuses, you must alert the instructor prior to the beginning of class of your need to leave. Students whose work hours, athletic schedules, and other activities force repeated early departure, or late arrival must re-schedule these activities at times that do not conflict with the published course schedule. Repeated early departures will be counted against your final course grade.
· The use of cell phones is not permitted during class meeting and exam/quiz hours. The instructor reserves the right to limit laptop use during class.

· Students who will be absent from class on the day an assignment is due, must email their assignment to their writing team members so that it can be uploaded to Blackboard.

· All paperwork must be word-processed, spelled checked, neat in appearance, and well organized or it will not be accepted and an "F" will be permanently marked in the grade book for that assignment. All written assignments are due at the end of class ("EOC") unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. (Open access hours for University computers in the Hemenway Annex and Whittemore Library are posted in those buildings.) Please Note: ALL written assignments must follow the rules of grammar and spelling as outlined in the College’s "Standards for Oral and Written Performance" (see FSU Catalog).

· Unless excused as noted above, missed and/or late assignments and tests will not be accepted or made up. If you have a valid excused absence, you will be given one class meeting per excused class to make up assignments or tests. All assignments must be uploaded to the Assignment section on Blackboard—do not email them to me. DO NOT SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS USING THE DIGITAL DROPBOX option.

Collaboration vs. Plagiarism: By definition, writing for film and television is a collaborative enterprise. In this course you will be expected to work in teams on various assignments where collaboration (and creativity) are required. Tests, however, are a different matter. As we are in an academic environment where scholarship and intellectual inquiry are paramount, you MAY NOT collaborate in any way, shape, or form with another student on quizzes, tests, and exams.

Online Grading & Assignments: All of your writing assignments are to be downloaded from the "Assignments" section of the course Blackboard website. Once completed, you must upload and save your writing assignment to Blackboard in order to receive credit. PLEASE DO NOT USE THE DIGITAL DROPBOX OPTION TO UPLOAD YOUR ASSIGNMENT. No assignment will be accepted via email unless specified by the Instructor.

All assignments and exams will be graded numerically and posted in the Grade Center on Blackboard. Your final course grade will be the sum total of all your grades, divided by the total number of graded assignments and tests. (For example, if in the Grade Center the "Total" that appears in the column is "1125" and the total number of assignments and exams comes to "12", then divide 1125 by 12 to get 93.75. Rounded upward, this comes to 94—-which translates into a letter grade of A---. (See the chart below for the corresponding letter grade.)

***Of course, repeated absences and/or missed assignments and tests will be counted against your final grade***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100 - 95</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>94 - 90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>89 - 87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>86 - 83</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>82 - 80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>79 - 77</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>69 - 67</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>66 - 63</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>62 - 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>59 - 0</td>
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**Office hours:** University faculty office hours are for students to use to discuss issues relating to their progress in a given course. They **may** be used for advising, but their primary purpose is for class-related discussion. You are required to see me at least once during the semester so that you become more familiar with my grading system, your progress in the course, and to minimize any errors recorded under your name.

**Special Needs:** Students with special needs and/or learning disabilities are to place on file, acceptable documentation at CASA. CASA personnel will determine the validity of documentation. The student is to inform this course instructor, in writing of the existence of a special need and/or learning disability as soon as possible after the beginning of the semester. The instructor will determine that the required documentation is on file. The instructor, the student, and a CASA counselor will then develop a written agreement as to how the student's special needs will be addressed. The instructor, the student, and CASA will keep a copy of this agreement.

**Notice:** There will be a variety of films and television programs screened in this class that may contain strong language and subject matter offensive to some students. Students who enroll in this course must understand that these materials are being presented for scholarly investigation, discussion, and study—not as entertainment. Therefore, the option to avoid viewing these materials is limited. It is incumbent upon the student to notify the instructor of any objection to the program(s) prior to or during screening. Should a student wish to be excused from viewing any program they will not be penalized. In such cases, an alternative screening assignment will be set up.

**Assessment Statement:** Framingham State University is committed to the assessment of student achievement regarding academic outcomes. This process addresses the issues of what you need to learn in your program of study and if you are learning what you need to learn. The assessment program at FSU has four specific and interrelated purposes: (1) to improve student academic achievements; (2) to improve teaching strategies; (3) to document successes and identify opportunities for program improvement; and (4) to provide evidence of institutional effectiveness. Students enrolled in this course may be asked to participate in the FSU assessment effort. This might involve submitting copies of assignments for review, responding to surveys, or participating in other measurements designed to assess the FSU student learning outcomes. No identifying information will be reported and only aggregated data will be used. If you do not wish to participate in any assessments, please notify your instructor.

**Communication Arts Department Mission Statement:**

The Department of Communication Arts combines the theoretical foundations and practical applications of human communication, creating a hybrid experience grounded both in the liberal arts and pre-professional education. In addition to engaging in general approaches to communication theory and critical media studies, all students are exposed to a wide range of instructional methods in visual studies, performance competence and visual production. This integrated curriculum gives students an enhanced learning opportunity and a substantial grounding for futures in both the workplace and post-baccalaureate study.

**Communication Arts Department Learning Objectives and Student Outcomes:** All students in Communication Arts, upon completion of the major, are expected to develop proficiency in each of the following areas:

- **Communication Theory:** Apply communication theories to written, visual, or oral messages.
- **Visual Studies:** Critically analyze visual texts using appropriate disciplinary terminologies.
- **Performance Competence:** Confidently express spoken message with voice and gestures aligned with the presentation’s context.
- **Writing Competence:** Develop an effective written message using word choice, structure, and mechanics suitable to the genre.
- **Visual Production:** Produce a purposeful visual communication message employing a process and design acceptable to the medium.
- **Media Studies:** Interpret how social media and mass media inform human communication dynamics in contemporary culture.
Any student who has a serious interest in writing for television and film or multi-media should have a library of reference materials. The following titles are highly recommended (those in **boldface** are a “must have”):

**A MANUAL FOR WRITERS OF TERM PAPERS, THESES, AND DISSERTATIONS, 5th ED. by Kate Turabian**

**THE CRAFT OF RESEARCH by Booth, Colomb, and Williams**

**RULES FOR WRITERS by Diana Hacker**

**INSIDE STAR TREK by Herbert Solow and Robert Justman**

**SATURDAY NIGHT: A BACKSTAGE HISTORY OF SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE by Doug Hill and Jeff Weingrad**

**ADVENTURES IN THE SCREEN TRADE by William Goldman**

**THE AGENCY by Frank Rose**

**THE BIG SHOW: HIGH TIMES AND DIRTY DEALINGS BACKSTAGE AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS by Steve Pond**

**WHO THE DEVIL MADE IT by Peter Bogdonovich**

**HIT AND RUN by Nancy Griffin and Kim Masters**

**THE MOVIE BUSINESS BOOK edited by Jason E. Squire**

**SPIKE, MIKE, SLACKERS, AND DYKES by John Pierson**

**THE PERFECT PITCH by Ken Rotcop**

**BYTE--SIZED TELEVISION: CREATE YOUR OWN TV SERIES FOR THE INTERNET by Ross Brown**

**COMEDY WRITING STEP BY STEP by Gene Perret**

**THE ART OF DRAMATIC WRITING by Lajos Egri**

**THE WRITER'S JOURNEY by Christopher Vogler**

**THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES by Joseph Campbell**

**PLOTS UNLIMITED by Tom Sawyer and Arthur Weingarten**

**STORY by Robert McKee**

**THE POETICS by Aristotle**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Lecture/Subject</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction &amp; Overview</strong>&lt;br&gt;Website—Links—Course Documents</td>
<td><strong>Subscribe to (3) RSS news feeds</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Subscribe to Twitter, Buzzfeed; monitor</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Online News Product.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>DVD: Network &amp; Local News.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Assignments:</strong> Exercise I (local)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The Details: News Gathering and Story Writing,&lt;br&gt;Leads/Quotes and Attribution</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; NEWS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Watch ½ hour of three local/nat'l news</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Ethics. In-class exercises.</strong></td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; COURSE DOCUMENTS &gt; NEWS</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>News Editing and the Rewrite&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Exercises I due.**&lt;br&gt;Assignment: Project I (regional)</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; COURSE DOCUMENTS</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>News Editing and the Rewrite, cont’d.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Handout: Exercise II-A. Exercise II-A due by EOC.**</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; COURSE DOCUMENTS</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Edit Marks)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Investigative Reporting. Anonymous Sources&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Handout: Exercise II-B. Exercise II-B due by EOC.**</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; NEWS</strong>&lt;br&gt;(“exercise two copy”)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The PR Writer and Corporate Structure.&lt;br&gt;Discussion: Friedmann, Chapter 1</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; PR</strong>&lt;br&gt;[Friedmann 1]</td>
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<td>Press Release-EPK, Media Kits, VNRs, Websites&lt;br&gt;DVD: various.</td>
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<td><strong>Project I due by end of class.</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Assignment: Exercise III, PR releases**</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The PR Writer and Corporate Structure, continued&lt;br&gt;Discussion: Friedmann, Chapter 2</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; PR</strong>&lt;br&gt;[Friedmann 2]</td>
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<td>Press Release-EPK, Media Kits, VNRs, Websites&lt;br&gt;DVD: various.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The PSA &amp; Promotion writing&lt;br&gt;Appeal to Reason, Emotion, and Ethics&lt;br&gt;DVD: various. Review</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; PSA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The PSA &amp; Promotion writing. DVD: various.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Exercise III due. Assignment: Project II.**</td>
<td><strong>BB &gt; WEBSITES &gt; PSA</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>BB &gt; COURSE DOCUMENTS &gt; PROJ 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ethics. In-class exercise &amp; discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Class Presentations:</strong> Project II.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Assignment: Exercise IV**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
13 Advertising Commercials: Structure, continued.
Discussion: Friedmann, Chapter 6
DVD: The Serialized Commercial

14 Advertising Commercials: Structure and Script Format.
DVD: “Structure”, various online commercials

15 Midterm

16 Class Presentations: Exercise IV
Backstory Assignments
QUIZ (online)

17 The Backstory--DALLAS

18 Backstory Outlines Due. Flowcharts (in-class exercise)
Assignment: Exercise V (The First Draft)
Writing Episodic Television--Organization and Structure
Class Script Format. DVD: Emmy excerpts & various
DVD: “Lifeboat--(Act 1)”, etc.

19 Writing Episodic Television--Organization and Structure
Principles of Story Design—The Love Story
DVD: “Love Stories”.

20 Writing Episodic Television--Organization and Structure
Principles of Story Design—The Hero/Anti-Hero
Treatments and Pitches. DVD: MadMen
DVD—“The Natural”. **VT: “AT Play In The Fields Of The Lord”

Exercise V (story outlines) due

21 Principles of Story Design—The Police Story.
DVD—various.

22 Principles of Story Design—Sci-Fi
DVD—various.

23 Principles of Story Design—Humor and Comedy
DVD: various titles

24 Exercise V due—Class Presentation & Critique
Assignment: Project III

25 Writing for the Web—Webisodes.  [Friedmann 11-14]
BB > WEBSITES > WRITING WEBS
(WEB THERAPY—ET AL)
26  Class Readings, Project III outlines

27  **Project III (first draft)—Class Presentation & Critique**

28  The TV Writer’s Profession—Script Registration.  [Friedmann 15]
Hybrid Careers

**Exercise VI—in class**

29  Agents and Agencies.  From Freelance to Showrunner Submission & follow-up
Marketing & Festivals.

30  **Final Exam/ Final Submissions**