UCLA Extension

380990: Get Your Script Contest Ready

SCRIPT-X 463.6E

Summer 2021   Section 1   3 Credits   06/30/2021 to 09/07/2021   Modified 07/23/2021

This course takes place fully online. While there are no set days with live classes, the weeks will run from Wednesdays to Tuesdays, starting on June 7th, until September 9th, 2021. However, readings and assignments should be completed every week, per the class schedule.

🖥 Description

One of the hardest things to do for aspiring writers is to get noticed in order to jump-start their careers. Entering competitions, getting internships, sending query letters, and networking are the most common ways to break into the industry. In this course we focus on screenwriting competitions, how to write a script that places in competitions, what judges are looking for, how to write a killer opening that engages your reader, what mistakes to avoid, which competitions to enter, and how to use competition wins to propel your writing career. With the use of lectures, script readings/analysis, and practical workshops, you learn how to elevate your script, heighten its potential for placing in competitions, and capitalize from your wins.

◎ Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze what contests are looking for in scripts
- Identify and fix common mistakes
- Learn what makes scripts attractive for competitions
- Learn tools on how to capitalize from festival wins
- Discern what are good contests to enter

📶 Outcomes

By the end of this course, successful students will:

- Have analyzed several scripts and learned what works and what doesn't for contests
- Have come up with contest-worthy ideas and written some scenes and shorts that grab contest readers' attentions
- Have come up with a strategy to best apply to festivals/contests with your scripts.

📄 Materials

Course Pre-requisites:

This course doesn't have any pre-requisite courses, but it does require students to have script ideas to write/pitch during the quarter.

Required Reading:

There will be some required script readings, but they will be uploaded to Canvas for students to download and read. No need to purchase any books.

Suggested Reading:

Two suggested books to learn more strategies for getting your script contest ready and how to apply to festivals/competitions:

a) Book Title: "Screenplay Competitions"

Author: Ann Marie Williams

Publisher: Bluestocking Pr

Edition: February 15, 2019 (1st Edition)

ISBN: 0942617754

b) Book Title: "Stop Screwing Around and WIN Your Next Screenplay Contest!"

Author: Bob McCullough

Publisher: Independently published

Edition: October 8, 2018

ISBN: 1723716448

✔ Evaluation

Criteria

There are 100 points possible in this course.

Points	Graded Activities	Notes
40 points	Writing assignments	Assignment guidelines and criteria will be posted each week, and students are also expected to comment on their classmates' submissions and offer constructive criticism. Submissions that respond effectively to the assignment prompt will receive full credit. Posts or work that do not fulfill the criteria will lose points, all the way up to receiving no credit at all. There are 4 writing assignments total, each worth 10 points.

20 points	Participation in forum discussions	Your initial discussion posts should respond thoughtfully and critically to the questions posed. Replies to classmates should do more than suggest you agree or disagree with the ideas presented in the post, and generate constructive discussions.
		Discussion posts that meet thoroughness expectations will receive full credit. There are 4 forum discussions, each worth 5 points.
40 points	Final Projects	Students post their final projects in a forum board, and everyone must comment and analyze everyone's submissions as part of their grade.

Grading Philosophy

It can be challenging to assign grades in a course where students take creative risks, push themselves artistically, and generally work outside their comfort zones. For that reason, grades do not reflect artistic decisions you make in your writing. Instead, you are graded on how effectively you met the criteria of the assignment, and how you show in-depth analysis of your work and that of your classmates (when needed).

Grade Disputes

If you believe a grade has been posted in error, or has been calculated unfairly, please contact me through Canvas messaging to discuss your perspective. If our conversation doesn't satisfy you, you may contact the Director of the Arts department for additional review.

Breakdown

Grade	Score	Notes
A	90% -100%	Pass
B	80% -89%	Pass
C	70% -79%	Pass
F	69% or below	Fail

✳ Course Policies

Access to Modules

Modules will become available every Wednesday, and everyone should turn in their work and comment on their classmates' work (if required) within the established week.

If you have special circumstances, please contact me via Canvas messaging before working ahead in this course.

Participation

Good participation is demonstrated through regular and thoughtful contributions to the weekly discussions, writing workshops, and in class exercises. I expect timely and professional communication with both fellow students and myself throughout the quarter.

Course Content Guidelines

The Writers' Program commits to creating a welcoming, inclusive learning environment for all students. The study of writing requires students to craft, share, and discuss works by established authors as well as peers in the classroom.

Because of this, you may encounter content that affirms and upholds structural and institutional inequities, often historical in nature, that marginalize and silence communities and fixed/unchangeable aspects of personal identity.

This kind of oppressive content is never appropriate in our classrooms. If you feel content presented by the instructor or another student is oppressive, voice your concerns about the work to the instructor directly, or discuss the situation with the Writers' Program Student Affairs Officer.

If you encounter language, ideas, opinions, and perspectives that do not align with your personal beliefs to a degree that you cannot in good conscience fulfill the expectations of the assignment, contact your instructor to determine if an alternate reading or workshop activity can be provided for you. If a discussion with the instructor fails, contact the Writers' Program Student Affairs Officer for further support.

Late Work

All late work requires my approval to receive credit. This means we must have a conversation before the assignment is late. Work that is not turned in receives no credit. Work turned in late without permission receives no credit. Work that is turned in early in anticipation of an absence will receive full credit.

Discussion posts and responses to students submitted after the deadlines will not receive credit.

Technology Issues In the event of technology failures, students must send assignments as attachments to me through Canvas messaging. I will then post it into the forum on your behalf.

Reading and Workshopping Guidelines

- Be open and supportive of the risks taken by your workshop peers
- Read attentively when your work is critiqued—takes notes on your own for reference
- Read and make notes on your assigned readings—come to each workshop ready to discuss

While this class is comprised of both lectures and assignments, giving and receiving feedback are essential parts of the class. This will be a safe space to share your work, where feedback will be constructive and inspirational, as we all work together to improve our work. We are all writers and artists and sharing our work is never easy. So please remember to be aware of this fact, and to be respectful or everyone's work so feedback can become a positive tool in the learning process.

This class is comprised of lectures, readings, script analysis, writing assignments, and forum discussions. All work is expected to be conducted at the highest levels, with respect, providing constructive criticism to your peers, and aiming to learn what it takes to get your script contest ready.

Artistic Guidelines

This course is designed to challenge you and expand your concepts about writing. Please be prepared to take risks with your writing, and respect and support the risks of your classmates.

As a student, you know the basics of scriptwriting. We'll review some areas, while going deeper into others, and analyzing them from the perspective of contest readers and judges in order to better scripts and get them ready for competitions.

Every week, you'll get access to lectures on how to get your script contest ready. You'll also have assigned readings on each week's subject, some script analysis and some writing assignments. You'll be expected to review all course materials in a timely manner, to promptly deliver your assignments, and to participate in any forum discussions that are assigned.

You'll get to understand scripts from the inside out, from a contest judge's perspective, and then be able to enhance your writing in order to appeal to competitions. We'll also participate in a lot of forum discussions, and we'll share our assignments with the class. Please remember to always be constructive and respectful, as it's never easy to share one's work, and we want to encourage each other to better our skills through interesting discussions.

You should expect to spend about 10 hours a week in this class between lectures, readings, and rewriting assignments.

The Writers' Workshop

Instruction in the Writers' Program follows the guidelines established by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) guidelines for the teaching of creative writing, which include a "challenging writers' workshop" as a hallmark. They define this as

...a seminar in which students critique one another's work under the mentorship of an accomplished writer-teacher. The workshop is writing intensive, offering each student multiple opportunities for submission and revision of creative work. (AWP)

This method of instruction is considered the gold standard for developing writers at all levels of expertise, and workshopping is a key learning tool in nearly every course offered by the Writers' Program. Workshopping teaches you to read and respond to written work from a variety of perspectives, and hearing critique of your own writing will help you understand how successfully your work achieves your goals. Every student is expected to participate fully in workshopping activities as defined by and guided by Writers' Program instructors.

Scope of Work for Instructors

Each Writers' Program instructor has signed an agreement to teach the curriculum in their course, following a syllabus of their own design with approval by the Writers' Program director. Instructors are never obligated to read, review, critique, respond to, or otherwise address student work that has not been developed for their course or in response to specific assignments in their course. Individualized instruction like this falls into the categories of Consultation and Mentorship, which are separate services your instructor can provide through special arrangement with the Writers' Program.

Underage Students

As UCLA's principal provider of continuing education, the majority of UCLA Extension courses are designed for the post-baccalaureate professional-level student. Enrollment is therefore normally reserved for adult students 18 years of age and older. The Writers' Program may consent to enroll younger students based on special academic competence and approval of the instructor. Minors who enroll in a Writers' Program course without first receiving permission from both the department and the instructor are subject to withdrawal. To request approval, please contact the Writers' Program at 310-825-9415.

Inclusive Teaching Statement

I want to welcome everyone into this class, from all walks of life and backgrounds, as we embark on this course, to learn from each other, students and instructor together.

I believe that everyone, from wherever they may come, deserves a fair and equal education, and that no matter where you're from or what your cultural background may be, we all deserve a chance to better ourselves.

As a Latina immigrant myself (and a former UCLA Extension student), I believe that the melting pot that we find in America and that is reflected in the student and teaching bodies of UCLA Extension only enriches our lives, the classroom, and any writing project we're a part of. Bringing people together is what the film industry does best, and that's what I would love everyone to take away from this course. I think that film is a great medium to show audiences that the world is made up of all sorts of people, all equal despite our differences.

My aim is that through this course, we all learn, from example and through practical approaches, that the world is a big place and that tolerance, acceptance, and kindness can make a huge difference. We all need to work together to create a world that's fairer, more accepting, and that welcomes everyone in. And this is exactly what should be reflected in the work we do in class, as film and TV should be true representations of what we see and find in the world.

I will make it my number priority that everyone in this course feels welcome, embraced, and accepted, and that nobody is ever left behind. And I will ask that anyone who is experiencing any issues, please bring them up in a timely manner, so we can all get on the same page and work things out so we can all enjoy this course experience. I'll also encourage everyone to share their work, with the understanding that we're all learning together, and that we'll be constructive and helpful in our criticism, and that we're all here to improve.

🏛 Institutional Policies

Student Conduct

Students are subject to disciplinary action for several types of misconduct or attempted misconduct, including but not limited to dishonesty, such as cheating, multiple submission, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University; or theft or misuse of the intellectual property of others or violation of others' copyrights. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with policy provisions which proscribe these and other forms of misconduct at: https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentConduct.jsp (https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentConduct.jsp)

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, UCLA Extension provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services such as sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for and proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through UCLA Extension's Service for Students with Disabilities Office at (310) 825-7851 or by email at access@uclaextension.edu. For complete information see: https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp (https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp)

Incompletes

Your instructor may post the interim grade *Incomplete/I* if at the end of the class your overall work is of passing quality but a portion could not be submitted for understandable reasons (e.g. illness). It is your responsibility to petition your instructor for permission to submit work late and to provide an explanation, and it is his or her sole decision whether to accept the explanation. If permitted, the *Incomplete/I* grade will be posted and a time frame defined for you to submit the missing work, ranging from one to twelve weeks. *Incomplete/I* grades that remain unchanged after twelve weeks will lapse to *F*, *NP* or *U*. Receiving an *I* grade entitles you to submit only the missing work your instructor has agreed to accept late, and does not allow other work to be retaken or oblige UCLA Extension to provide continuing access to course materials via Canvas. The *Incomplete/I* grade is not an option for courses that do not bear credit, such as 700, 800, or 900-level courses. For complete information, see: https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp (https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp)

All Grades are Final

No change of grade may be made by anyone other than the instructor, and then, only to correct clerical errors. No term grade except Incomplete may be revised by re-examination. The correction of a clerical error may be authorized only by the instructor of record communicating directly with personnel of Student and Alumni Services.

Sexual Harassment

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates our policy.

All Extension students and instructors who believe they have been sexually harassed are encouraged to contact the Department of Student and Alumni Services for complaint resolution: UCLA Extension, 1145 Gayley Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024; Voice/TTY: (310) 825-7031. View the University's full Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence at http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV (http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV).

▤ Additional Items

Protecting Privacy and Data During Live Instruction

Live meeting sessions for this class, when applicable, are being conducted over Zoom. As the host, the instructor may be recording live sessions. Only the host has the ability to record meetings, no recording by other means is permitted. Recorded sessions will be posted in the Videos area of this class unless otherwise notified. Due to privacy, recordings are not available for download and are only accessible via Canvas for the duration of the class. If you have privacy concerns and do not wish to appear in the recording, do not turn on your video and/or audio. If you also prefer to use a pseudonym instead of your name, please let the instructor know what name you will be using so that the instructor knows who you are during the session. To rename yourself during a Zoom meeting, click on Participants, click on your name, click on More, click on Rename. If you would like to ask a question, you may do so privately through the Zoom chat by addressing your chat question to the instructor only (and not to ""everyone""). Additionally, chat may be used and moderated for live questions, and saving of chats is enabled. If you have questions or concerns about this, please contact the instructor via Canvas Inbox.

Pursuant to the terms of the agreement between Zoom and UCLA Extension, the data is used solely for this purpose and Zoom is prohibited from re-disclosing this information. UCLA Extension also does not use the data for any other purpose. Recordings will be deleted when no longer necessary. However, recordings may become part of an administrative disciplinary record if misconduct occurs during a video conference.

Course and Instructor Evaluation

UCLA Extension values your feedback on course and instructor evaluations. We ask all students to take a few minutes to complete an end-of-course evaluation survey. Updates to the course and instruction are influenced by your feedback. Understanding your student experience is essential to ensure continuing excellence in the online classroom and is appreciated by your instructor and the UCLA Extension academic leadership.

Your participation in a survey is voluntary, and your responses are confidential. After instructors submit grades, they will be given an evaluation report, but this report will not contain your name.

About Your Online Course Materials

Please note the following about online course components at UCLA Extension:

- Students must have basic computer skills, including the use of word processing software, email, and the ability to use internet browsers, such as Safari, Firefox, or Chrome.
- Students are responsible for meeting the technical requirements of Canvas and familiarizing themselves with the Canvas Learning Management System.

- What are the basic computer specifications for Canvas? - [https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10721 (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10721)](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10721)
- Which browsers does Canvas support? - [https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720 (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720)](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720)

- Students are responsible for keeping a copy of all assignments and work submitted, and to be aware of all assignments, due dates, and course guidelines.
- Students are encouraged to keep and/or download a local copy of their assignment files, as **access to the online environment of a specific course is limited to 30 days after the final course date**, as listed in the course catalog.

  To download all your assignment submissions in Canvas, please refer to the [online support guide. (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10606)](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10606) for more information or contact Canvas Support via the help menu within Canvas.

UCLA Extension Canvas and Learning Support

For immediate 24/7 Canvas technical support, including holidays, click on **Help** (located on the menu to the left) where you can call or chat live with a Canvas Support representative.

UCLA Extension Instructional Design and Learning Support
The UCLA Extension Learning Support staff assists both students and instructors with Canvas-related technical support, as well as general and administrative questions.

Learning Support staff is available Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 5 PM (Pacific Time), except holidays:

- Email: support@unexonline.zendesk.com
- Website: [http://support.uclaextension.edu (http://support.uclaextension.edu/)](http://support.uclaextension.edu/)

Campus Safety Escorts

For students taking classes held on the UCLA campus and in and around Westwood Village, the UCLA Police Department provides a free walking escort service every day of the year from dusk until 1 a.m. Community Service Officers (CSOs) are available to walk students, faculty, staff members and visitors to and from anywhere on campus, in Westwood Village, and in the village apartments. CSOs are uniformed students who have received special training and are employed by the UCLA Police Department. To obtain an escort, please call (310) 794-9255 and allow 15 to 20 minutes for your escort to arrive. For complete information, see: [https://www.ucpd.ucla.edu/services/community-service-officers-csos/evening-escorts (https://www.ucpd.ucla.edu/services/community-service-officers-csos/evening-escorts)](https://www.ucpd.ucla.edu/services/community-service-officers-csos/evening-escorts)

📅 Schedule

When	Module Title	Notes

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Week 1	Introduction to Script Contests	**Lesson Topics:** - Contests and other strategies to jump-start your writing career - Contests get thousands of submissions—How to get noticed - The Competition Process (readers, judges, ranking) - Contest strategies, how they work, and what categories are scored in competitions - The importance of the first 3 pages of your script **Read / Watch:** - Prologue and Section I of "Screenplay Competitions" by Ann Marie Williams - Prologue and Chapter 1 of "Stop Screwing Around and WIN Your Next Screenplay Contest!" by Robert L. McCullough **Activities / Assignments:** - Introduce Yourself in the Introductory Forum Discussion - Participate in a Forum Discussion discussing a script/film that has an engaging opening scene/sequence that immediately grabs your attention, and why it grabs you. - Comment on your classmates' answers

When	Module Title	Notes
Week 2	What Are Competitions Looking For in Scripts	**Lesson Topics:** • Unique voices • Original ideas or new takes on old ideas • Scripts that engage the reader on page 1 • Fast reads • Areas readers pay attention to: • Presentation & Format • Characters • Structure • Genre • Some important details: Title, Iconic Moments, Avoiding the Ordinary • Is the Script Visual • Can Your Script Be Produced **Read / Watch:** • Sections II and IV of "Screenplay Competitions" by Ann Marie Williams • Chapters 2 to 7 of "Stop Screwing Around and WIN Your Next Screenplay Contest!" by Robert L. McCullough **Activities / Assignments:** • Participate in a Forum Discussion on What Makes a Script Appealing to Contests versus What Turns Readers Off Your Script (provide concrete examples) • Comment on your classmates' answers

When	Module Title	Notes
Week 3	Common Script Mistakes	**Lesson Topics:** • Submitting Concepts that aren't original • Submitting stories with not enough conflict • Characters that aren't fleshed out • Dialogue that sounds the same for every character • Ignoring/bending rules • Using the feedback to write your story—write it yourself • Not proofreading • Not picking significant contests • Submitting slow burners or cliffhanger endings • Submitting adaptations you don't own the IP for • Submitting to 1 contest and that's it **Read / Watch:** • Section III of "Screenplay Competitions" by Ann Marie Williams • Chapters 8 & 9 of "Stop Screwing Around and WIN Your Next Screenplay Contest!" by Robert L. McCullough **Activities / Assignments:** • Read the first 3 pages of different assigned scripts and explain what you'd change/rewrite to make them stand out more to better engage a contest reader • Post your answers on Canvas, and comment on your classmates' answers.
Week 4	Practice Workshop 1	**Lesson Topics:** • We'll look at some script openings, and see how we could rewrite them to better engage the reader from page 1 **Activities / Assignments:** • Rewrite an opening scene from a script of your choice, in order to better engage the reader. • Post your scene on Canvas, and comment on your classmates' assignments.

When	Module Title	Notes
Week 5	Practice Workshop 2	**Lesson Topics:** • We'll discuss what readers expect from each section of a script. • We'll look at some scripts that are new takes on existing ideas, and see how they managed to find new ways of telling an old story, making for an interesting new idea **Activities / Assignments:** • Come up with a new take on a story we've seen multiple times before. Write a brief logline or description, explaining what makes it fresh/new. • Post your new take on a story on Canvas, and comment on your classmates' ideas.
Week 6	Using Short Films to Jump Start Your Career	**Lesson Topics:** • Telling compelling stories in few pages • Showing your voice and how you can tell a full story in under 15 pages • Using your short script as proof of concept for a full feature **Activities / Assignments:** • Come up with a short script logline & Synopsis for a short film that could do well in contests. • Post your logline and synopsis on Canvas, and comment on your classmates' ideas.

When	Module Title	Notes
Week 7	TV Pilots that Stand Out in Competitions + Capitalize from Contests	**Lesson Topics:** • Real episode samples versus Premise Pilots • Original ideas • Worlds we haven't seen before • Protagonists we haven't seen before • Topical stories • Choose the right contest for your goals • Make things happen for yourself—don't wait for others to come to you • Fight for yourself and your career • Learn about the power of social media • Find mentorships opportunities in contests and use them effectively • Get a manager or agent, connect with producers, get your script made, and start your career • Engage with other winners • Query • Be ready (with several scripts) for when someone shows interest • Take meetings • Not everything you get from a festival is quantifiable • Be persistent **Activities / Assignments:** • Participate in a Forum Discussion on what would be a good contest/festival strategy • Comment on your classmates' answers
Week 8	Final Presentations, Part 1	**Lesson Topics:** • Implementing what we've learned, students present a short script or a feature opening sequence of their own (3 to 8 pages) that would appeal to contests **Activities / Assignments:** • First half of the class posts their final presentations on Canvas. • Participate in Canvas discussions about your classmates' final presentations.
Week 9	Final Presentations, Part 2	**Lesson Topics:** • Implementing what we've learned, students present a short script or a feature opening sequence of their own (3 to 8 pages) that would appeal to contests **Activities / Assignments:** • Second half of the class posts their final presentations on Canvas. • Participate in Canvas discussions about your classmates' final presentations.

When	Module Title	Notes
Week 10	Entering Competitions	**Lesson Topics:** - Selecting Competitions - The Submission Process - Resources: FilmFreeway and others - Competitions Worth Entering: - Nicholl - Austin - Save the Cat! - Screencraft - Page International - Bluecat - Finish Line - Final Draft Big Break - Scriptapalooza - SlamDance - Sundance Lab - Script Pipeline - Scriptation **Read / Watch:** - Sections V, VI, and VII of "Screenplay Competitions" by Ann Marie Williams - Chapter 10 & Afterword of "Stop Screwing Around and WIN Your Next Screenplay Contest!" by Robert L. McCullough **Activities / Assignments:** - Participate in a Forum Discussion sharing your final reflections about what it takes to get your script noticed by contests, and why contests are important to jump-start your career. - Comment on your classmates' posts, elaborating further on their reflections.