

CMNS2180: Screenwriting

Newcastle City Precinct
Semester 2 - 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

The School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences is committed to providing an inclusive environment in which all cultures are accorded respect and all students and staff are expected to act with honesty, fairness, trustworthiness and accountability in dealings with others. The School recognises and respects the unique histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their unbroken relationship with the lands and the waters of Australia over millennia, and the validity of Aboriginal ways of knowing. We are dedicated to reconciliation and to offering opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education.

OVERVIEW

Course Description

This course introduces students to the concepts, skills and knowledge required for writing short scripts for the screen. The course will examine elements of dramatic, factual and documentary storytelling such as structure, theme, character and storyworlds, content and plot devices, as well as scene, action, dialogue and narration. Students will write concept documents, outlines, treatments and pitch decks to gain an understanding of the stages of script production as well as new and evolving forms and conventions of screenwriting.

Requisites

You cannot enrol in this course if you have successfully completed CMNS3170 and/or CMNS3180.

Assumed Knowledge

CMNS1090 or equivalent understanding of production, writing and analysis.

Contact Hours

Lectorial (Screening and analysis of short films)

Face to Face On Campus

1 hour(s) per Week for 3 Weeks starting Week 1
Weeks 1-3

Tutorial

Face to Face On Campus

2 hour(s) per Week for 12 Weeks starting Week 2

Unit Weighting Workload

10

Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10 unit course.

COURSE OUTLINE

www.newcastle.edu.au

CRICOS Provider 00109J

CONTACTS

Course Coordinator **Newcastle City Precinct**
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Consultation: please email for a meeting in Q building or NuSpace

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SYLLABUS

Course Content The focus of this course is on the conception, research and writing of short film, documentary and transmedia scripts that are presentable to a Producer for further development. Topics will include:

1. Analysis and evaluation of short films, documentaries, television and media programs in terms of their approach to narrative and experimental storytelling.
2. Script writing and editing for various genres and modes of storytelling and the role of screen writing in the production of films, documentaries, television and transmedia programs
3. Narrative styles, techniques and layouts of the screenplay form
4. Consideration of scripts within the constraints of budgets and time schedules.

Course Learning Outcomes **On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Write and edit imaginative and creative scripts;
2. Apply different styles and techniques to the screenplay form;
3. Analyse films and other audio-visual forms of media entertainment;
4. Integrate constraints imposed by budgets and time schedules.

Course Materials **Other Resources:**
- See Canvas for details

SCHEDULE

	Week Begins	Lectures Tue 11-12 X101	Tutorial Tue 1pm, Tue 3pm, Thu 10am Q205	Learning Activity	Assessment
1	17 Jul	INTRODUCTION & SCREENING SESSION	No tutorials	Preparation: read course outline and check CANVAS	
2	24 Jul	SCREENING & DISCUSSION SESSION	Introduction & story ideas Drama v documentary	Story ideas and the cinematic narrative	
3	31 Jul	SCREENING & DISCUSSION SESSION	Structure & plot	Elements of structure: from story to beat The synopsis How to pitch your screenplay ideas	
4	7 Aug		Pitching Sessions	Pitching Sessions and feedback	Assessment 1a - Short Film Pitch
5	14 Aug		The Scene Outline and treatment	Creating outlines Rules for writing a treatment	
6	21 Aug		Characters – Person and situation	Designing characters. Developing characters	Assessment 1b – Proof of Concept
7	28 Aug		Screenplay formats (drama & documentary)	The industry rules for formatting your script. Writing exercises	
8	4 Sep		Reverse writing – finding the right verb.	Writing exercises	
9	11 Sep		The scene	How to structure and write a scene Writing exercises	
10	18 Sep		Rewriting the script: structure	Writers room: script read throughs and problem solving.	Assessment 2 - The First Draft (due BEFORE tutorial)
Mid Semester Break					
Mid Semester Break					
11	9 Oct		Rewriting the screenplay: characters	Writers room: script read throughs and problem solving.	
12	16 Oct		Rewriting the screenplay: dialogue	Writers room: script read throughs and problem solving.	
13	23 Oct		Rewriting the screenplay: pacing	Writers room: script read throughs and problem solving.	Assessment 3 – “Final” Draft of Script
Semester 1 Examinations					
Semester 1 Examinations					

ASSESSMENTS

This course has 3 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below.

	Assessment Name	Due Date	Involvement	Weighting	Learning Outcomes
1	Assessment 1 - Script Proposal & Initial Proof of Concept- 40%	Pitch due in class week 4 Final document (proof of concept) due week 6	Individual	40%	1, 3
2	Assessment 2 - The First Draft -30%	Week 10 (before class)	Individual	30%	1, 2, 4
3	Assessment 3 - Final Draft & Final Proof of Concept - 30%	Week 13 by midnight Sunday	Individual	30%	1, 2, 4

Late Submissions

The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

Assessment 1 - Assessment 1 - Script Proposal & Initial Proof of Concept -40%

Assessment Type	Professional Task
Description	Proof of concept will include a pitch of your idea in Week 4 and submission of a final Proof of Concept in Week 6. The pitch must be no more than 5 minutes and you will be given feedback in class that you can incorporate into your Proof of Concept. You must upload your pitch document to Canvas in Week 4. The Proof of concept will include a working title and logline, genre and tone, intended audience, synopses, treatment, scene outline, and look book imagery. The main functions of the Proof of Concept are to demonstrate that there is sufficient material for a 6-7 minute short drama or documentary, that the story will be told cinematically (ie it is designed for the screen) and that the tone/nature of the film has an audience.
Weighting	40%
Due Date	Pitch in Week 4, Proof of Concept in Week 6
Length	4-6 pages not including images
Submission Method	Pitch In Class, documents online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas
Return Method	NA
Feedback Provided	Pitch feedback In Class, Documentation feedback Online

Assessment 2 - Assessment 2 - The First Draft - 30%

Assessment Type	Professional Task
Description	Write a first draft screenplay. This should include an industry standard title page followed by a maximum of seven pages (ie 7 mins) in industry accepted script layout.
Weighting	30%
Due Date	Week 10 (before class)
Length	5-7 pages in industry standard script format
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas
Return Method	Not Returned
Feedback Provided	Online - Canvas

Assessment 3 - Assessment 3 - Final Draft & Final Proof of Concept - 30%

Assessment Type	Professional Task
Description	Write a "final" screenplay package (that demonstrates substantial rewriting from the first draft) taking into account feedback from readthroughs, notes and self assessment. This should take the form of an industry standard title page followed by no more than ten pages (ie 10mins) of script in industry accepted script layout, together with a revised Proof of Concept document, and a completed Notes template that sets out what changes you have made to your script.
Weighting	30%
Due Date	Week 13 – Sunday midnight
Length	Script: 5-10 pages in industry standard script format. Proof of concept 4-6 pages not including images; Notes template 2 pages
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas
Return Method	Not Returned
Feedback Provided	Online

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Grading Scheme

This course is graded as follows:

Range of Marks	Grade	Description
85-100	High Distinction (HD)	Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
75-84	Distinction (D)	Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
65-74	Credit (C)	Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
50-64	Pass (P)	Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
0-49	Fail (FF)	Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.

Attendance

*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

Attendance/participation will be recorded in the following components:

- (Method of recording:)
- Tutorial (Method of recording:)

WH&S Requirements

Due to COVID-19 safety restrictions, it is the student's responsibility to sanitise their work/computer space prior to any face to face lessons in this course. They must be mindful of current social distancing rules during their face to face lessons.

Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:

- Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the course site.
- Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.
- Face to Face: Communication will be provided via face to face meetings or supervision.

Course Evaluation

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement.

Oral Interviews

As part of the evaluation process of any assessment item in this course an oral examination may be conducted. The purpose of the oral examination is to verify the authorship of the material submitted in response to the assessment task. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the [Oral Examination Guidelines](#). In cases where the oral examination reveals the assessment item may not be the student's own work the case will be dealt with under the [Student Conduct Rule](#).

Academic Misconduct

All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations. For the Student Academic Integrity Policy, refer to

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=35>.

**Adverse
Circumstances**

The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s). Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:

1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or
2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;
3. you are requesting a change of placement; or
4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement.

Before applying you must refer to the Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure available at:

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=236>

**Important Policy
Information**

The 'HELP for Students' tab in UoNline contains important information that all students should be familiar with, including various systems, policies and procedures.

This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.

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