

Tcom 2682, Scriptwriting For Electronic Media
Fall 2017
9-19AM, MWF; Bliss #2019
(REVISED 8/1/17)

Fred Owens, PhD
Bliss #2010;
941-1855 (YSU); 792-5557 (HOME)

Required:

Robert B. Musburger, **An Introduction to Writing for Electronic Media**, available as a Safari Book at Maag Online. YSU email account. Reliable access to MS Word. Good university-level dictionary. Thirty standard manila file folders (for 8-1/2x11 paper). Good English handbook, such as *The McGraw-Hill Handbook of English*¹. Access to Strunk & White's Elements of Style (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/37134/37134-h/37134-h.htm>).

Objectives:

1. to help you learn the principles of writing for electronic media, both broadcast and non-broadcast. This entails planning words to be spoken, sounds to be heard and actions to be seen. So scriptwriting has its own set of rules, some of which differ from those which apply to "print media."

To learn these new rules requires you already to know the rules for print and to understand the basics of electronic media. Hence, the minimum prerequisites for this course are English "Composition I" and Tcom 1580.

The only way to receive credit for this course is first to have completed the prerequisite courses with grades of "C" or better **prior to the start of this semester**.

2. to give you practice in writing to deadlines. Time constraints affect almost all scriptwriting, usually for the worse. Assignments in this course will require you to submit a particular script at a specific time. Late scripts will not be awarded passing marks.

3. to help you build your electronic file management skills.

When you have completed the course, you will have created an array of written products for use in your Portfolio of Learning. For example, you might have:

- * developed and written a community media campaign
- * developed and written various commercials and PSAs
- * written two 5-minute news scripts appropriate for Radio and TV
- * developed and written a story script with supporting Radio/TV promos

¹ <https://ia800703.us.archive.org/34/items/mcgrawhillhandbo00shaw/mcgrawhillhandbo00shaw.pdf>

Grading:

Letters, not percentages, will initially be used to compile grades.

A = An assignment is turned in **on time and in correct form**. The English is simple and superb. **The specific challenges of the assignment are clearly met.**

B = An assignment is turned in **on time and in correct form**. The English is simple and **acceptable, with a few minor errors**. **The specific challenges of the assignment are mostly met.**

C = An assignment is turned in **on time and in nearly correct form**. The English is **understandable but rough** - with errors in grammar and/or usage. **The specific challenges of the assignment are not clearly met**, as though the assignment was not understood or a mature effort was not extended.

D = An assignment is turned in **on time and/or possibly in poor form**. The **English is substandard (not at university level) and/or the challenges of the assignment are not met.**

F = An assignment is turned in **late and/or in substandard form**. The **English is substantially illiterate and/or little effort is apparent to meet the challenge (or the effort misses the mark substantially).**

0 = An assignment has **not been submitted**. To pass this course you must submit the assignments.

In practice, I will use this code:

- ✓+ Equivalent to 95%, or A
- ✓ Equivalent to 85%, or B
- ✓— Equivalent to 75%, or C
- D Poorly done or late; equivalent to 65%
- X Equivalent to 0%, or F
- R Directed to rewrite and resubmit

The final grade will comprise grades from up to two tests, approximately 24 out-of-class writing assignments, and a summary of your attendance/participation. Weighting of assignments will be explained, but generally scripts done late in the semester will be more significant. **Scripts containing significant faults in grammar, spelling or usage will be considered fatally flawed (grade of X, above).** Text-type assignments should be read before they are discussed in class. A schedule of assignments will be distributed; changes in the schedule, if any, will be announced in class. Sign the attendance sheet when one is circulated: consistent attendance and participation will be positively related to grades. Some

professors lower a final grade by 20 percent for each absence over three, a criterion which serves as a good guide.

Form is a critical part of your scripts. When media professionals pick up a script, they immediately look at form. Form tells them whether it's a radio or TV spot, a :30 or a :60, and more. If the data block is correct, they can tell by a glance when it was written, by whom, and when it is to air. By looking at font style, font point and line spacing, they can tell whether it's been written by somebody who knows what he/she is doing – or not.

After glancing at form, media professionals quickly scan the copy. They know what they are looking for – good hook, easy sentences, call for action, and more. All these features should be immediately obvious.

So you want your form to be so standard, and your words so clear and compelling, that media professionals need only take a few seconds to read and pass judgement on your work.

Assignments:

You will receive your writing assignments 2 or 3 days before they are due. I will send them to you via **email as pdf's**. Because of copyright restrictions, these documents will be readable, but you will not be able to print or edit them. You will turn in a writing assignment each **Monday before 9AM** and each **(Thursday) Friday before 9AM (TBD)**. Many will be "short form" of one minute or less. There will be up to four long-form assignments (involving either longer scripts or significantly more planning and research). Graded homework will be returned to you as soon as practicable. Note these points:

1. *All scripts* must be submitted in two forms: (1) as MS Word files sent as attachments to < fowens@ysu.edu > and (2) as printed output within a manila folder and deposited in my open mailbox.
2. The **electronic** scripts must contain "[SLUG]#[NUMBER]" in the subject line, where "slug" is a keyword relevant to the assignment and where "number" is the assignment number.
3. All **printed** scripts must be submitted in a manila file folder. The folder must be clearly labeled (on the front, upper right corner, as demonstrated in class) with your name and the assignment slug/number.
4. It's okay to recycle folders for a subsequent assignment by simply obliterating the previous assignment's slug and writing in the current one. Obviously, remove the previous assignment papers from the folder. **Be sure to have an ample supply of manila folders.**
5. Some scripts might be unacceptable for grading, especially early in the term. In this case, I might direct you to submit them a second time after correction or rewriting. **Only** those scripts so identified in writing will be accepted. They must be submitted in the same manila file folder as the original, with the circled letter "R" written large on the folder and on each page of copy. **Originals must always accompany repairs.**
6. Be careful to understand the assignment **before** trying to complete it. A late epiphany is not helpful.

Expect one or two short tests covering “Readings/Guides” and class discussions. These will weigh as writing assignments.

College students/graduates are expected to know the language well and to be able to use it to the level of persons such as Brian Williams, Bob Costa, Keith Olbermann, Jim Nantz and Larry Wilmore. Or Robin Roberts, Savannah Guthrie, Natalie Morales, Lesley Stahl, and Lara Logan. Or Megyn Kelly, or Khizr Khan. We always write idiomatic Standard American English. That’s American English spoken without any clear regional or cultural markers. Sometimes you will write for a character whose speech sounds like a regional/cultural dialect.²

If your use of English is conspicuously substandard, you must provide evidence of your attendance at a significant number of Writing Center workshops or sessions. The Writing Center provides summaries of work accomplished to instructors so that you will be recognized for your diligence. Once again, this will be at the instructor’s discretion. Assignments featuring substandard English will not receive passing grades. Collaboration with a Writing Center tutor indicates your good faith effort to improve your knowledge and skills, and its effect will be seen in your final grade.

Every hard copy writing assignment must be correctly identified. Put a three-line “Data Block” in the **upper right corner** of the manila folder (holding it as a book), thus:

Larry Pencilfoote Assignment #2 Dramatic Radio Spot

On your assignment itself, whether sent electronically or submitted physically, put this in the upper left corner:

Pencilfoote #2, 2/2

Script formats. It’s important that all scripts conform to a standard format. Here are actual samples. You will note some variations from one to another because formats are often standardized within agencies or production houses. Note how these are done, so we can later agree on the specific formats we will use. Use **Arial font, 13 or 14 point.**

Time your scripts by using this online timer:

<http://www.edgestudio.com/production/words-to-time-calculator>

²<http://deadspin.com/the-many-dialects-of-american-english-in-one-charming-1471963562>

For this course, a :30 must always be between 25 and 30 seconds. and a :60 must always be between :55 and :60 – unless production instructions call for a non-standard length.

First, consult **Script #1**³ to see the standard format for a “straight reader” radio commercial. Note that “ANNCR” is identified in the left column, which is narrow. Wrongly, the Sound Effects Cue (“PHONE RINGS”) is contained within the copy, not on a separate line. Always **double-space** lines of script that will be read by an announcer. Triple-space between paragraphs. **Use simple, not compound or complex, sentences. Use commas, ellipses, and periods** to indicate pauses: do not use dashes, colons or semi-colons.

Second is a spot read by talent Ken Nordine. Nordine is no ordinary announcer, which is why the copy identifies him by name. Notice the music bed that starts full and then is backgrounded, over which Nordine talks. Then at the end, the music is potted up and then faded out.

And the **third** script contains a **production note**. You may use such notes, but this layout is confusing. This script contains **stage directions** to the announcer and **production cues** for Foley, written in a confusing way. Notice how quickly the script establishes a change in time and place. The announcer does not return at the end of the script (Aristotle would roll over in his Forum, but this is radio.)

Criticism: Two aspects of this course can be upsetting if you’re not ready for them. First, many of your written scripts will be projected for all to see and comment on. Do not feel embarrassed about this. After all, this whole course is a practice session - it’s better to improve your work here “in private” than for someone to hear your mistakes on the public airwaves. Further, everyone is in the same boat of beginners. So if you make a silly mistake today, somebody else will make an equally silly mistake tomorrow. It all evens out. And, writing well is in part a matter of seeing lots of poor writing – and lots of excellent writing. You’ll learn a lot by seeing a whole set of scripts projected on the wall.

The second aspect has to do with the instructional model. Sometimes, you’ll be given the main principle and examples of its use, and then you’ll be asked to apply the principle in your homework. But other times you’ll be asked to solve a homework problem and then we’ll extract the principle from your experience. In many cases, teaching/learning has to be done **indirectly and experientially**. So, if you find yourself thinking, “Oh, like that, eh? Well why didn’t you say so?!” just realize that’s the nature of the beast.

Key Points:

1. Label assignment folders correctly. Buy the correct number of folders.
2. Use proper script format. Don’t blame your technology ... or the dog.
3. No late scripts. Don’t be clever with email (“But I SENT it, honest!”)
4. **No sub-standard or non-standard English.** Carefully proofread your copy.
5. Keep your files for use in your Portfolio of Learning.

³These scripts are shorter than :60. Use them as demonstrations of format and language.

6. You must have email service. I will use the emails created by Office 365.
7. Take a seat from which you can easily see the projection screen. This system is new, so we might experience hiccups.
8. Class attendance and participation will be important because assignments are explained and sometimes modified during class.
9. Sign in daily – at the beginning of class.
10. Turning in out-of-class assignments on time and to specification is necessary to achieve a passing grade for the course.
11. Because this course aims to develop personal skills, most assignments will be done individually.
12. Pay attention during class. I talk for a purpose.
13. Be prepared to have class photos taken periodically. These will be used to verify class attendance.

Course Objectives also include:

Use stories, character, and dialogue to persuade audiences to purchase or use a product/service; differentiate writing conventions for television, radio and print/web; break down the structure of news and promotional non-fiction pieces; use media research methods to produce media messages; use demographics and psychographics to construct persuasive messages; analyze your own work and the work of others; organize and present a project proposal to the class; collaborate creatively and be a productive, cooperative team member; produce ethically and legally responsible media scripts.

Computer labs are open for your use at the following locations: Maag, Meshel, Debartolo, Kilcawley, Cushwa, Moser, and Williamson. More information is available at <http://www.maag.ysu.edu/complabs.html>.

<http://cms.ysu.edu/administrative-offices/media-and-academic-computing/microsoft-license-agreement>.

Deadlines: Assignments are to be completed and turned in by **1PM (TBA)** on the scheduled due date. Assignments produced after this time will be considered late. Late assignments will be accepted, but they **will not receive a passing grade**. To accept or not to accept a late assignment is at the instructor's discretion. For certain assignments in this class, you might be working as a member of a team.

Cancelled class: If this class is cancelled for any one day due bad weather, illness, schedule conflict, or other reasons, an e-mail message will be sent to your YSU student e-mail address (...@student.ysu.edu) as soon as possible.

"Incomplete": YSU policy is that a grade of "I" may be assigned as a final grade only if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The student encounters unforeseen circumstances beyond his or her control that prevent completion of all coursework by the scheduled end of the

semester.

2. The student has completed at least 50% of the assigned coursework.
3. The student is receiving a passing grade on all completed work.

If all of the above criteria **cannot** be met, the student should consider withdrawing from the course.

Academic dishonesty: see the YSU Student Handbook for policies about such behavior.

Youngstown State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternative format upon request. In accordance with University procedures, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You must be registered with the Center for Student Progress Disability Services, located at 275 Fifth Avenue, and provide a letter of accommodation to coordinate reasonable accommodations. You can reach CSP Disability Services at 330-941-1372.

Script #1 - Reader

Pencilfoote
#2 – Straight Reader

Fuller Paint – :60
Feb 28, 2017

ANNCR: The Fuller Paint Comapny invites you to stare with your ears at – yellow. Yellow is more than just a color. Yellow is a way of life. Ask any taxi driver about yellow. Or a banana salesman. Or a coward. They'll tell you about yellow. (PHONE RINGS) Oh, excuse me. Yello! Yes, I'll take your order. Dandelions, a dozen. A pound of melted butter. Lemon drops and a drop of lemon. And one canary that sings a yellow song. Anything else? Yello? Yello? Yello? Oh, dropped. She'll call back. If you want yellow that's yellow-yellow, remember to remember the Fuller Paint Company. A century of leadership in the chemistry of color. For the Fuller Color Center nearest you, check your phone book. The Yellow Pages, of course.

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Script #2 - Nordine

Pencilfoote
#2- Radio Spot – Straight Reader

Forest Fires - Nordine – :60
Feb 28, 2017

MUSIC: BACH UP AND UNDER

KEN NORDINE: Handel's oratorios. The symphonies of Brahms, Mozart and Beethoven. The piano music of Chopin. The concertos of Rachmaninoff. The music of Tchaikovsky. The rhapsodies of Liszt. The Operas of Wagner (VAHG-nur). The ballets of Stravinsky. The great masterpieces of man are also the great masterpieces of our forests. Take away the wood in pianos, organs and harpsichords, and you take away the medium through which these geniuses communicated their inspiration. A symphony of life abounds in every tree, in every forest. Please allow that inspiration to be appreciated by our children ... and our children's children. Only Bach could have written the Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor. But only you can prevent forest fires.

MUSIC: **UP AND OUT**

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Script #3 - Production

Larry Pencilfoote
#3- Radio Spot – Production

Vaughn's Elixir – :60
Feb 28, 2017 / **1 of 2**

Production Note: All talent should convey lines like actors in an early 1930's movie.

ANNCR: Motion sickness; that queasy feeling. And it's hard to imagine a better place for it than this choppy cruise. Doesn't seem to bother that guy out on deck, though ... (Fading off) ... Let's try to find out why.

SFX: **(FADE IN: CREAKING TIMBERS, SPLASHING WAVES)**

BILL: (Fading on) What? No. I'm no sailor. I'm Bill the Bookie from Davenport. (TIMBERS/WAVES OUT) Motion sick? Not me. Not since that day (Fading off) back at George's Drug Store.

SFX: **STORE SOUNDS UP QUICKLY THEN SLOWLY OUT**

GEORGE: Hey, Bill. (Whistles "Camptown Races" off-key). Know this song?

BILL: Give it some hay, George. Oh, that bumpy flight from Vegas. Like riding a sway-back steer. (MUSIC: TWO MORE BARS OF "CAMPTOWN RACES")

GEORGE: Then saddle up to this. It's VAUGHN'S ELIXER.

MORE - MORE - MORE

Pencilfoote
#3- Radio Spot – Production

Vaughn's Elixir – :60
Feb 28, 2017 / **2 of 2**

Bill: Vaughn's what?

GEORGE: Vaughn's Elixir. Makes you feel like it's post time !

MUSIC: **TRADITIONAL "AT THE POST" BUGLE CALL**

SFX: **CROSSFADE TO SHIP SOUNDS, UP AND UNDER**

BILL: From then on, it's Vaughn's Elixir for me ! You can bet your calm stomach on it. It's Vaughn's Elixir to win. Every time.

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