

Writing for Stage and Screen

Summer 2026

Instructor	Melissa Foulger	Class	LMC-3236
Email	melissa.foulger@lmc.gatech.edu	Pre-req	ENGL 1102
Office		Satisfies	HUM Req.
Office Hours	Tuesday: 11:00-12:00	Class Time	1:30 – 3:25 pm
	Or by appointment/email me	Location	TBD

Description

This course will help students develop creative writing techniques in the genre of **short** scripts (film screenplays and dramatic stage plays). The course will discuss elements of form, craft, language, style, theme, character, plot, story, genre conventions, etc., both as they pertain to creative writing more generally and to writing for film and drama specifically. We will use scriptwriting software to write our scripts, and examine and analyze screenplays, stage plays, and read films and play for inspiration as well as direction. Students will develop several screenplays/plays, from ideas to drafts ... to drafts... to drafts... to polished, producible work, through invention exercises, revision exercises, small group feedback, large group workshops, etc. Additionally, student will be expected to develop critical eyes towards filmmaking and playwriting, to study texts, and write reflexively about the work they and others have produced in order to contextualize, understand, and appreciate craft.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this class, students will be able to:

- Advance their understanding of what constitutes readable, interesting, and dynamic creative writing;
- Develop, revise, and polish several short scripts (plus one short fiction story) in preparation for some of them to be filmed in a later semester, outside the scope of this class;
- Read, analyze, and communicate more contextually and skillfully;
- Engage in critical discussion of creative works by fellow students as well as published screenwriters and filmmakers;
- Assess their own writing for strengths and areas of improvement, but be able to articulate this information; and
- Co-create knowledge in a collaborative learning environment.

Additional Learning Outcomes Per LMC & BOR

Students will also be able to:

- Cultivate awareness of the traditions and conventions of literature, film, and other forms of narrative art, analyze those traditions and conventions in specific cultural contexts; and
- Describe relationships among languages, philosophies, cultures, literature, ethics, or the arts.

Required Materials

- Assorted resources, as needed. (These will be available in Canvas, as hand-outs, and/or as links.)

- A Celtx account (<https://www.celtx.com>) or access to other scriptwriting software. Don't buy the pay versions – the free versions are fine.
- Something to write with/on

Grading Policy

This course uses an alternative grading model that prioritizes learning, engagement, and reflection over traditional grading metrics. Students are expected to focus on the quality and completeness of their work rather than numerical scores.

Assessment Structure

- Feedback is provided through written comments and detailed rubrics
- Each assignment includes clear expectations and evaluation criteria
- Students are responsible for completing all work according to assignment guidelines
- Any assignment can be resubmitted after receiving feedback for a better grade

Self-Reflection

Students will complete structured reflections at designated points during the semester to assess their learning, progress, and overall performance in the course.

Module Evaluation Scale

Each module is evaluated on a completion scale:

- **3** – Exceeds expectations
- **2** – Meets expectations
- **1** – Incomplete or below expectations
- **0** – Not submitted

These scores provide ongoing feedback; final course assessment is based primarily on student reflection and demonstrated engagement.

Final Grade

The course is graded per the following:

- **A** – 90 – 100%
- **B** – 80 - 89%
- **C** – 70 – 79%
- **D** – 60 – 69%
- **F** – 59% or below

Projects at a Glance

- Attendance and active, engaged participation in all discussions and activities
- Script drafts (1 screenplay and 1 ten-minute play)

- List of Ten Dramatic Themes
- List of Twenty Workable Loglines
- Professional Script Analysis
 - Play (<https://www.newyorktheatreguide.com/theatre-news/news/where-to-read-plays-for-free-online>)
 - Film (www.imsdb.com or www.simplyscripts.com/movie-scripts)
- Peer critique: Written critique of another student’s screenplay and ten-minute play
- Self-reflection and course reflection

Description of Graded Components

Creative Work/ Portfolio: You’ll craft two scripts throughout the semester: one short screenplays (approx.. 10 pages) and one 10-minute play (approx.. 10 – 12 page), and develop these pieces through invention writing exercises that we do in and out of class, through writing multiple drafts, experimentation with drafts, getting class feedback on drafts, and polishing pieces for the portfolio. Drafts with accompanying developmental material (such as character interviews, beat sheets, synopses, etc.) must be turned in on their assigned due date to receive thorough feedback and suggestions from me for revision and polishing. You must produce a complete draft with attempted revision for each piece, even if you do not choose to pursue the screenplay or stage play through to a final, polished form. This work will be collected in your portfolio.

Peer Critiques (2): You’ll prepare a 2-3 page typed, double-spaced insightful critique of another student’s screenplay and complete stage play, highlighting the specific strengths of the other student’s work, discussing how the work succeeds and how it doesn’t, and offering thoughtful suggestions for revision. These critiques will be shared with the other student as well as turned in for a grade.

Professional Script Analysis (2): You’ll prepare an analysis of a feature-film-length screenplay and an analysis of a full-length play of your choice. Your analysis will be a 3 – 4 page typed, double-spaced critique of the work, examining such things as style, narrative structure/arc, character development, use of dialogue, etc. I am not looking for a plot summary here, but rather, insightful engagement with the text and some commentary about how such writing influences your own.

Twenty Workable Loglines: Loglines are a basic building block of screenplays; they tell the plot, characters, and primal goal of the protagonist of a movie in a single declarative sentence (for instance: When a socially awkward guy tries to break up with his clingy girlfriend, he discovers she’s already dead and haunting his dating apps.) With that in mind, you’ll create a list of 20 potential topics for spring plays that you could write and actual student filmmakers could produce. (You can be as imaginative as you like, of course, but the goal is to make films that do not require extensive sets, locations, and special effects.)

Ten Dramatic Themes: Similar to loglines, themes for plays are the central idea or underlying message that gives a stage play its emotional and intellectual core. It’s what the story is *really about* beneath the plot, dialogue, and action. This assignment has two parts: One, you must list what the theme is (for instance “betrayal and loss”) and then offer a brief one-line sentence about the play (for

instance, “A family bond is tested when a prodigal daughter returns home with a secret that could tear the family apart.”)

Course Policies

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that access to quality education is a fundamental human right. As an educator, my goal is to foster an environment in which knowledge expands perspectives and inspires curiosity and creativity. I am committed to supporting students in the development of critical thinking skills, empowering them to question, interpret, and create meaningful narratives both individually and collaboratively. Central to my teaching is the belief that every student’s voice has value, and I strive to help students recognize and effectively use that power.

My pedagogical approach emphasizes active and applied learning. I believe students learn most effectively when material is introduced in manageable segments and then reinforced through practical application. I also value the importance of engagement and enjoyment in the learning process. Striking a balance between rigor and creativity encourages deeper understanding and sustained motivation. Theatre, in particular, offers a dynamic framework for developing transferable skills such as collaboration, communication, organization, and relationship-building—competencies that are essential across professional fields.

I am dedicated to creating a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. I view the unique identities and lived experiences that students bring to the classroom as strengths that enrich the collective learning experience. Course materials and activities are designed to reflect all members of the class. I welcome and encourage student feedback and suggestions, and I am committed to continuously improving the course to better meet the needs of all learners.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Success in this course program depends heavily on your health and well-being. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](https://student-resource-guide.gatech.edu)).

Attendance and/or Participation

In a small class where so much of what we do affects the other students in the class, it is important to be **present**. When people are missing, their absence denies other students their insight, knowledge, and opportunities for connection and understanding. This class is designed to foster an environment of growth and communication; if students are absent, it harms other class members' learning potential. In other words, please come to class.

We will do a lot of freewriting, brainstorming, listing, and revising in class to help you when it comes to writing your scripts. All of this work is generative, and much of it is spur-of-the-moment, so if you're not in class, you won't be able to generate this material.

You may miss 2 classes for ANY reason. You don't need to tell me why you're missing class. I understand that things happen.

Furthermore, missing class does not absolve you from turning in assignments. It is your responsibility to get them to me when they are due, whether or not you are in class. Additionally, if you are absent on the day we are to discuss your work in a large group workshop, we may not get to discuss it at all; it will depend on what our schedule looks like and if we can make time. Therefore, it is to your benefit to appear in class on the large group workshop days.

I will deal with any emergency situations as they arise on an individual basis. If an unforeseen situation does arise, and you cannot contact me beforehand, make sure you contact me as quickly as possible after the fact so that we can set up a time to discuss what, if anything, must be done. Do not let the weeks pass by.

Late Work, E

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

[Core IMPACTS](#) is the University System of Georgia's General Education curriculum. If you are teaching a course that counts towards Core IMPACTS, you should include a syllabus statement about the Core area and associated [career competencies](#). [This resource](#) developed by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Online Education at Georgia State University includes template syllabus statements for each of the Core IMPACTS areas that you may adapt for your course.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible to discuss your situation. If you need accommodations, I need to know sooner rather than later so that I can make any necessary adjustments in assignments, timelines, or due dates. **There is no shame in asking for help if you need it, and I am happy to work with you.** But I need to know, and I need to see that you're registered with Disability Services. They will provide you with papers that show you have registered with them and that list of the kinds of accommodations you will need.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

There are no pre- or co-requisites for this course.

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Collaboration and Group Work

Theatre is a collaborative discipline, and active participation is essential. Students are expected to:

- Take initiative and seek additional tasks when work is completed
- Remain engaged, present, and responsive during lab sessions
- Assist promptly when help is requested

Students must also maintain awareness of safety protocols, including responding to standard backstage calls (e.g., "heads," "winch coming in"). A commitment to teamwork, communication, and safety is essential to the success of the production.

Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools may be used for research and idea generation. However:

- All submitted work must reflect the student's own ideas and writing
- AI-generated content must be properly cited
- Failure to attribute AI-generated material constitutes plagiarism

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

This course adheres to Georgia Tech's official inclement weather and emergency procedures.

- If campus closes: all course activities are canceled or rescheduled
- If operations are modified: activities may shift online or be adjusted
- If campus remains open but conditions are unsafe: students should prioritize safety and notify the instructor

Students are responsible for monitoring official Institute communications and course announcements.

Technology and Classroom Conduct

- No recording or photography without permission
- Devices should not be used for non-course activities
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated

Common Courtesy

Students are expected to maintain a respectful and professional learning environment:

- Engage respectfully in discussions
- Avoid disruptive behavior
- Dispose of food waste properly

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit us online at success.gatech.edu/tutoring, email us at tutoring@gatech.edu, or come see us at Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, Suite 283.

Course Schedule

Read the course schedule carefully and make a note of important dates. I highly recommend that you frequently review this schedule to ensure that you are managing your time wisely and prepared to participate in activities and submit assignments by the recommended due date.

Key Deadlines

- **Pre-midterm work due:** June 23
- **Post-midterm work due:** August 4

5/19	Course Introduction	
5/21	Critical Response Process	Read Kramer 1 - 18
5/26	Works of Art Teach Us How to Read Them Ives, "Sure Thing"	Discussion Post #1 Read Kramer 19 - 42
5/28	The Perception Shift Yockey, "Adorable Image Kitten Collapse"	Discussion Post #2 Read Kramer 43 - 82
6/2	Theatre is a Rhyme for Life Churchill, "Blue Kettle"	Discussion Post #3
6/4	Writing Exercise Script Formatting for Theatre	List of Ten Dramatic Themes Due Read Kramer 83 – 102
6/5		Professional Script Analysis – Play Due by 10 pm
6/9	Story and Plot Planning Your Writing	Read Kramer 103 - 132
6/11	Choice and Consequence	
6/16	Writing Exercises	Read Kramer 133 - 168
6/18	The Inevitable	Read Kramer 169 – 206
6/23	Convergence	Midterm Self-Reflection and Course Reflection Due

6/25	Peer Review - Play	Ten Minute Play Draft Due
6/30	Peer Review – Play	
7/1		Peer Critique #1 – Play Script Due
7/2	Loglines and Short Film Scripts	Read “The Usual Suspects” screenplay
7/7	The Usual Suspects	Twenty Workable Loglines Due
7/9	Writing Exercise	Revised Play Script Due
7/14	Bastille Day - No Class	
7/16	Planning Your Screenplay Script Formatting for Film	
7/17		Professional Script Analysis Due by 10 pm
7/21	Writing Exercise	
7/23	Peer Review	Screenplay Draft Due
7/28	Peer Review	Peer Critique #2 – Film Script Due
TBD	Final	Final Portfolios Due by 10 pm