FITV 4625 WRITING SITCOMS SYLLABUS
HALF-HOUR COMEDY WORKSHOP
M-T-W-Th 1pm to 4pm
Lincoln Center Campus / ROOM TBD
Instructor: Jennewein

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is an immersive workshop-style course that covers core concepts of the craft and business of writing half-hour television. Students will create their own original TV comedy series and write a complete pilot script and a show bible. (Note: **This class is a good follow-up or prelude to FITV 3624 Writing the TV Drama**, in which students write a spec episode of an existing series, or **FITV 3626 Writing The Original TV Pilot**.)

(Students may choose to write a spec episode of an existing comedy series instead of an original pilot.)

Over the first few days, you will learn the core building blocks of half-hour comedy writing craft via script analysis, film clips and lectures on structure, character, dialog, story, comedy, etc. You will also build your own original series from concept to outline to pilot script. Once greenlighted, you will begin to deliver scene pages and receive in-class critiques from your peers and professor, and this process will continue for the remainder of the session, with each student expected to complete their half-hour pilot script.

As you continue to refine your writing process you will learn how to give constructive feedback on your classmates’ scripts and take constructive feedback from your teacher and peers. All this helps you learn how to be a good writer in a room—and is a BIG part of your grade.

**PROF JIM AMAZING FACT #23:**
It is my experience that as much as 50% of what you learn about story craft will come as much from you helping to improve the stories of your peers as it will from writing your own script.

We will run class like a real Hollywood Writers Room. So absolutely NO postponing or rescheduling of deadlines. You are required to behave like professional writers. Late assignments will not be accepted and a failing grade will be issued. If you are not in class when an assignment is due, you must email it to me **before class meets.**

LEARNING GOALS
By the end of the course, the student will know how:

1. To break down the beats of a half-hour TV comedy.
2. To create an original story outline (beat sheet).
3. To write a first-draft pilot script for an original television series and a series bible.
4. To recognize story engines, character motivations, and character dynamics that are strong enough to build a television show around.
5. To grasp the inner workings of the TV industry.

Each student will write:

1. Series Bible, including pilot script beat sheet
2. A pilot script (25 to 30 pages)
Each student will execute a pilot script in industry-standard format, including:
- Scene headings (locations)
- Action lines
- Dialogue
- Scene transitions

A NOTE ON “ROUNDTABLING”

This is primarily a workshop class, where both outlines and screenplay pages will be read aloud in class, thoughtfully critiqued and evaluated line by line. Everyone in the room is expected to participate. Everyone is expected to help identify and solve problems in the narrative, enhancing any weakness or lack of clarity as we proceed.

Students are evaluated not only on the quality of their script pages, but also on the quality of their participation during round-tabling.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:
1. One human brain, fully engaged.
2. Handouts written and given out by instructor.
3. Final Draft computer program (industry-standard) or equivalent screenwriting program (Celtx) (FREE internet download).

When you begin to write script pages, no Word Program documents will be accepted.

RECOMMENDED INTERNET SITES:
- Internet Movie Database: www.imdb.com
- Screenplay samples: www.script-o-rama.com
- Screenplay samples: www.simplyscripts.com
- Film Reviews (Rotten Tomatoes): www.rottentomatoes.com
- Box Office Mojo: http://boxofficemojo.com
- The Black List: www.blcklst.com
- Writing Tips: http://johnaugust.com
- Bitter Script Reader: http://thebitterscriptreader.blogspot.com
- Scriptshadow: http://scriptshadow.net
- Screenwriting U: http://screenwritingu.com
- Lit Hub: lithub.com

INFO ON NARRATIVE TV COMEDY FELLOWSHIPS & CONTESTS 2017
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11CwM-6ejG6PwC1oJCaHRivh4scB_wE7a3zg5YAZzZoi/htmlview#gid=0

FOLLOW THE CMS DEPT ON FB & TWITTER
Be sure to “like” and ‘follow’ our departmental Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FordhamCMS and/or follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/FordhamCMS to receive departmental news, notices of jobs, internship opportunities, etc.
JIM’S IMPORTANT CLASS RULES

BE COOL. Our class will be a safe, nurturing place to express considered opinions and thoughtful critiques... NOT a place for bullying, bigotry, sexism, racism or personal attacks of any kind. Students will offer constructive criticism of each other’s work, NOT each other.

BE HERE. Care enough to show up on time. (If you don’t show up, you won’t get an A.) You will be allowed one unexcused absence. An excused absence is one in which you have emailed me at least two hours prior to start of class and told me of an illness or emergency of some kind that would warrant your absence and received my okay not to attend.

BE EXCELLENT. Show up emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and creatively, too. Come to work. Come to revel in the power of the human imagination – yours and everyone else’s in the room. Come to discover what you have to say. Bring your best self.

BE FOCUSED. No facebooking or texting during class.

SEE ME. I encourage each student to meet with me at least once outside of class. This will help me get to know you better as a creative writer and give us a chance to address any specific aspects of story craft you might need help with.

OTHER MUSTS AND MUST-NOTS

Unless there is a genuine family emergency, absolutely no cell phones. Ever.

You must use Final Draft software for the script pages you write in this class. It is the industry standard. You may also use Celtx if you choose, as it is available as a free download over the internet.

Send in your pages to me as a PDF, please. The first to email will be the first to be read in class. And you will NOT need to print out your pages for class. I will project your script pages on the screen and we will read out the scenes from there. (So, we’ll be eco-friendly and save you time/money in Xeroxing.)

In order to be on time, be in class early.

There will be absolutely NO postponing or re-scheduling of deadlines. You are required to behave like professional writers. Deliver pages when it’s your day to deliver.

If you ARE absent, I will ask you to read and send WRITTEN COMMENTS to each of the writers whose work you missed workshopping.

Failure to do this will negatively affect your grade.

Grades will be based on the quality and timely completion of your written work and willingness to participate in class. Investing real time and energy into the words you commit to the page and the critiques you give to your peers will optimize your grade.

> Not participating in class discussions will lower your grade.
> Sloppy, thrown-together work will lower your grade.
> Late or missed assignments will lower your grade.
> Constant tardiness will lower your grade.

Do not think of your scene pages as homework assignments you can knock out the night before. Bring us the best you can do and you will be rewarded.

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GRADING:

Because so much of your time and effort will be focused on writing and group work, there will be **no final exam.** Below is a detailed breakdown of grading for this course:

- 20% Attendance
- 20% Class Participation
- 60% Quality of Writing Assignments (Pilot Beat Sheet & Series Bible 10%, Pilot Script 50%)

Note that a BIG PART (40%) of your grade will be determined by the quality of your class participation and attendance. So demonstrate that you care by giving thoughtful, well-articulated notes in class. Show the respect that you’d like to receive.

*I expect all to live by my Golden Rule: “Everybody’s script is as important as my own.”*

**CLASS 1 – Thurs July 5 - 1:00 – 4pm**
WORKSHOP: Students pitch ideas. Discuss and develop in the room.

ASSIGNMENT:
1. Write SERIES VISION STATEMENT (Bible): Include logline, series format (half-hr or 1-hr), title, world of the show, genre/type (closed-end procedural, serialized crime drama, single-camera comedy, etc), three series it is like in style and tone, lead characters, backstory, target network and demo.
2. WRITE BEAT SHEET OF BOTH PILOT SCRIPTS #1 I SEND YOU.

**CLASS 2 – Monday July 9 - 1 – 4pm**
LECTURE: Analysis of the Teaser/3-Act Structure (half-hour comedy) and the Teaser/Five Act Structure (one-hour drama), A, B & C Stories and Act Outs. Mamet’s Three Questions. More on Story Engines: the needs that drive stories. SCREENING followed by discussion.
WORKSHOP: Review student Vision Statements and selected beat sheets

ASSIGNMENT:
1. Write CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS for YOUR SERIES and A, B & C Stories in paragraph form.

**CLASS 3 – Tuesday July 10 - 1 – 4pm**
LECTURE: Creating compelling characters: ANALYSIS OF GREAT PILOT SCRIPTS (TBD). SCREENING followed by discussion.
WORKSHOP: Review student Character Descriptions & A/B/C Stories.
ASSIGNMENT:
1. Write BEAT SHEET for YOUR PILOT SCRIPT.

CLASS 4 – Wednesday July 11 - 1 – 4pm
LECTURE: ANALYSIS OF GREAT PILOT SCRIPTS (TBD).
SCREENING followed by discussion.
WORKSHOP PILOT STORY BEAT SHEETS

CLASS 5 – Thursday July 12 - 1 – 4pm
LECTURE: ANALYSIS OF GREAT PILOT SCRIPTS (TBD).
WORKSHOP PILOT STORY BEAT SHEETS

CLASS 6 – Monday July 16 - 1 – 4pm
LECTURE: ANALYSIS OF GREAT PILOT SCRIPTS (TBD).
WORKSHOP PILOT STORY BEAT SHEETS

*** NOTE: YOU WILL NOT BE GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT TO GO TO SCRIPT PAGES UNTIL JIM SIGNS OFF ON YOUR BEAT SHEET. ERGO, WORK TO REVISE IT UNTIL IT GLOWS WITH THE ESSENCE OF EXCELLENCE. ****

CLASS 7 – Tuesday July 17 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages

CLASS 8 – Wednesday July 18 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages

CLASS 9 – Thursday July 19 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages

CLASS 10 – Monday July 23 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages

CLASS 11 – Tuesday July 24 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages

CLASS 12 – Wednesday July 25 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages

CLASS 13 – Thursday July 26 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages
CLASS 14 – Monday July 30 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages

CLASS 15 – Tuesday July 31 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages

CLASS 16 – Wednesday Aug 1 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages

CLASS 17 – Thursday Aug 2 - 1 – 4pm
Revisit fundamentals of story, character and dialog, as needed.
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 1 teleplay pages

CLASS 18 – Monday Aug 6 - 1 – 4pm  FINAL CLASS
JIM’S FINAL INSPIRATIONAL LECTURE – TIME PERMITTING
WORKSHOP -- GROUP 2 teleplay pages
Possible Skype session with industry pro.

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM

*** All Final REVISED SCRIPTS (AND SERIES BIBLES) MUST BE DELIVERED TO ME VIA EMAIL AS A PDF – no later than 5PM EST TUESDAY AUGUST 7, 2018. ***

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES THAT MUST BE OBSERVED BY ALL:

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A University, by its nature, strives to foster and recognize originality of thought. Originality can only be recognized, however, when people acknowledge the sources of ideas or works that are not their own. Therefore, students must maintain the highest standards with regards to honesty, effort and performance. As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Fordham is committed to ensuring that all members of the academic community strive not only for excellence in scholarship but also for integrity of character. In the pursuit of knowledge and personal development, it is imperative that students present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique and eventual reformulation. As part of this process, each student must acknowledge the intellectual contribution of others…. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, falsification, unapproved collaboration, and destruction of library materials. For further details, consult the Standards of Academic Integrity on the University website http://www.fordham.edu/academics/handbooks__publicati/undergraduate_academ/index.asp

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS: The Office of Disability Services at Fordham University helps to ensure equal educational access and opportunity for all members of our community. In the Jesuit tradition of cura personalis, members of the ODS staff work individually with each student to understand his or her strengths and limitations in order to develop their most effective and comprehensive accommodation plan. Fordham will offer reasonable and appropriate auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services, and facilities once students meet with ODS for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students seeking accommodation(s) should contact Jessica Hawkins, Assistant Director of Disability Services,  45 Columbus Ave, 1st floor, (212) 636-6282 disabilityservices@fordham.edu