



# MAS 314

## Screenwriting: Images, Ideas, Stories

MQC3 Day 2014

*Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies*

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Lecturer in Charge and Tutor

Dr Craig Johnson

[craig.johnson@mqc.edu.au](mailto:craig.johnson@mqc.edu.au)

Contact via Email

By appointment via email only.

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

39cp including MAS202

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

The unit investigates a diversity of processes and techniques from around the globe for writing and editing drama, documentary and hybrid screenplays. Assessment tasks combine creative writing projects with critical analysis. It is relevant to those writing for performance, screens and digital media.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.

Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.

Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.

Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.

Engage in the process of learning

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Critical Readings</u>	5%	Weeks 3 - 7
<u>Concept Art and Writing Folio</u>	20%	11th December (Week 5)
<u>Treatment &amp; Analysis</u>	30%	8th January (Week 8)
<u>Screenplay Draft</u>	35%	12th February (Week 13)
<u>Workshop Participation</u>	10%	Throughout Semester

### Critical Readings

Due: **Weeks 3 - 7**

Weighting: **5%**

In groups, students will present their analysis and response to set readings and lectures for a particular week (to be signed up for in the first class). The emphasis of the task is a brief presentation (about 10 minutes per student) raising issues and questions regarding the week's topic, lecture and readings. Students will then lead a workshop discussion.

MAS 314 students will prepare for their presentation and discussion in groups but will be individually marked for this assignment. However, you must show that you have planned your presentation as a group.

This is not a simple reproduction of information explored in the readings and lectures. Aim to expand the discussion from the readings and lectures into relevant areas.

Your individual 1-2 page presentation notes /outline must be handed in to your tutor after your presentation.

If you are absent on a day you are due to give a presentation, you will forfeit your marks. Should you have a doctor's certificate, however, please consult your tutor about rescheduling your presentation.

### Assessment Criteria:

Clarity of expression

Capacity to articulate the key ideas of the text and expand discussion

Demonstrated relevant research

Engage in the process of learning

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive

stages and responding to critical feedback.

- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Concept Art and Writing Folio

Due: **11th December (Week 5)**

Weighting: **20%**

Conceptualise and write material with the development of a 12-15 minute film in mind.

This assessment focuses on the writing process. Writers rarely begin with a fully-fledged concept, rather they develop their ideas concretely through writing scenes, taking photographs, drawing, developing CGI, and creating characters.

For this assessment you must combine at least two of the following and submit in the form of an 8-page folio:

- a) Write two scenes (2-5 pages)
- b) Take a series of photographs. These may be of locations, or of a journey through the city or suburbia, or at a workplace (1-3 pages)
- c) Create illustrations by hand or using CGI (1-3 pages)
- d) Write a series of character descriptions (1-2 pages)

This assignment will be discussed further in MAS314 workshops.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Ability to identify relevant/innovative screen ideas

Capacity to draft and revise a screenplay through successive stages and respond to critical feedback

Ability to identify and communicate screen ideas clearly and succinctly in a written document

Engage in the process of learning

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Treatment & Analysis

Due: **8th January (Week 8)**

Weighting: **30%**

### Story Treatment and Research

This assessment consists of two parts - creative output and research. As screenwriters we are always combining the two. We are influenced by others yet need to step back and reflect on their methods in order to create our own.

Both the creative and research components must be completed.

### Screenplay Treatment

a) A treatment can take many different forms, according to contemporary practices and scholarship in screenplay studies. A chronological unfolding of the story is only one of the most traditional modes. Other modes will be discussed in class, and will be discovered in our readings.

It is to use 12 point Courier Font, single spacing and be no more than 3 pages.

### Feature Screenplay Analysis

View a feature film from any cinematic era that has departed from the traditional screenwriting model (improvisation, no written script, other unusual approaches to narrative etc).

a) Provide a 75 word synopsis of the film.

b) Using any information you can about the script – excerpts online, interview with writer, press kit, production notes etc. - detail how the film departed from the traditional screenwriting model and reflect on the strength and weaknesses of the employed process on the final film (750 words)

c) Select a 1-2 page scene from any produced screenplay that you regard as compelling writing. The excerpt should include 'big print' and dialogue or narration. Briefly discuss its strengths. (300 words)

References must be provided for this assessment.

This assignment will be discussed further in MAS314 workshops.

## Assessment Criteria

### Screenplay Treatment

Capacity to draft and revise a screenplay through successive stages and respond to critical feedback

Ability to identify and communicate screen ideas clearly and succinctly in a written document

Engage in the process of learning

### Feature Screenplay Analysis

Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production

Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Screenplay Draft

Due: **12th February (Week 13)**

Weighting: **35%**

### **12-15 minute First Draft Short Film Screenplay**

Your final assessment is a culmination of all the work throughout the semester. Your "first draft" should be the result of a well thought through idea that has been continuously revised, rewritten and reimagined.

Please provide:

- a) 50 word Synopsis of your idea
- b) 300 word account of how you have responded to feedback from your treatment and the process you have used to toward writing your first draft
- c) A 12-15 minute First Draft of your Short Film Screenplay.

Screenplays are expected to be formatted according to the Australian film industry conventions. Material will be provided on iLearn.

However, thought-through departures from standard formatting are acceptable. Options include a Scriptment or Image/Text Assemblage. Please consult with your lecturer before submitting a non-traditional screenplay format.

This assignment will be discussed further in MAS314 Workshops.

### **Assessment Criteria**

Ability to effectively translate screen idea/s to a first draft screenplay stage.

Demonstrated capacity to respond to feedback and develop screenplay, as evidenced by 150 word account.

Appropriate formatting and writing fluency/competency.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Workshop Participation

Due: **Throughout Semester**

Weighting: **10%**

Students are expected to attend workshops regularly and actively contribute to discussions of readings, screenwriting exercises and readings of other students' work.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
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## Delivery and Resources

**Required and recommended texts and/or materials:** The MAS 314 Unit Reader is required for this unit. This is available for purchase from the MQC reception.

Key texts referred to in this course are Kathryn Millard (2014) *Screenwriting in a Digital Era*; Linda Aronson (2010) *The 21st Century Screenplay*; Dancyger and Rush (2007) *Alternative Scriptwriting: Successfully Breaking the Rules*; J.J Murphy (2007) *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*; and Linda J. Cowgill (2005) *Writing short films: structure and content for screenwriters*; Paul Well (2007) *Basic Animation 01: Scriptwriting*.

**This site at the BBC has some great resources for beginning writers:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/write-a-script/writing-film>

Additional information relating to the Unit will be available on iLearn.

**Attendance at Workshops :** You must attend 9 out of 11 Workshops to pass MAS 314. Any absence from a workshop must be supported by documentation such a medical certificate and should be discussed with your tutor.

**Extensions for Assignments:** These are only granted on grounds of illness or misadventure, and appropriate supporting documentation (along with an extension form signed by a staff

member) must be submitted. If you are having problems, please speak to your tutor as early as possible. Late delivery of assignments without agreement of the lecturer will incur a penalty and may result in automatic failure.

**Special Consideration Policy:** [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html)

**Applying for Special Consideration:** Students applying for Special Consideration circumstances of three (3) consecutive days duration, within a study period, and/or prevent completion of a formal examination must submit an on-line application with the Faculty of Arts. For an application to be valid, it must include a completed Application for Special Consideration form and all supporting documentation. The online Special Consideration application is found at: <https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/forms/display/disruptions>

**Technologies used:** Online units can be accessed at: <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au/>. PC and Internet access are required. Basic computer skills (e.g., internet browsing) and skills in word processing are a requirement.

**Hard Copy Submissions:** Written work must be submitted through the Arts Student Centre (via the appropriate assignment box) on Level 1, W6A. Students must print and attach a completed coversheet to all submitted work. A personalised assignment coversheet is generated from the student section of the Faculty of Arts website at: [http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current\\_students/undergraduate/admin\\_central/coversheet](http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current_students/undergraduate/admin_central/coversheet).

Please provide your student details and click the *Get my assignment coversheet* button to generate your personalised assignment cover sheet. No other coversheets will be provided by the Faculty.

**Return of marked work:** During semester, marked work will be returned to students in workshops. Residuals will be available for collection from the Arts Student Centre (W6A Foyer).

**Examinations:** There is no exam for MAS 314.

## Unit Schedule

### Week 1

Introduction to Screenwriting

Introduction to Workshops

### Week 2

Generating Screen Ideas

Workshops

### Week 3

Short Film Structure: A Viewpoint

Workshops



**Week 4**

Short Film Structure: World Views

Workshops

**Week 5**

Screenwriting Practices : Compose & Improvise

Workshops

**Week 6**

Traditional Story Structure

Workshops

**Week 7**

Alternative Story Structure

Workshops

HOLIDAY BREAK

**Week 8**

Treatment and Research Week

Workshops

**Week 9**

Writing Speech and Inner Speech

Workshops

**Week 10**

Writing Animation

Workshops

**Week 11**

No Lecture. Individual consultations with lecturer

Workshops

**Week 12**

No Lecture. Individual consultations with lecturer

Workshops

**Week 13**

No Lecture. Individual consultations with lecturer

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Hard Copy Submission

Written work must be submitted through the Arts Student Centre (via the appropriate assignment box) on Level 1, W6A. Students must print and attach the appropriate coversheet - available through the student section of the Faculty of Arts website.

## Late Submission

A late penalty of 5% per day will be applied.

## Extensions

Extensions may only be granted by Unit Convenor in line with University policy.

## Additional information

MMCCS website [https://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/faculties\\_and\\_departments/faculty\\_of\\_arts/department\\_of\\_media\\_music\\_communication\\_and\\_cultural\\_studies/](https://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/department_of_media_music_communication_and_cultural_studies/)

MMCCS Session Re-mark Application <http://www.mq.edu.au/pubstatic/public/download/?id=167914>

Information is correct at the time of publication

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

### Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## Graduate Capabilities

### Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

#### Learning outcomes

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.

- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.

## **Assessment tasks**

- Concept Art and Writing Folio
- Treatment & Analysis
- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## **Commitment to Continuous Learning**

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Engage in the process of learning

## **Assessment tasks**

- Treatment & Analysis
- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## **Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills**

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Assessment tasks

- Critical Readings
- Concept Art and Writing Folio
- Treatment & Analysis
- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

## Assessment tasks

- Critical Readings
- Treatment & Analysis

- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.

### Assessment tasks

- Critical Readings
- Concept Art and Writing Folio
- Treatment & Analysis
- Workshop Participation

## Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

### Assessment tasks

- Concept Art and Writing Folio

- Treatment & Analysis
- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Identify and refine screen ideas by drafting and revising a screenplay through successive stages and responding to critical feedback.
- Critically analyse the nature of the screenplay in screen production.
- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of work-in-progress.
- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.
- Engage in the process of learning

### Assessment tasks

- Critical Readings
- Concept Art and Writing Folio
- Screenplay Draft
- Workshop Participation

## Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Evaluate texts that conceptualise script ideas through contributing to script readings of

work-in-progress.

- Apply discipline-specific knowledge by planning, carrying out and documenting field research tasks to a deadline.

## **Assessment task**

- Workshop Participation

## **Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible**

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Assessment task**

- Workshop Participation