MECO851
Screenwriting
S1 Day 2016

Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies

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### General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff  
Convenor/Lecturer  
Kathryn Millard  
kathryn.millard@mq.edu.au  
Contact via kathryn.millard@mq.edu.au  
Y3A 157  
Monday 2.00-3.30

Credit points  
4

Prerequisites  
Admission to MCrMedia or MCrInd

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description  
This unit deals with writing for screen media including film, television and mobile devices. It explores techniques for generating and developing ideas for drama, documentary, video essays and hybrid forms. Over the course of the unit, students will be guided through the process of writing and editing their own scripts. There will be opportunities to work both individually and collaboratively. Together, students will explore the purpose and role of screen storytelling around the globe. The unit is best suited to those interested in screenwriting, screen production, script editing and creative process.

### Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at [http://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/enrolmentguide/academicdates/](http://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/enrolmentguide/academicdates/)

### Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
2. Synthesise and build visual storytelling skills through the development of a Screen Idea Dossier.
3. Critically analyse selected screenplays
4. Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.

5. Engage in the process of learning

**General Assessment Information**

**Unit Requirements and Expectations**

Students attend and participate in a **three-hour seminar each week from Weeks 1-6 and 7-8 of Semester 1. Classes begin in Week 1.** You are required to attend all seminars. As participation in the process of learning is linked to and underpins the unit Learning Outcomes, you will need to either apply for Disruptions to Studies to cover any missed seminars (if the disruption is greater than three days) or supply appropriate documentation to your unit convenor for any missed tutorial (if less than three consecutive days).

Students are expected to read and view materials posted by the Lecturer at the iLearn page for this course.

Assessment tasks are aligned to the unit Learning Outcomes. Timely submission of assessment tasks is a unit requirement or penalties apply. 10% per day (including weekends) will be deducted for all late submissions unless Disruption to Studies (including a request for an extension) is approved.

There is no examination for this unit.

**Submitting Assignments**

Assignments should be submitted via the link at the Course's iLearn page.

They will be returned to students in class.

**Assessment Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screen Idea Dossier</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24th March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Essay or Audio Podcast</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26th April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Script and Scene Sketches</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12th May 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Throughout Semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Screen Idea Dossier**

Due: **24th March 2016**

Weighting: **30%**
This dossier is a record of work-in-progress for your proposed script for a short film, web episode, documentary, hybrid work (10-12 minutes, a maximum of 3 locations). The dossier should contain:

**Research materials:** A brief 2 page account of the research you have undertaken. It could include reading, viewing, listening. Include 4-6 images of a proposed key location/setting and an account of its role in your story/idea.

**Script materials:** A 150 word outline for your video idea and a 2 page treatment. Visual scripts offer an alternative for students who have advanced skills in drawing, graphics etc. Examples will be discussed in seminars.

**Assessment criteria**

- the suitability of idea as the basis for an engaging and innovative short film, web episode, documentary
- evidence of research undertaken in more than one mode (eg. listening, viewing, reading)
- demonstrated understanding of modes of writing used for an outline and treatment
- clarity of written expression and presentation

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
- Synthesise and build visual storytelling skills through the development of a Screen Idea Dossier.
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**Video Essay or Audio Podcast**

**Due:** 26th April 2016

**Weighting:** 30%

1. A short video or podcast response (8-10 minutes) to a produced screenplay that particularly resonates for you. Alternatively, you may discuss an aspect of screenwriting that especially interests you. Ensure that you have researched your topic, read the screenplay and viewed the film carefully before scripting your own response. Ensure that you discuss at least one scene in more depth. You may choose to speak to camera or use voiceover. You may choose to shoot/record this on your smartphone – or to use MQ cameras and editing facilities available. The assignment will be discussed in seminars and production advice/support is available. You will be asked to present and discuss your work on Thursday 28th April.
Assessment Criteria

- evidence of in-depth research
- clarity of written/spoken expression on video/podcast
- contribution to debates and discussion about the practices of contemporary screenwriting

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
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- Engage in the process of learning

Script and Scene Sketches

Due: 12th May 2016
Weighting: 30%

First Draft Script

Students will prepare a First Draft Script developed from the materials in your Screen Idea Dossier. A Visual Script may offer an alternative – depending on your subject and preferred method of working. (If so, please discuss your plans in advance with the Convenor). Consider how you might draw on the insights on screenwriting practices developed in your Podcast/Video in your own screenplay. It should be noted that a First Draft Screenplay is not your first attempt at 'writing up' an idea but shows evidence of substantial consideration and revisions.

Examples of screenplays will be discussed throughout the course and a guide to layout provided on the course's iLearn page.

Assessment criteria

- the degree to which the screen idea has developed from Assignment 1
- the suitability of the script as the basis of an engaging and innovative short video, web episode, documentary
- clarity of expression and use of imagery, dialogue, narration suited to screen media
- suitability of work to be realised via images and sound

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:
• Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
• Synthesise and build visual storytelling skills through the development of a Screen Idea Dossier.
• Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.
• Engage in the process of learning

Participation
Due: Throughout Semester
Weighting: 10%

Engage in the process of learning by actively participating in all seminars via preparation and contribution to discussion.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:
• Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
• Critically analyse selected screenplays
• Engage in the process of learning

Delivery and Resources
E-Readings
MAS 202 e-readings for this course will be available via the Library. The e-readings contain information necessary to completing assignments for this course.

Please read the Week 1 readings before our first seminar. A full list of ratings will be available via iLearn in Week 1.

Links and Videos
Key links and videos relevant to seminar tasks and assignments will be available through the MAS 202 iLearn page each week.

Technologies/resources required.
Students will be required to use their own computers for development of treatments, storyboards and scripts. It is recommended that MAS 202 students become familiar with Celtx (free script software). Microsoft Word can also be used for scriptwriting.
Unit Schedule

Week 1: *Introduction. Generating Screen Ideas.*

**Readings:**
- Cherry Potter (1990) 'Image, Sound and Story: The Art of Telling in Film' pp. 200-214
- Paul Wells (2007) 'Ideas and Starting Points' in *Scriptwriting* (Basics Animation') pp. 40-59
- BBC Writers' Room Scriptwriting Essentials
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/writers-lab/scriptwriting-essentials](http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/writers-lab/scriptwriting-essentials)

Week 2: *Story Structures: Journeys, People and Encounters.*

Week 3: *Writing the Real.*

Week 4: *Approaches to Character.*

Week 5: *Voice and Dialogue.*

Week 6: *Building Scenes.*

Week 7: *Table Readings of Scripts.*

Week 8: *The Art of Collaboration.*

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:


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/

## Results

Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

## Additional information


## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](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 Enquiry Service

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

## Equity 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.

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).
Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
• Critically analyse selected screenplays
• Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.
• Engage in the process of learning

Assessment tasks

• Screen Idea Dossier
• Video Essay or Audio Podcast
• Script and Scene Sketches
• Participation

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Synthesise and build visual storytelling skills through the development of a Screen Idea Dossier.
• Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.
• Engage in the process of learning
Assessment tasks

• Screen Idea Dossier
• Video Essay or Audio Podcast
• Script and Scene Sketches
• Participation

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

• Critically analyse selected screenplays

Assessment tasks

• Video Essay or Audio Podcast
• Participation

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Demonstrate an understanding of the practices and aesthetics of developing screenplays from generating ideas to production-ready.
• Synthesise and build visual storytelling skills through the development of a Screen Idea Dossier.
• Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.
• Engage in the process of learning

Assessment tasks

• Screen Idea Dossier
PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**
- Critically analyse selected screenplays
- Engage in the process of learning

**Assessment tasks**
- Screen Idea Dossier
- Video Essay or Audio Podcast
- Script and Scene Sketches
- Participation

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcome**
- Develop further skills in creative media projects by taking an idea through several key stages and working with text and images.

**Assessment tasks**
- Screen Idea Dossier
- Video Essay or Audio Podcast
- Script and Scene Sketches
Changes from Previous Offering

MECO 851 is offered for the first time in Semester 1, 2016. Student suggestions on special areas of interest are most welcome. Please email the Convenor.