

Tcom 2682, Scriptwriting For Electronic Media
CRN 41588; Fall 2014
9-10AM, MWF; Bliss #2019

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Bliss #2010;
941-1855 (YSU); 792-5557 (HOME)

Required: Orlik, Peter B. Broadcast/Broadband Copywriting. 8th. Allyn & Bacon, 2010. YSU email account. Reliable access to MS Word. Good university-level dictionary. Ample supply of standard manila file folders (2 dozen). Good handbook of English, such as *Harbrace College English Handbook*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 some 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 radio commercial campaign
- * developed and written a video training program
- * written two 5-minute news scripts appropriate for Radio and TV
- * developed and written a story script with supporting Radio/TV promos

Grading:

Adjusted straight-scale, where A=90-100%, B=80-89%, etc. But letters, not percentages, will be used to compile final grades. **Scripts containing significant**

¹ <http://www.metropulse.com/news/2011/jun/15/how-harbrace-handbook-english-changed-way-american/>

faults in grammar, spelling or usage will be considered fatally flawed. Text 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: significant absence will adversely affect grades.

Assignments:

You will turn in a writing assignment each Monday and each Thursday before NOON. Most of these are "short form" of one minute or less. There may be some in-class short form assignments, and 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 deposited in my open mailbox.
2. The **electronic** scripts must contain " Script Assignment #X " in the subject line, where X designates the specific script assignment from #1 to approximately #20.
3. All **printed** scripts must be submitted in a manila file folder. The folder must be clearly labeled (on the front, as demonstrated in class) with your name and the assignment name.
4. It's okay to recycle folders for a subsequent assignment by simply obliterating the previous assignment's name 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.**
4. I might find some scripts unacceptable for grading. 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 word "REPAIRED" written in large letters. Originals must always accompany repairs.
5. All scripts may be turned in, as final copy, near the end of the semester. The exact date will be announced. Such rewrites must be in their own manila folders labeled "Final Rewrite," and each must be accompanied by the original. Specifics will be discussed later.

There could be an English Usage Check and one or two short tests, depending on our progress. Normally, the English check has been a standardized "screen," used to verify that your knowledge and skill are sufficient for you to undertake this course. A 93%-83%-73%- etc. model is used to score the Usage Check *for informational purposes*, giving you insight to how you compare with other educated users of the language. 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, Or Robin Roberts, Savannah Guthrie, Natalie Morales, Lesley Stahl, and Lara

Logan. The tests will cover specific chapters of the Orlik book.

If you do not score well on the English Usage Check, you must do **two** things: (1) provide evidence of your attendance at a significant number of Writing Center workshops or sessions, **and** (2) score well on the end-of-term post-test. 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. The exam, if used, will cover the English Usage/Style rules and/or class lectures.

Every hard copy homework assignment must be correctly identified:

Your Last Name
Due Date
Assignment Identification

Use these three lines on the upper right corner of the manila folder (holding it as a book). On your W-P'ed assignment, use these three lines as the "DATA BLOCK" on the upper left corner of the first page, but your Last Name and page number ("p.2/4") on each subsequent page.

If you're not sure, put a box in the upper left corner of every page. Put enough information in it so anybody could immediately figure out what the document is. If it's not clear, it won't be read.

If the exercise is a **script**, be sure to label the script appropriately. For second, third (and so on) pages of scripts, do not repeat the identification. Simply put your name, the client's name, and the page number in the upper left corner.

Here's the rule of thumb for identification of your work: if it is unclear to the reader (your instructor), it will be rejected. This not only is a suitable university-level standard, but it also correlates with professional practices in the communication industries.

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.

First, here is the standard format for a “straight reader” radio commercial:

ANNCR: The Fuller Paint Company 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, disconnected. Well, 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 directory. The yellow pages, of course.⁸

Note that “ANNCR” is identified in the left column, which is narrow. Wrongly, this copy is not double spaced, and the Sound Effects Cue (“PHONE RINGS”) is contained within the copy.

Second, here 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.

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. 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 music 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

This third script contains a production note. You may use them, 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.)

¹Production Note: All talent should convey lines like actors in an early thirties movie.

ANNOR: 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.

²(Fading off) Let's try to find out why—

³(FADE IN: CREAKING TIMBERS, SPLASHING WAVES)

(Fading on) What? No, I'm no sailor. I'm Bill the Bookie from Davenport. ⁴(TIMBERS/WAVES OUT) Motion sick? Not

me. Not since that day (Fading off) back at George's Drug Store—

⁵(STORE SOUNDS UP QUICKLY AND GRADUALLY OUT)

GEORGE: Hey, Bill. ⁶(MUSIC: OFF-KEY WHISTLING OF 'CAMPTOWN RACES' FIRST FOUR BARS) Know this tune?

BILL: Give it some hay, George. Oh, that bumpy flight from Vegas. Like riding a swayback steer.

⁷(TWO MORE WHISTLED BARS OF 'CAMPTOWN RACES')

GEORGE: Then saddle up to this. It's Owen's Elixir.

BILL: Owen's what?

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

⁸(MUSIC: TRADITIONAL 'AT THE POST' TRUMPET CALL)

⁹(CROSSFADE TO SHIP SOUNDS UP AND UNDER)

BILL: From then on, it was Owen's for me. You can bet your calm stomach on it. It's Owen's Elixir to win, every time.

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. 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 homework folders correctly. Buy two dozen 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. Turn in copies, not originals (keep your files!)
5. You must have email service. I will use the emails created by Office 365.
6. Take a seat from which you can easily see the TV screen AND the white board.

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>. For information on the Microsoft Academic Select Student License Agreement call the YSU tech desk at 330-941-1595.

Deadlines: Assignments are to be completed and turned in by the class start time (NOON) on the scheduled due date. Assignments produced after this time will be considered late. All late assignments must be LABELED AS "LATE" ON THE FOLDER in order to be accepted for any review whatsoever. Late scripts will trigger an automatic penalty. To accept or not to accept a late assignment is at the instructor's discretion. For certain assignments in this class, you will be working as a member of a team. Penalties for late GROUP assignments will be applied to all individuals in the group.

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.

Attendance: Sign the attendance sheet daily. Noticeable absence will negatively affect your final grade (because it means you are not participating in the class). Some professors lower a final grade by 20 percent for each absence over three, a criterion which serves as a good guide.

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