

# CIN 304

## INTRO TO SCRIPT WRITING

### **Course Overview ( Spring 2026 )**

**Meeting Location:** Cornish Hall, RM 1310

**Meeting Time:** T-Th, 11:40am - 12:55pm

**Prerequisite:** COM 203

**Credit Hours:** 3 Academic Credits

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**Instructor:** Sam Avery

**Instructor Email:** [Samuel.Avery@cortland.edu](mailto:Samuel.Avery@cortland.edu)

**Office Location:** Van Hoesen Hall C117L

**Office Hours:** T-Th, 10:30am-11:30am + 1:00pm-2:30pm

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**Course Description:**

CIN 304 - Intro to Script Writing explores the use of traditional three-act narrative structure and alternative narrative structures in the feature-length screenplay through analysis of screenplays and films. Major topics include organizational strategies, story and character development, and the writing process. Students develop and write a feature-length screenplay.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Create Meaningful Content – students will apply knowledge and skills of the communication process in the creation of meaningful content appropriate to their area of interest or concentration.

**Course Assignments + Grading:**

Students are required to complete **12 Lesson Modules** (see Course Schedule) focused on various screenwriting-related topics over the course of the semester. Lessons Modules can be accessed via the Course Portal ([www.profavery.online/cin304](http://www.profavery.online/cin304)) and will include lecture materials, readings, multimedia elements, and a lesson assessment and/or assignment. Final grades will be determined by how many total points students accumulate on the Lesson Modules throughout the semester. A breakdown of points for the various Lesson Modules can be found on the “Course Schedule”.

**Final Screenplay:**

As a requirement of CIN 304 - Intro to Script Writing, students are required to complete both a First and Second draft of a feature length screenplay (approx. 80-110 pages) by the end of the course. This is a monumental task and will require great discipline, persistence, and focus. Students enrolled in this course should plan to write 10+ pages per week.

**Late Work:**

Assignments submitted after the submission deadline will immediately receive a 2-point deduction from the received score and another 2-point deduction for every 24 hours that passes from the original due date. For example, if a student scores 18/20 on an assignment but it was submitted three days past the submission deadline, the student will receive 12/20 on that assignment due to tardiness.

**Extra Credit:**

Extra credit may be offered (or not) at the sole discretion of Professor Avery. Extra credit is not a guarantee and students should not factor it into their final grade calculations. If extra credit is offered, a student must first submit all outstanding work before attempting any extra credit as these opportunities are in addition to the assigned work, not a replacement.

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are required to attend all class meetings (in-person and/or virtual) and actively participate in class discussions and exercises. Students who arrive late to class will be noted - three late arrivals will count as a complete absence. Missing more than three weeks of class time will result in a failing grade.

**Recommended Readings (NOT REQUIRED):**

- [\*Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting\*](#) by Robert McKee
- [\*Dialogue: The Art of Verbal Action for Page, Stage, and Screen\*](#) by Robert McKee
- [\*Pixar Storytelling: Rules for EffectiveS storytelling based on Pixar’s Greatest Films\*](#) by Dean Movshovitz
- [\*Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting\*](#) by William Goldman
- [\*Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need\*](#) by Blake Snyder
- [\*Save the Cat! Goes to the Movies: The Screenwriter’s Guide to Every Story Ever Told\*](#) by Blake Snyder
- [\*Teach Yourself Writing a Novel\*](#) by Nigel Watts
- [\*Screenplay: Good Will Hunting\*](#) by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck
- [\*Pride of Baghdad\*](#) by Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon

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## **Course Guidelines and College Statements:**

### **Academic Integrity:**

All students are expected to uphold academic integrity standards. Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas of others and using them as one's own without due credit. Students who cheat in examinations, course assignments, or plagiarize in this course may be disciplined in accordance with university rules and regulations. (College Handbook, Chapter 340)

### **Disability Notice:**

As part of SUNY Cortland's commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, we strive to provide students with equal access to all courses. If you believe you will require accommodations in this course, please place a request with the Disability Resources Office at [disability.resources@cortland.edu](mailto:disability.resources@cortland.edu) or call 607-753-2967. Please note that accommodations are generally not provided retroactively so timely contact with the Disability Resources Office is important. All students should consider meeting with their course instructor who may be helpful in other ways. (College Handbook, Chapter 745)

### **Diversity Notice:**

SUNY Cortland is dedicated to the premise that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We define diversity broadly to include all aspects of human difference. The College is committed to inclusion, equity, and access and thus committed to creating and sustaining a climate that is equitable, respectful and free from prejudice for students, faculty and staff. We value diversity in the learning environment and know that it enhances our ability to inspire students to learn, lead and serve in a changing world. We are committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive campus through the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. As a community, we hold important the democracy of ideas, tempered by a commitment to free speech and the standards of inquiry and debate. To this end, we are dedicated to developing and sustaining a learning environment where it is safe to explore our differences and celebrate the richness inherent in our pluralistic society. (College Handbook, Chapter 130)

### **Inclusive Learning Environment:**

SUNY Cortland is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. The course instructor honors this commitment and respects and values differences. All students enrolled in this course are expected to be considerate of others, promote a collaborative and supportive educational environment, and demonstrate respect for individuals with regard to ability or disability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other aspects of identity. In an environment that fosters inclusion, students have the opportunity to bring their various identities into conversation as they find helpful, but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity. If you have any questions or concerns about this statement, contact the Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at 607-753-2263. (IEIO <http://www2.cortland.edu/about/diversity/>)

### **Title IX Statement:**

Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit [cortland.edu/titleix](http://cortland.edu/titleix) to learn about all reporting options and resources. (Updated by SUNY Legal Feb. 1, 2018). (Title IX <http://www2.cortland.edu/titleix>)