



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Creative Writing

Faculty of Arts

## Course Syllabus: Writing the Romantic Comedy: The Script

### Week by Week Breakdown

Every week, students will watch instructor video lectures, talks and interviews with screenwriters, executives, and others. From there, assignments will explore the move from knowing the story you want to tell, to actually doing the work to get it into script form. Regular group discussion topics will help you get where you're going. While the class will roll out a new module each week, you're welcome to work at your own pace and write as much as you can in between them. You will have access to this course indefinitely after it ends, but we won't be monitoring it or answering questions after the last module is complete.

Note: this course is not a writing workshop and we will not be giving feedback on your work in process. It's a craft-based experience, designed to get you writing and provide you with writing and rewriting tools that will serve you long after the class is over. Zac will be available during the course for a student Q&A session, recorded as a lively podcast.

### Module 1: Formatting Your Script

We'll start this module with a look at scriptwriting software and how we construct the scenes necessary to tell the story. Video lectures and writing exercises will help you narrow down the idea you've come to class with, and how to improve specific parts. We'll also screen one of the earliest examples of a rom-com with 1934's *It Happened One Night*. The aim for the first week is to look deeply into the structure and characters and world you've built and prepare you to get in there.

### Module 2: Telling a Visual Story

In this module, we'll take a look at verbs. When we think visual writing, we often think adjectives, but scripts are active things, happening in the present moment. A lecture and a series of exercises on the way we watch movies (or imagine them, as the case may be). From there, we'll screen 1971's *Harold and Maude*. We'll also get started on putting down some landmarks in your script by writing (out of order) your four most important scenes.

### Module 3: Dialogue

We begin this week by asking ourselves to imagine the way our characters sound, and how they talk about themselves, creating interesting and refreshing characters and consider how to add them to the world you're building. We'll discuss the most effective ways to create a character arc in dialogue, which, ironically is to use less. We'll take a look at a highly stylized version of dialogue, from 2009's *Down With Love*. We'll even hear from the Academy Award-winning producer of that rom-com, Dan Jinks. From there, we'll move into the most important part.

#### **Module 4: The Zero-Draft**

The most important thing we'll do - get to the end of your script. Really. This module focuses on how hard but how necessary it is to do. This module will take the longest of any because it will ask you to get to the end in the sloppiest, most slapped-together way you know how. We'll review the three-act and nine-act story structure and the concepts of want/desire/need, we'll take a look at *The Thing About Harry*, a queer rom-com written in 9-Act Structure, with an interview from Co-Writer and Director Peter Paige.

#### **Module 5: The Art of the Rewrite**

Now that you have a zero-draft, we'll talk about the methods that various writers use to rewrite it. We'll use all of the skills we've adopted throughout the lectures to take a look back at the script we've written and analyze it for ways to fix our drafts. From there, we'll look at a few ways that the "rules" of character structure can be bent to help the overall structure of the story. We'll finish the class with a deep dive on *Crazy Rich Asians* and hear a solid pep talk from industry professionals.