Overview:
Your primary project for the semester is the creation of an original concept script. You will choose from one of the following tracks and work to develop a thorough treatment and 30-pages of script (using Celtx or Final Draft) incorporating the topics we will discuss in class. You must create an original concept and should not re-purpose ideas used in previous courses. You should expect to submit your final product to the BEA script competition at the end of the semester. More details will be provided at that time.

Tracks:
You can choose to write one of the following. You will tell me your selection in Milestone #1.
- Feature Film: Full Treatment and 30 pages of script
- TV Pilot (half-hour or hour): Full Treatment and 30 pages of script
- 10-minute Shorts (Webisode, Mobisode, etc...): 3 Treatments and 10-page scripts.

Milestones (See syllabus for due dates):
Milestone #1: Track selection and preliminary concept due
Milestone #2: Treatments and Journal due
Milestone #3: First 10 pages
Milestone #4: Second 10 Pages
Milestone #5: Final First Draft Script, 30 pages
Milestone #6 Self-Evaluation

SUBMIT/UPLOAD ALL DOCUMENTS AS PDF’S!

Grading:
Milestone #1: 5%
Milestone #2: 45% (this is also 25% of your final class grade)
Milestone #3: 15%
Milestone #4: 15%
Milestone #5: 15%
Milestone #6: 5%
Milestone Details:

Milestone 1:

Submit a document that tells me:
1. What track you have chosen (film, tv, short, etc...)
2. A basic overview of your story. What’s it about? Who are the main characters? Where is it set? When does it take place? What’s the genre? Etc...
3. How did you come up with the idea? Is it inspired by someone you know? An event?
4. Any other details you can provide or anything else you want to tell me.

Note: You will not be held to any of this information (other than the track selection). Through the development of your script, many of these items will change, but it’s important to have a starting point and that is the purpose of this document.

Review the Guiding Questions at the end of this document. These questions are meant to help you throughout the development process and to evaluate your scripts at the end of the semester.

Milestone 2:

This is the most important stage of this project. You must develop all of your ideas before your try to put them into script format. You have approx. 6 weeks to develop your original concept. We will work together in groups, 1-on-1, inside and outside of class.

Your Treatment (most likely about 8-10 pages long per 30 minutes) will include:

1. A Title
2. A Logline
3. Identification of Acts
4. A scene by scene description of the action
5. Identification of key elements including the catalyst(s), turning points, etc...

We will discuss/review this further in class. You should also submit a Journal.

Your Journal is a “show bible” or master document where you keep all of your notes. This includes:

1. Information on characters, backstories, themes, future development plans, etc... Basically, I want to see all of your development notes and brainstorming that has helped you create your Treatment and will act as a source of reference for future development.

Submit both the Treatment and Journal as one PDF document.
Milestone 3:
You will write-out the first 10 pages of script in Celtx or Final Draft. Make sure to include a title page.

Milestone 4:
Submit the revised version of your first 10 pages and pages 11-20.

Milestone 5:
Submit the revised version of your first 20 pages and the final 10 pages of your script along with a properly formatted cover page.

Milestone 6:
I want you to spend some time reflecting on the writing process and your final script. Ask yourself what you did, why you did it, and what elements of the script you can improve in future versions? Use the list of Guiding Questions to evaluate your script and help identify areas that can be improved.

In approx. 3 double spaced pages, address each section below (in varying degrees of details as you see fit). Tell me how you got started, tell me about the structure of your script (3 acts, turning points, etc...), tell me about the characters (their motivations, backstories, development), tell me about the scenes, dialogue and anything else you want to discuss. I am not requiring you to write on any specific aspects. Instead, you can choose what you want to tell me. I want you to think about each element of screenwriting we have explored this semester and apply them to your script. Were there things you did well? Areas you identify needing improvement? Why did you make the decisions you did?

This paper can be informal or conversational in tone (spelling, grammar and organization still count).
Guiding Questions:  

Questions to ask yourself about your script:

Getting Started:
1. What's the one thing that makes me want to write this story?
2. What research is necessary for me to tell this story?
3. Have I thought about all of the elements of my script: story, theme, characters, images, dialogue?
4. Do I hear the voices of my characters? Are they beginning to talk to me so that when I start to write the dialogue, I'll have real characters talking? Have I incorporated specific syntax, word choices, or accents as part of these voices?
5. Have I taken enough time to explore the story and characters without rushing ahead to write the script?
6. Have I superimposed rules onto my story and characters, or have I tried to allow them to grow organically?
7. Am I focused on my passion, my art, on what I really want to say? Or am I being overly concerned about marketing the script, how commercial it is, how much money I am going to make, or how famous I will become?
8. Have I remembered to keep my eye on the process rather than trying to find fast results?

Structure:
1. Did I begin with an image?
2. Does that image give a sense of the story's style and feeling?
3. Do I have a clear catalyst to begin the story? Is it strong and dramatic, preferably expressed through action?
4. Is the central question clear? Does each turning point bring up the central question again?
5. Do I have a clear first turning point? Does it lead into the action of Act Two?
6. Is my second turning point clear? Does it setup the climax?
7. Is my climax a big finish? Is my resolution quick?

Subplot:
1. Do I need this subplot? Does it add to my story? Does it intersect the story? Does it dimensionalize the story?
2. How many subplots do I have? If I have more than three or four, are there any that I can cut in order to give more focus on the plotline and the “B” and “C” stories?
3. Do I have a clear structure for each subplot, with a clear setup, clear turning points, and a clear climax, particularly from the “B” and “C” stories?
4. Does the subplot resolution occur close to the climax of the plot?

5. Are some of my subplots small but without turning points? If so, do they still go through at least two acts? Do they have a sense of beginning-middle-end?

**Action Points:**
1. How are action points used? Is my story gaining momentum through action points, or does it use dialogue to push itself forward?
2. What kind of action points are used within my script? Obstacles? Complications? Reversals? Twists? Where do they occur and how often?
3. Does my script go off on tangents, or does it stay focused on its plot and subplot developments?

**POV:**
1. Have I chosen POVs that work for my story? Do they need to be expanded? Or limited?
2. Am I running into any problems because of my POV choices? Does that mean changing POV, or might it work to keep the current POV but simply find another way to deal with a particular challenge?
3. If I’ve used voice-overs, were they necessary? Could my story work just as well without that extra talk?
4. If I have omniscient POVs, have I created interesting transitions from one POV to another? Am I using these POVs to help the audience understand the broader story?

**Creating the Scene:**
1. Do all of my scenes have a reason for being in my story?
2. Do the majority of my scenes move my story forward toward its climax?
3. Have I structured most of my individual scenes so that they have a direction? A sense of going somewhere? A point to make?
4. Do I get out of my scene after I’ve made my point, rather than continuing to hang around with noting more to be said?
5. Have I remembered that scenes are about images? Have I remembered to play the image, to play the conflict, to play the emotions, rather than simply playing the information?
6. Will an audience be entertained by each individual scene in my script?

**Balancing Images and Dialogue:**
1. Look through your script and see how many scenes contain strong images. Are you creating too many scenes that take place in vague apartments or unexciting restaurants? What can you do to make these scenes and/or these places more cinematically interesting?
2. Do characters state or allude to your theme? Have you kept such statements short?
3. Do you have any cinematic metaphors? If not, what is your theme? Can you render your theme into any visuals?
4. Read your dialogue out loud. Do all of your characters sound the same? Start working through your characters’ dialogue and find ways to give them
unique voices. If necessary, do more research, listening to speech patterns, accents, and dialects of people who are somewhat like your characters.

Finding Your Character’s Spine:
1. Is my main character motivated by action or talk? Is there a clear moment when that character enters into the story? Why does my protagonist begin to act?
2. What is my main character’s goal? Is it sufficiently compelling to propel that character through three acts?
3. Is my main character active or passive in achieving that goal? Does the action meet the needs of the story? If it’s an action-adventure story, do I use strong dramatic actions? If it’s a relationship story, so I find subtle ways to employ action?
4. Can I clearly discuss my protagonist’s spine in a few words? Is it clear how this character’s spine intersects with the spine of the story?

Questions about Conflict:
2. How is the conflict expressed? Do I use images and action as well as dialogue to show conflict?
3. Have I created small conflicts among other characters to add extra “punch” to some scenes?
4. Does one overall conflict define my story’s issues? Does it relate both to my storyline and my protagonist’s spine?

Multidimensional and Transformational Characters
1. Have I gotten stuck in stereotypes? Have I defined certain characters through one dimension rather than creating multidimensional characters?
2. What is my protagonist’s transformational arc? Have I given my character enough time to change? Is the change credible?
3. What influences help my main character change? Do I have a catalytic character? Is there a love relationship? Does the story force change?
4. Will an audience clearly see via images and actions how the includes of the story and other characters created my protagonist’s transformation? Does this transformation express both my theme and my story?

Character Functions:
1. Can I identify the major functions of all my characters?
2. Who is my protagonist? Is my protagonist driving the action? Does my protagonist achieve his or her goal at the climax of the story? (Even if you are writing a TV show, you need to know these things in advance so you can build up to them).
Sample Assignment. University of Georgia. Professor Evan Kropp, Ph.D.

3. If I have several protagonists, do I have an equal partnership story or does one protagonist enjoy a bit more focus than the other?

4. Who is my antagonist? Who opposes my protagonist? If it’s several characters or situations, which is the major one? Is my antagonist moving through my script?

5. Do I have a confidant character? If so, are my confidant scenes overly talky, or have I found ways to reveal and show rather than tell?

6. Do I have several characters with the same function? If so, how can I combine or cut them?

7. Am I missing an important character function? Perhaps I need another catalyst figure?

8. Is my protagonist receiving help from the supporting characters or are they just hanging around? How do the supporting characters contribute to the story?

9. Is there humor? If so, does at least one character offer comic relief? How do I use humor? To release tension or lighten the material to increase audience enjoyment?

10. How many characters does my story focus on? Are there too few or too many? Will the audience get confused?