

APHRA BEHN: THE PODCAST

EN 334-001 • 12.00 – 12.50 CST • MWF • A/V Synchronous

ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE

This course responds to the 350th anniversary of the English poet, playwright, and translator Aphra Behn, one of the first women to make a living from writing. While many public resources, documentaries, and digital humanities projects point to the significance of Behn in the seventeenth-century literary landscape, rarely is more than a single episode or chapter devoted to her contributions. Working in production teams of three, this class seeks to remedy this by creating a series of eight podcast episodes specifically about Behn’s literary contributions.

Episode Requirements

- 10-15 min runtime
- 2000-word script
- 3 peer-reviewed sources quoted
- 1 or more Merit Badges included
 1. interview with an expert (literary scholar, historian, theatre maker, &c.)
 2. scene work with multiple voices
 3. original music
 4. other, pending editor approval

All of the assignments of this course comprise tasks necessary to research, prepare, compose, and record a podcast episode, the course’s “final.” While some class time will be dedicated to podcast development every Monday, this will not be enough to complete all the work needed for the final, so plan on out-of-class meeting sessions with peers. What follows are requirements and resources for each assignment leading up to this episode.

Deadlines

2/15 Production Team Agreement	3/29 Full Script + Title
2/22 Pitch	4/19 Show Notes
3/01 Beat Sheet	4/30 Episode Recording
3/17 Half Script	

READING NOTES

Deadline: 23 Apr, 11:55 PM CST
Grading: Individual, In/Complete

Compose a summary for four (4) of the opportunities provided during the term. A specific video, article, or other item will be provided. For each:

- 500 words or more, in paragraph format
- Identify and analyze the effectiveness of specific podcasting strategies used
- Summarize three types of “take-aways” from the content: facts, concepts, and the central argument

In order to pace your workload, ideally these should be submitted on the date indicated on the syllabus. Give the A/V format and the contingencies of the global pandemic, however, these may be turned in up until the last week of class meetings.

PRODUCTION TEAM AGREEMENT

Deadline: 15 Feb, 11:55 PM CST
Grading: Group, In/Complete

Working in groups can be both rewarding and challenging. Project and team contracts are increasingly the norm in the professional world, so clear ground rules, expectations, roles, and responsibilities in the form of a contract or project charter can help keep one another on track and accountable. A group contract is a document that a group creates to formalize the expectations of group members.

A group contract should contain the following:

- Group members' names and contact information.
- Expectations (ground rules) regarding preparation for and attendance at group meetings, frequency and duration of meetings, and communication. The contract should focus on behaviors that will be expected of all group members and should only include those behaviors that are crucial to the group's effectiveness. Groups could aim for five-seven ground rules.
- Assignment of specific tasks, roles, and responsibilities along with due dates. The group can itemize the tasks to be completed for the project and provide a space for each group member to sign up for that task.
- Outline of the specific process for dealing with unmet expectations or other problems that might arise.
- An agreed-upon method for peer feedback during the project so that problems can be addressed before the project ends.
- A place for each group member to sign, indicating their agreement to the contract.
- A place for group members to sign once the project is completed to indicate whether or not they agree that all group members contributed as expected and, therefore, earn the group grade.

Creating the contract

- [Working Effectively in Groups](#) [PDF] from the Waterloo Student Success Office

Group contract templates

- [Team Contract Template](#) from the Eberly Centre, Carnegie Mellon University
- [Team Charter](#) from the International Centre at Humber College (PDF)
- [Group Work Contract \(Activity\)](#) from Portland State University (DOC)

Group contracts samples

- [Sample Group Contract \[PDF\]](#) from the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Centre, UC Irvine
- [University of Waterloo Sample Group Contract](#) [DOC] (also available [here](#))

PITCH

Deadline: 22 Feb, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, In/Complete

Compose two or three paragraphs to the editor proposing your specific episode. Consider the following:

- What is your topic and why is it timely? Is there an upcoming event, anniversary, or occasion that lends exigency?
- How are you advancing the public conversation?
- What unique experience or expertise can you offer on this issue?
- What are some possible larger ramifications of considering this particular case from your vantage point? For whom?

Pro Tips

- “Beyond the 5Ws: What should you ask before starting a story?,” A. Macadam
- “[How to successfully pitch The New York Times \(or, well, anyone else\)](#),” T. Herrera
- “[How to Pitch a Magazine Template: A Twitter Thread](#),” J. Johnson
- “[How \(and Where!\) To Pitch Your Writing](#),” A. Friedman
- “[How to Pitch an Article](#),” G. Harris

Sample Pitches

[Redacted for confidentiality.]

BEAT SHEET

Deadline: 1 Mar, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, In/Complete

Compose a “beat sheet” or outline of your episode’s structure. A beat sheet is the precursor to a screenplay outline: it identifies the important moments in an episode or feature film, and lays out what needs to happen in each act of the story. The beat sheet identifies the key emotional moments in a story, while the outline expands on those moments with specific scenes, settings, and details. There are a variety of methods you can use to create a beat sheet:

- Divide a sheet of paper into three sections (representing the three acts of a feature screenplay) or five sections (representing the five acts of a television script).
- Use a whiteboard to diagram your story beats.
- Write each beat on an index card, then pin them to a cork board or arrange them on a table.

4 Types of Story Beats

Beats can refer to several different kinds of emotional moments or plot points. Examples of beats you might find in a screenplay include:

- **Events.** From graduation parties and proms, to battles and boxing matches, large social gatherings and events offer many opportunities for characters to express their views or desires, interact with secondary characters, and advance plot development both within the main story and outside of it.
- **Realizations.** Realizations are often small, subtle, and quiet moments that occur after some buildup. Perhaps a character witnesses a gesture or glance that reveals their best friend’s betrayal, or discovers that there’s a reason she keeps getting passed up for promotions. Realization beats help characters make decisions based on the information they have.
- **Resolutions.** Resolution beats tend to come early in the story, and stem from a character’s desire to change the status quo or conduct an experiment. *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* is a clear example of how a simple resolution made early on in the film impacts the entire plot: for her advice column, protagonist Andie Anderson (Kate Hudson) resolves to drive a man away within 10 days.
- **Interactions.** Throughout the course of his or her journey, a character meets allies and antagonists, characters who provide additional conflict and dimension to the story. Notable interactions (for instance a hero facing off with the villain in the final battle) are important beats that shape the plot. Conversations fall under this category as well: even seemingly minor dialogue, like a teenager and her father arguing over curfew, can shape the outcome of the story.

Resources

- [“The Beat Sheet: What It Is & Why You Need It,”](#) Film Daily
- [“Beats in Screen Writing,”](#) MasterClass
- [“Starting Your Podcast: A Guide for Students,”](#) NPR
- [“Sample,”](#) J. August
- [“Blank Beat Sheet Form,”](#) Story Fix

HALF SCRIPT

Deadline: 17 Mar, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, In/Complete

Compose a working draft of your script, using your beat sheet as a guide. No doubt things will change between the beat sheet and this draft (as well as the final script), and that’s how it is supposed to work. Your half draft should

total at least 1,000 words or more. Don't forget to consider the Merit Badge elements you plan to include, sounds, and other elements. When submitting, provide a rough outline of the remaining half of the script to be drafted.

Resources

- [“Sample Script,”](#) Podcasting at Mills
- [“Scripting Podcasts: 3 Tips for Writing Podcast Episodes,”](#) E. King
- [“Video: How To Write A Script for Your Podcast,”](#) Pod Pros

FULL SCRIPT + TITLE

Deadline: 29 Mar, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, Letter

Complete your working script, which should total at least 2,000 words or more, including any of the Merit Badge elements you plan to include, sounds, and other elements. If some of those are cut later, that is fine; this is merely the ideal blueprint from which to work.

SHOW NOTES

Deadline: 19 Apr, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, In/Complete

Compose show notes to be published alongside your episode. Read this excellent post, [“5 Easy Steps to Create Better Podcast Show Notes,”](#) on what to include and what you have to gain from these elements. It should at least include (but can certainly be expanded from):

- A list of main points of each episode in a simple bulleted format (like a reverse beat sheet)
- A list of resources mentioned (a.k.a. a Works Cited or References list) with links, including scholars, books, articles, movies, &c.
- A transcript of the dialogue of the show for accessibility

Examples

- [“Aphra Behn: Poetry and the Crisis of Stuart Monarchy,”](#) Stuarts Online
- [“Dr. Qwo-Li Driskill on Indigenous & Two-spirit Studies,”](#) Research in Action
- [“Writing About Plague in Shakespeare’s London,”](#) Shakespeare Unlimited

EPISODE RECORDING

Deadline: 30 Apr, 11:55 PM CST

Grading: Group, Letter

Return to the top for specific requirements expected of the final product. Once all the episodes are collected together, the editor will collate and release as a single-season podcast through the [Alabama Digital Humanities Center](#).