DEVELOPING THE STORY
Comedy Scriptwriting

CREATING A BEAT SHEET

- *Beat Sheet:* one page blueprint of the story's structure
- At a glance look
- Allows you to see fatal flaws
- What is a *beat*
  - Consists of action and reaction

STORY STRUCTURE

- Linear VS. Thread
  - Three sections to each story
  - *Aristotle's Politics & Poetics*
  - Story threads

STORY THREADS *VS.* SUBPLOTS *VS.* ENSEMBLE STORIES

- Story Threads
- Subplots
- Ensemble
  - Utilize thread structure

STORIES WITHOUT ENDINGS

- Introduction of subplot or story thread
- Serialized story lines / *Story Arcs*

CHARACTER ARCS

- Do sitcoms need them?
  - Yes and No

STORY TIPS

- Lead character should drive the story
- Conflict
- Character's weaknesses
- One story line per character
- Build as you go
- Time frame of story

COMEDY IMPACT

- Characters and events exaggerated
- Goals and strategies are often silly / outrageous
- Small stakes

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE *VS.* BROADCAST FORMAT

- Broadcast format
  - Cold open
  - First act
  - Cliffhanger before the break

CREATING CHARACTERS

- Three dimensions:
  - Physiology: sex, age, height, weight, posture, appearance, physical defects
  - Sociology: social class, occupation, education, family history, religion, race, politics, hobbies
  - Psychology: morals, ambitions, frustrations, temperament, attitude, complexes, and IQ

CHARACTER TYPES

- Supportive Parent
- Idiot Savant
- Idiot Idiot
- The Clown
- The Operator
- The Mentor

- The Confidant
- The irritant
- The Romantic Interest
- The Critic

VISITING CHARACTERS

- Not too fresh / exciting
- Opponents
- Avoid repetition

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

- Locations and sets

- Special effects

- Stunts

HOMEWORK

- Watch an episode of a sitcom of your choice

- Describe the 3 dimensions of the main character

- Identify the character types present in the episode

- Analyze the show format

- Type in Word Document (one page minimum; 5 paragraphs)

- Due: Thursday, October 1st, 2009