**COM507 assignment 1: Guidance**

*Creative plot summary and reflective commentary (1500 words)*

For this assignment, you should pick a famous figure from the present or from history who can serve as the protagonist of a tragedy. Then, to explore key terms from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, you should produce a 500-word plot summary. Accompany your plot summary with a reflective commentary (1000 words) setting out how your plot design responds to Aristotle’s ideas about tragedy.

To allow for creative license, there are no strict guidelines as to how you should present your plot summary. For example, you aren’t obliged to divide your summary into acts, though you may find that to be a useful way of organising events. A sample structure is provided below.

When identifying a ‘famous figure’, please choose an individual and events that haven’t already been dramatized into a play, film, novel, etc, and that haven’t been discussed in class. This will ensure that you don’t run the risk of plagiarising an existing plot structure. You can choose a tragic protagonist either from history or from the present day. You should carry out research to ensure that your plot is rich and convincing, with vivid details and convincing reference points where appropriate.

Tragic playwrights throughout history have, of course, also carried out research of this kind to shape their plots. Like those playwrights, you aren’t constrained by facts – feel free to embellish, invent details, change names, and leave out information as required to ensure the greatest dramatic impact! Your choices, and your treatment of the ‘facts’, are interesting in their own right; you should discuss them in the reflective commentary as appropriate.

Above all, this is an exercise in dramatic structure and organisation. By reading extensively in the critical material on tragedy (especially Aristotle, but also Poole, Hall, Hammond, Wallace, and others on the reading list) you’ll encounter a range of interesting ideas that can inform your plot summary and commentary. I’d strongly encourage you to engage with these studies, and cite them – along with relevant ideas from Aristotle – in your reflective commentary.

*A sample plot summary*

**Title of play**: *Georgie*

**Primary characters**:

Georgie: a social media influencer, married to a famous footballer

Kirsty: Georgie’s stylist

Emilie: Georgie’s publicist

James: a reporter for *The Sun*

Sarah: a famous wife of a footballer

A hotel cleaner

A hotel waiter

The Chorus: panellists from *Loose Women*

**Setting**: A luxury hotel in Manchester

**Act 1** [Restaurant]

On a TV above the bar, the panellists on *Loose Women* discuss the upcoming World Cup and the hierarchy of WAGs. Over a drink with her stylist Kirsty, Georgie describes her rise to fame and recalls her difficult childhood. Georgie wants a better life for her children. She aspires to be part of a footballing power couple and expand her media empire. She is jealous of Sarah, another footballer’s wife.

A waiter and hotel cleaner discuss their famous guest, and argue about whether she deserves her status.

**Act 2** [Conference room]

Georgie is in a meeting with her publicist, Emilie. She is amazed that Sarah is being praised in the press for her charitable work, as she feels she is driven only by self-interest. She tells Emilie that she has discovered from Sarah’s private Instagram account that she is unhappy in her high-profile marriage and has been seeing an actor. Emilie seizes on this information and suggests Georgie leak it to the tabloids to tarnish Sarah’s reputation before the World Cup. Georgie reluctantly agrees.

**Act 3** [Terrace]

Georgie and Emilie talk about Sarah’s affair to James, a *Sun* journalist. They discuss payment, and when the story will go live. Emilie and James agree that the story should be published online that evening, rather than waiting for the print news the next morning. They also embellish the details of the private Instagram post, to further damage Sarah’s reputation. Georgie is hesitant, but nonetheless agrees.

[Restaurant]

Georgie is amazed to encounter Sarah in the bar, where the TV is showing rolling news. Cornered, she agrees to have a drink. She realises that the story will soon be revealed, and Sarah will be horrified that her affair has come to light. In the bathroom she resolves to maintain her composure so as not to betray herself. To Georgie’s amazement, Sarah appears unfazed when the news breaks. Suspicious about previous leaks from her inner circle of WAGs, Sarah had set a trap to find out who was responsible, posting fake stories to her private Instagram account, which she had made available to Georgie alone. Georgie’s amazement turns to horror as Sarah reveals that Georgie has fallen into her trap. Smiling, Sarah leaves the bar after telling Georgie that tomorrow’s news will lead with the story of her leaking false information. Georgie, distraught that her reputation is ruined, leaves several messages on her publicist’s voicemail.

**Act 4** [Restaurant, next day]

As the waiter and cleaner prepare for the lunch service, they discuss that morning’s news. Sarah’s affair has turned out to be false; newspapers are reporting that the story was leaked by Georgie. They wonder where their famous guest is, as she normally comes down for coffee. On TV, the *Loose Women* panellists talk about a lack of solidarity between women. The discussion is interrupted by a breaking story that Georgie has been found dead in the hotel’s underground car park; she is suspected to have taken her own life.

*Some initial questions to guide a reflective commentary*

* What was the source material for the creative plot summary? Why did you choose it?
* Which of Aristotle’s ideas about tragedy were you trying to explore?
* Did you change any of the ‘facts’, and if so why?
* How did you decide what to keep in and what to leave out?
* What were the challenges of organising a series of events into a tragic plot?
* Discuss key elements of Aristotle’s account of tragedy (e.g. *hamartia, peripeteia, anagnorisis, mythos, ethos, dianoia*) and how you explored them in your own creative practice. Were Aristotle’s concepts helpful? Did you feel constrained by them in any way? Did you subvert or challenge them?
* Did you choose to include a chorus? Why?
* How were your creative decisions determined by what could feasibly be represented on stage?

*Bibliography*

You should accompany your reflective commentary with a properly formatted bibliography (follow the Harvard referencing style, as outlined by the Cite Them Right Online tool (there’s a [link on the Library site](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills/referencing-hub/referencing-guides-and-resources/)).

Make sure that you include the sources (e.g. websites) that you’ve used to research your chosen individuals and events. As well as Aristotle’s *Poetics,* you should also use the general material on the reading list to shape your creative engagement with tragic composition (e.g. Wallace, Hall, Poole etc.).