

WRITING ON ASSIGNMENT

DC 408 (801, 810)

Mondays 5:45pm-9:00pm

CS&TC 202

Instructor: Nathan DeWitt, MFA

Office Hours: Mondays: 3:30pm to 5:00pm, Wednesdays 3:30pm to 5:00pm, Thursdays 11:00am to 12:30pm. (I am in and out of my office frequently during office hours so please let me know if you will be stopping by).

Office: CDM 616 (Mondays), STDC 332 (Wednesday & Thursday).

ndewitt@cdm.depaul.edu

Prerequisites: DC 401.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Modeled after professional writing assignments, this advanced course challenges students to complete a feature length screenplay in ten weeks. Lectures and strict weekly page submission deadlines provide a practical framework on how to write quickly without sacrificing quality. Constructive analysis will be used in discussing produced scripts, weekly assignments and group workshops to reveal the writer's unique voice and perspective. It is imperative students possess a viable concept and outline before enrolling.

This course will, as closely as possible, resemble the real world environment of writing a feature length film script on assignment. Students will function in the role of "Writers" while the Professor functions in the role as "Producer." As such, STRICT ADHERENCE TO DEADLINES is expected. Students will cultivate the necessary time management skills to complete such an arduous task.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will conceive, pitch, outline and create a complete, original feature length Screenplay (90-120 pages).

REQUIREMENTS:

Actively participate in class discussions, read and critique your own and fellow students' work, complete all homework assignments and readings. **Strict adherence to deadlines is expected.** (If you miss an assignment or class, you better have a good reason. Attendance is MANDATORY. This is a lot of work to do in 10 weeks. DO NOT FALL BEHIND!

ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. **It's your work, you're responsible for its quality.** All Scenes and Scripts must be in proper Screenwriting format. (Use of screenwriting software such as Final Draft (if your parents will buy it for you) or Celtx (if you're on a budget) is HIGHLY recommended. (www.celtx.com)

All assignments should include your name and the date of the assignment.

A NOTE ABOUT EMAILS:

Sign them please. I have no way of knowing who EskimoPyrite@FartDartsRUs.org is unless he or she signs the email. I'm always happy to answer any questions you might have.

A NOTE ABOUT TALKING 'SMACK':

Writer's are competitive. I'm not going to sit here and pretend that we're all at the same skill level and will all get along famously. Nor am I going to pretend I don't know people are going to talk about each other's work, sometimes in derogatory terms. But I don't want to see it. I don't want to hear about it. And it's absolutely forbidden in my classroom. If you feel the need to badmouth someone's work, please do so in PRIVATE. Note: **THE INTERNET IS NOT PRIVATE!** You'd be surprised who stumbles across your Twitter, Facebook or Blog. So let's please be respectful and remember we're all in this to become better writers.

That said, this is a Workshop, not some wimpy-ass artist's studio. You know what happens in Workshops? People lose fingers. That's just how you learn. Be hard on your classmates' writing and respect them when they're hard on yours. We're all in here to get better and you can't do that without a little constructive criticism. But cruelty and rudeness will not be tolerated. ***Ideally, by the end of this course you'll be observant and analytical enough to never make a critique unless it's also accompanied by a suggested fix.***

LASTLY:

By and large, you may say anything in this class, except one phrase. "You didn't get what I was going for." This phrase is the hallmark of young, defensive artists across all media and it's usually the first phrase they utter upon hearing criticism and suffering the pangs of an injured ego. However, it is a nonsense expression, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the relationship between writer and reader. If your work is muddled, vague or otherwise ineffective it is not the reader's responsibility to 'get it,' it is your responsibility to improve your writing. In writing, onus of clarity is on the creator, not the beholder. If I didn't get what you were going for it is because you did not take me there.

When feedback comes, don't get defensive. Let your ego go, listen to what's being said, consider new approaches and PLEASE feel free to tell us what you were trying to do, we're here to help. Just don't blame the audience for your inability to communicate properly. **The first step to improving your writing is to take ownership of its shortcomings.**

TEXTBOOK:

Writing Movies for Fun and Profit by Robert Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon. Touchstone Publishing.
ISBN-10: 1439186766 , **ISBN-13:** 978-1439186763

SUGGESTED READING:

www.deadlinehollywood.com

Grading:

Class Participation (Attendance, attitude, Peer Feedback, Movie Paper, Written Progress Report): 20%
Pitch Document: 10%
Expanded Story Document: 20%
Final Script: 50%

*******WATCH MOVIES SIMILAR TO YOUR SCRIPT*******

The Schedule

Week 1

January 7:

Introduction, Pitches.

Homework: Read Chapters 23-34, Writing Movies for Fun and Profit. Brainstorm. READ ONLINE PITCHES AND LATE PITCHES (provided by Professor)- provide written feedback to the writers via email, CC-ing the Professor.

Week 2

January 14:

Potentially some time devoted to late pitches, Structure Lecture, Pitch Document Format Lesson

Homework: Prepare your Pitch Document as we learned in class, Read your peers' work.

Group 1 Pitch Documents Due: January 18 by Midnight. (I'm not your Fairy Godmother so Midnight is a guideline- as long as it's on ColWeb by the time I wake up Saturday morning so I can send them out to everyone, that's fine). EVERYONE read EVERYONE'S Pitch Document and be prepared to discuss at length on Monday night!

DC 408 Students: *Regardless of your status as an In-Class or Online student, you are REQUIRED to provide WRITTEN FEEDBACK for ALL work submitted. You are to provide written notes to every single student on every single piece of writing submitted. Be sure to CC the professor.*

Week 3

January 21:

Discussion of Group 1 Pitch Documents. THIS IS EXPECTED TO BE A LIVELY DISCUSSION INVOLVING EVERYONE.

Online Students: Write written notes and send them to the writers.

Homework: Prepare your Pitch Document. Read your peers' work.

Group 2 Pitch Documents Due: January 25 by Midnight. Same drill- you'll get an email from me Saturday morning with Group 2's Pitch Documents, read them and be prepared to discuss. Online Students, read and send written notes, CC-ing the Professor).

Week 4

January 28:

Discussion of Group 2 Pitch Documents.

Online Students: Write written notes and send them to the writers.

Homework: Brainstorm, start working on your Expanded Story Document (Treatment or Outline). Specific formatting is up to you, but this is expected to be a 12-15 page document telling the story of your movie).

Group 1 Expanded Story Document Due: February 7 by 8pm SHARP. You will then get an email from me with Group 1's ESDs. READ THEM ALL and be prepared to discuss on Monday Night, February 11.

Week 5

February 4: NO CLASS

REMINDER: Group 1 Expanded Story Documents are due February 7 and you are required to read them ALL for discussion on February 11. Online Students, read and provide notes via email, CC-ing the Professor.

Week 6

February 11:

Discuss Group 1's Expanded Story Documents.

Homework: Brainstorm. Group 1, rethink your story structure. Read Group 2's ESDs and be prepared to discuss.

Group 2 Expanded Story Documents Due: February 14 by 8pm SHARP. Read and be prepared to discuss on Monday, February 18. Online Students, read and provide notes via email, CC-ing the Professor.

DC 408 Students: Movie Paper. Discuss THREE films you watched similar to your idea. What did you learn from watching them? What was valuable about the experience? What was not valuable or what did the filmmakers do poorly? (3 pages).

Week 7

February 18:

Discuss Group 2's Expanded Story Documents.

Homework: GO TO SCRIPT! Your final is Due March 20 at 5pm SHARP.

Week 8

February 25: NO CLASS

Homework: Written Progress Report Due: Monday, February 25 by 9pm. Email the Professor to let him know how your script is coming. Any questions? Any problems? ***I MAY ASK TO SEE PAGES AT ANY POINT FROM HERE ON OUT!***

Week 9

March 4:

Story Problems, Meltdowns. This is a day for you. You can bring in things you're stuck on- scenes, moments, larger concerns- the class and Professor will help talk you through them.

Homework: Keep writing! Read Chapters 1-11 of Writing Movies for Fun and Profit.

Week 10

March 11:

Tying up loose ends, any story issues or questions, Industry Talk: How seriously have you considered Law School?

Homework: FINISH YOUR SCRIPT!

FINAL SCRIPT DUE: March 20, 2013.

SCHOOL POLICIES:

Online Instructor Evaluation

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what

responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over two weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online at <https://mycti.cti.depaul.edu/mycti>

Email

Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at [CampusConnect](#) is correct.

Academic Integrity Policy

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>

Plagiarism

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

Resources for Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted either the PLS Program (for LD, AD/HD) or The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370 Phone number: (773)325.1677 Fax: (773)325.3720 TTY: (773)325.7296