

DC 201 Syllabus - Winter 2013 - Brian Mellen

bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu

Office hours:

Tu and Th 11:15 to 12:45pm - **LPC Student Center Rm. 332**

Summary of Course:

Introduction to Screenwriting focuses on narrative storytelling and encourages students to find their unique voices. Emphasis is placed on telling the story in terms of action and characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Students will analyze feature films and animated shorts in depth and will provide a final short screenplay of their own which adheres to a traditional dramatic structure.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Write a screenplay for a short film
- Talk about characters, storyline, and dialogue in-depth
- Understand plot structure and its relation to conflict and rising action

** Syllabus is subject to change*

Textbooks and printed resources:

The Screenplay by Syd Field

The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri

Grading:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Morning Pages/Journal	10%
First Draft of Screenplay	10%
Assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Screenplay	30%

Grading Scale:

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82- 80, C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work

Student responsibilities:

Each student is responsible for their time management and for meeting the expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines in class. In the event of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for an assignment sheet detailing any homework. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus you are still responsible for completing the assignment on time.

Deadlines:

Late assignments will not be accepted for grading and written feedback will be given at the instructor's discretion. You will not be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

Attendance & Participation:

This course demands class participation - attendance is mandatory. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late, or leaving before class is dismissed will be considered absent. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences. After that, each successive absence will affect your Participation grade. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized.

Examinations:

Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism on assignments or cheating tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for class. There are no exceptions to the rule. If you are in doubt about the definitions of plagiarism, consult your student handbook.

Course Lectures/Reading Assignments:

Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The textbooks offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lecture presentations. The instructor will use both the classroom and the textbooks. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

Content Changes:

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

CLASS SCHEDULE

* *Syllabus schedule is subject to change*

Week One 01/08 and 01/10

Introduction to Course and Requirements, Screenwriting vs. Traditional Writing, What is a movie? Conflict

Readings: Field - Ch. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Egri - Ch. I, Ch. II (32-43)

Assignment #1 (Due at 02/12): Buy a notebook and start writing your morning pages. Write at least two pages a day, five days a week, from now until the midterm. These pages can be about anything. They don't have to be profound or particularly insightful for that matter. They don't even have to make sense - just write. I won't read what you write in the notebook (unless you want me to).

Assignment #2 (Due 01/15): Write about three different moments in your life or someone else's that could make a good starting point for a movie. Write about why you think each of these moments could make an interesting basis for a story in a movie. Devote at least a paragraph for each moment. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Two 01/15 and 01/16

What defines character?

Readings: Field - Ch. 6, 7, 8, 9, Egri - Ch. II (86-124)

Assignment #3 (Due 01/22): Create a character. Write a character biography for the protagonist of your story. Be as specific as you can - the more details the better. Also, keep in mind, nothing is chiseled in stone. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Three 01/22 and 01/24

Story Structure, Plot Points, Aristotelian Curve

Readings: Field - Ch. 10-12

Assignment #4 (Due 01/29): Outline a feature film hitting all the major beats and plot points. Record the time into the movie that the major beats occur (the 10's). Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Four 01/29 and 01/31

Premise, Treatments

Readings: Field - Ch. 13

Assignment #5 (Due 02/05): Write a step outline for your story. You will present your outline to the class next week. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Five 02/05 and 02/07

Presentations/Discussion of Step Outlines, Review for Midterm

Assignment #6 (Due 02/12): Write the opening scene or scenes to your movie. It must be at least two pages and no more than four. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Six 02/12 and 02/14

Midterm, Screenplay Format

Assignment #7 (Due 02/19): Begin writing your screenplay. The first five pages are due next week. Bring five copies to class next week. Upload to D2L as well as a Word .doc or .pdf. Points will be deducted if instructions are not followed.

Week Seven 02/19 and 02/21

Dialogue

FIRST FIVE PAGES OF SCREENPLAY DUE 02/19

Bring five copies.

Assignment #8 (Due 02/26): Continue writing the first draft. First ten pages due next week. Must be uploaded to D2L as Word .doc or .pdf. Hard copy not necessary.

Week Eight 02/26 and 02/28

Scenes

FIRST TEN PAGES DUE 02/26

Assignment #8 (Due 02/26): Finish writing the first draft. Upload to D2L as Word .doc or .pdf only. Hard copy not necessary.

Week Nine 03/05 and 03/07

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Meet one on one to discuss final screenplay.

Class Ten 03/12 and 03/14

REVISING/REWRITING

Final scripts due in ONE WEEK.

Getting through writer's block.

Review of format.

FINAL DRAFT OF SCREENPLAYS ARE DUE March 19, 2013 by 11:59pm.