
DC 408

Writing On Assignment

(Winter 2014)

CS&TO 924 at Loop Campus
(Thur 5:45 PM – 9:00PM)

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Overview

This course provides a framework for students to complete a feature length screenplay in ten weeks. Using techniques and deadlines modeled after professional writing assignments, students learn how to meet the expectations of studio executives and producers without sacrificing their unique voice. It is imperative students possess a viable concept and outline before enrolling.
PREREQUISITE: DC 501

The classroom will mirror how professional film development operates in the entertainment industry. The student will function as a “work for hire” writer and the Professor as the “Producer” and employer. Therefore strict adherence to deadlines is essential, and also learning the ability to take “Producer Notes” and apply them to the screenwriting process.

It is essential that students be actively involved in the development of their classmates’ projects. That means critiquing all pitches, reading and making detailed notes on both story treatments and drafts of their classmates’ scripts, and participating in all classroom discussions and workshops.

Course Goals

To write a screenplay in the ten weeks, focusing on the following key areas:

1. To pitch your screenplay idea in a concise and compelling manner.
2. To write a professional three-act treatment of your story idea.
3. To strengthen your story's characters, dialogue, and plotting.
4. To learn how to work on deadlines, and take “producer notes” on your script.

Course Objective

The objective by the end of the course is to have a completed screenplay written under a professional studio style work environment.

Class Schedule

NOTE: *This schedule is subject to change. Please consult class calendar and Professor emails for the most up to date schedule for student postings, readings, assignments, and all-due dates.*

Week 1: Introduction to course and each other. Students will discuss their writing project and goals for the class.

Class Discussion: We will review the key steps on how to pitch story ideas to producers.

Homework: Students will prepare a two to five minute pitch of their idea for the following class.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 1. Professor handouts.

Week 2: Students will pitch their story ideas to the Professor and class. We will critique and give suggestions on how to strengthen the students' pitches and technique.

Class Discussion: We will review formatting for feature film treatments.

Homework: Students will create a three to five page story treatment based upon their pitch and post on COL for their classmates to read.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 2,3,4. Professor handouts.

Weeks 3-4: We will begin workshopping the students' story treatments. The professor and students will discuss in detail their suggestions and notes for improving the concept.

Homework: Students will write 1st Act of script, and post on COL for classmates to read.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 5,6. Professor handouts.

Weeks 5-6: We will workshop 1st Acts of students' scripts.

Homework: Students will write 2nd Act of script, and post on COL for classmates to read.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 7,8,9. Professor handouts.

Weeks 7-9: We will workshop 2nd Acts of students' scripts.

Homework: Students will write 3rd Act of script, and post on COL for classmates to read.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 10,11,12. Professor handouts.

Weeks 9-10 We will workshop the 3d Acts of students' scripts.

Homework: Students will work on final changes for their screenplays.

Reading: Making A Good Script Great - Chapter 13. Professor handouts.

Week 11: FINALS. Students will discuss any further changes to their scripts, and post locked script for class.

Evaluation Writing Track

Original Feature Track

Pitch	5%
Outline/Synopsis	15%
1 st Act of Feature	20%
2 nd Act of Feature	30%
3 Rd Act of Feature	15%
Participation	15%

Course Policies

Attendance: Classroom attendance is MANDATORY. More than one “excused” absence (doctor’s note, Blackhawk game, etc.) will result in a lowering of grade per each absence.

Deadlines: Strict Adherence to deadlines is expected. A workshop cannot function if the writers miss their deadlines for posting material. Material posted late will result in a negative grade for the particular assignment.

Posting Material: All material must be posted in PDF format on the COL website for the course.

Other: Screenings, script readings, and handouts as assigned by the instructor TBD per class.

Textbooks

“Making A Good Script Great” 3rd Kindle Edition – Linda Segar.

Recommended Websites Reading

Deadline Hollywood

The Hollywood Reporter

Recommended Software

Final Draft

School policies:

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

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

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.

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM.

The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter

Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at

<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy

requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in [MyCDM](#).

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

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 the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677

Fax: (773)325.3720

TTY: (773)325.7296

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

Attitude: A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

Civil Discourse: DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be [Socially Responsible Leaders](#). It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Cell Phones/On Call: If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.