

DePaul University
School of Cinema and Interactive Media

DC 301 501/510: Advanced Screenwriting I

Winter, 2014

THUR 1:30-4:45 PM, 14 East Jackson room 802 and Online

Professor Brad Riddell: briddell@cim.depaul.edu, 312-362-5212

Office Hours: TUE 4:05-5:40, THUR 11:05-1:15 PM in CDM 506 and by appointment.

Description:

In this course students study, analyze, and write motion picture screenplays. We will employ elements of traditional storytelling and classic mythology, focusing on how these devices apply to contemporary screenplay structure. Students will move from concept to outline, and then finally write the first act of their own feature length screenplay. This script can be completed, revised, and polished in DC302 and DC303.

Prerequisites:

- DC201 Introduction to Screenwriting, or DC101 Screenwriting for Majors
- DC222 Hollywood Film Structures is suggested

Required Texts:

- Writing Movies for Fun and Profit by Robert Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon (Required) ISBN-10: 1439186766
- The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay by David Howard and Edward Mabley (Required) ISBN-10: 0312119089
- Additional assigned readings will be provided by the instructor on D2L.

Objectives:

- Close examination of the project-selection process
- Creation of fresh, three-dimensional characters
- Introduction to standard professional writing workflow
- Development of a personal cinematic writing style
- Understanding and application of three-act narrative structure
- Fostering the supportive, efficient environment of a professional writer's room
- Refining and advancing the practices of giving and receiving criticism
- Consistent delivery of outstanding creative work every single week

Outcomes:

Students will emerge from this course with a professional-quality step outline for a feature screenplay, as well as the completed and revised first act of that script.

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There, you will find course news, assignments and additional reading materials, and discussion boards for posting assignments and holding conversations. The *Checklist* function will be utilized in order to help you stay abreast with this syllabus.

You will find each week's recorded lecture and discussion (available shortly after 5 PM each Thursday) here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>. Should you have problems accessing lectures, request assistance: <http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx>

To best serve the purposes of time management and fair consideration for all, students will be divided into three working groups: **A**, **B**, and **C**. Weekly assignments for the group being discussed are due **Tuesdays at Noon**. All other groups are due **Thursdays at Noon**.

We will discuss one group's cumulative work each week, meaning, when we reach Group C in week 4, we will discuss, at once, all of the work Group C has submitted to date.

Schedule:

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 9

Course introduction. Discuss Project Selection, Pitching, Development, and Notes

Assignment: loglines and one-page pitches for three potential screenplays

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 1-3 & 11, Tools "About Screenwriting," Field (on D2L)

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 16

Discuss Structure and Character Development. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Feature Overview Worksheet and Character Map + 1 Scene

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 23-25, Tools "Basic Storytelling," Schechter (on D2L)

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 23

Discuss Sequences, Tension and Conflict. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Sequence Breakdown + 1 Scene

Read: WMFF&P Appendix, Howard on Step Outlines (on D2L)

WEEK 4 – JANUARY 30

Discuss Scenes and Outlining. Workshop **Group C**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the end of Act 1 + 1 Scene

Read: *All You Need is Kill* (screenplay on D2L), Mamet (on D2L)

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 6

Discuss Tone, Style, and Voice. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the Midpoint

Read: *Lego Movie* (screenplay on D2L), McKee (on D2L)

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 13

Discuss Dialogue and Exposition. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the end of Act Two.

Read: *Hot Summer Nights* (screenplay on D2L), Tools “Screenwriting Tools,”

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 20

Discuss Opening a Movie. Workshop **Group C**.

Assignment: *Completed and revised Step Outline through Act Three.*

WEEK 8 – FEBRUARY 27

Discuss Format and Page Craft. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Pages to the Inciting Incident

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 26, Hollywood Standard (on D2L)

WEEK 9 – MARCH 6

Discuss the Writing Process and Momentum. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Pages to the End of Act One

Read: The War of Art (on D2L)

WEEK 10 – MARCH 13

Discuss finishing a screenplay. Workshop **Group C**.

Assignment: Revise Act One

FINAL ACT ONE REVISION DUE: MARCH 20 at 2:00 PM in Dropbox on D2L

Grading:

Each week’s assignment is worth a maximum of ten points, adding up to 100 total, which comprises one third of your total grade. You will be graded on effort, creativity, originality, and the application of course materials and discussion to your writing.

You will also receive a maximum of ten points per week for participation, adding up to another 100 total points, or a third of your overall grade. Whether in-room or online, you will be expected to actively participate in the conversation about the group we are discussing in class during a particular week, and also all of the assigned readings. This means thoroughly reading all of that material and then formulating clear, timely, supportive notes for your peers, and thoughtful, engaging responses to the reading. Students will be required to moderate discussion group conversations on D2L.

The final, revised first-act of your screenplay is worth 100 points, and should represent the very best writing you can put forth. It must be between 25-30 pages.

Each student may complete one extra credit assignment worth a maximum of ten points. That assignment is located under “Dropbox” on D2L. Late work will not often be accepted.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A = 95	C+ = 78
A- = 92	C = 75
B+ = 88	C- = 70
B = 85	D+ = 69
B- = 80	D = 65

Attendance:

Absent in-room students will forfeit both their participation and assignment grade for each class they miss (20 total points or 6% of the final grade). Online students who fail to read material and post feedback by Thursday at 1:30 PM will be considered absent and suffer the same penalty. Tardiness will be considered an absence in both sections.

Decorum:

We must respect each other, our collaboration and the work at hand. Be truthful but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated.

Laptops/Cell Phones:

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

Alterations:

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.

Academic Policies:

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

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: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

TTY: (773)325.7296

Online Course Evaluations:

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 three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).