

DC 401 Writing the Short Screenplay

Fall 2014 | M 5:45-9:00 | Loop Campus LEWIS 01516

Instructor: Wendy Roderweiss Office: CDM 460

Email: wroder@cdm.depaul.edu (best way to reach me)

Office hours: 4:30-5:30pm, 9:00-9:30pm Monday

Course Management system: D2L

September 23, 2014 Last day to drop classes with no penalty

October 18, 2014 Last day to withdraw from AQ2014 classes

This syllabus is subject to change.

Summary of Course and Course Goals:

This course focuses on the fundamentals and art of cinematic storytelling in the short format screenplay. Emphasis is placed on telling a story that relies on rising action and compelling characters. Students will explore the elements of classic three-act narratives as they pertain to the visual medium. Constructive analysis will be used in discussing produced scripts, weekly assignments, and group workshops to reveal the writer's unique voice and perspective.

The short script created for this course will be written with student production in mind - Limitations in terms of budget, cast, locations and special effects must be taken into consideration.

Learning goals:

- * Students will be able to analyze the three-act structure as applied to features and the short film
- * Students will study in-depth components of plot, character, and dialogue
- * Students will be able to critically analyze traditional narratives
- * Students will establish their own voice and tone
- * Students will construct definitive screen moments

Students will write a polished short film designed to be produced as the student's MFA thesis or other route of production. Students will workshop these scripts with their peers in order to produce the most polished draft possible.

A major goal for this course is collaboration. My intention is to build a “writers group” within our class to help foster everyone’s work and see it successfully executed during your tenure at DePaul.

Required Textbooks and materials

The Short Screenplay by Dan Gurskis

ISBN-10: 1598633384

The Writer’s Journey by Christopher Vogler

ISBN-10: 193290736X

The Screenplay by Syd Field

ISBN-10: 0385339038

A blank journal book to write in (Standard comp book is fine)

Software:

Celtx-desktop version, free for mac and pc (I’ll post links on d2l)

Final Draft – If you’re going to take other screenwriting courses or pursue screenwriting beyond this class, it may be worth it to invest in professional screenwriting software now. For a limited time, Final Draft (industry standard) is on sale for \$99:

<http://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-9-edu.html>

Word Processing Program

Adobe Acrobat

Grading

Class Attendance, Participation 10%

Daily Journal 10%

Book Reports/Forum 15%

Assignments 1-6 25%

First Draft of Screenplay 10%

2nd Draft of Screenplay 10%

Final Script 20%

A = 100-93 A- = 92-90

B+ = 89-88 B = 87-83 B- = 82-80

C+ = 79-78 C = 77-73 C- = 72-70

D+ = 69-68 D = 67-63 D- = 62-60

F = 59-0

Standards for Achievement:

Grade A:

Student performs in an outstanding way. Student exhibits achievement and craftsmanship in all work. Creative criteria is exceeded and student challenges him/herself in project development. Student exhibits commitment to expanding ideas, vocabulary and performance.

Grade B:

Student performs beyond the requirement of the project. Student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship. A creative criterion is exceeded. Student exhibits above average interest in expanding idea, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade C:

Criteria of assignment is met, and all requirements are fulfilled. Student shows average quality work and minimum time and effort on projects. Student shows moderate interest.

Grade D:

Student performance is uneven and below average. Requirements for projects are only partially fulfilled. Minimal interest is shown and attendance, participation and involvement are inadequate.

Grade F

Student fails to meet minimum course requirements and shows little interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance/presence is inadequate.

Attendance – Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises.

Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15-minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically fail.** However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don't want your evil germs. Please email me at wroder@cdm.depaul.edu *before class* if you are going to miss.

Class Participation— Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions, critique other people's work, and participate in workshops. Remember, this is your class, you will get out of it what you put in it. **Also, be advised that many of the assignments that you write for this class, with the exception of your journals, will be read aloud.** My intention is not to embarrass anyone, but rather, have a fostering and openly creative environment where people are comfortable sharing their work.

Assignments and Exercises – Class Work Assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. **Do not use class time to finalize your projects.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class, if you come in late with an assignment it will not be accepted. If it is an assignment that is to be uploaded it must be uploaded on time.

D2L-In an attempt to save some trees and cash, most assignments will be turned in via D2L. If you are unfamiliar with D2L please see me. In some cases, you must print and bring in an assignment. I will indicate in the syllabus how each assignment must be turned into me.

Special Accommodations: If you have any special considerations please see me.

BACK UP YOUR WORK: Failure of computer software and or Hardware will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance for late projects or incomplete grades so back up your work daily.

Critiques: Due to limited class time, not everyone's work will get a full review during class. If you'd like more feedback, arrange to discuss your work with me during my office hours.

Electronic devices—Use of cell phones/laptops/tablets in the class is prohibited. Please turn your phone off before entering class. Absolutely no texting in class! Unless you have a university verified need for a computer in class, please keep them in your bags.

Course Lectures- This course has a joint online section. All lectures will be recorded and available on the course home page on d2l. There will be a box on the left-hand side of the page that says COL Recordings.

Book Reports/Discussion Forum – You will have a series of reading assignments with an accompanying book report. This book report will consist of listing five items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

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:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter

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 1 Monday 9/15

IN CLASS:

Introduction to the course and syllabus

What you like

Why we tell stories

Why we write

What to write about

Screenwriting vs. novels and plays

Final Script guidelines

Loglines

The Subject/ Premises

ASSIGNMENTS:

Daily Journal (10%): Start your journals. For in-class section, these must be hand written, in a notebook or journal book. For online students you must submit a word document via d2l. Write at least one page a day, every day, including weekends from now until the end of the quarter. Put the date and time on each page before you start writing. These pages can be about anything: your day, what you fed your dog, your annoying neighbor, the dream you had, how you felt when you were 7 and your best friends decided that you were bossy and didn't want to talk to you anymore, wait, that was me. You don't have to be profound or insightful, (but it's okay if you are). The idea here is to get you in the habit of writing. I will not read your pages. I will, however, scan them while I count the number of pages you produce. **THIS IS WORTH 10% OF YOUR GRADE** (a full letter grade).

DUE: Last day of regular class 11/17

FORMAT: In-class students--Handwritten in one notebook or journal not loose pages or scraps or lots of journals (to be returned during the final exam class period)

Assignment #1 (3%): Write 3 loglines for potential final short scripts for this class.

DUE: Monday 9/22 be prepared to pitch them to the class.

FORMAT: In class students: PRINTED and brought to class, also uploaded to D2L by class start into dropbox.

WATCH: *Star Wars* (Episode IV-The Original) if you haven't seen it. Re-watch it if it has been a while. It is available via COLTUBE!!!!

READ: Chapters 1 & 2 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay)

Pages 3-20 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)

Chapters 1-5 Field (The Screenplay)

Book Report/Discussion #1 (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 9/22

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

Class 2 Monday 9/22

DUE: Assignment 1: Loglines, Book Report #1 on D2L discussion forum, comments on discussion forum, *Online students loglines on discussion forum and comments made*
IN CLASS

Read loglines and choose which story you will develop for your final project

What is a Screenplay?

Three act structure (features and shorts)

Plot points

Story and Character

Character intro example

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment 2 (3%): 3-Act Structure--See D2L for assignment details

DUE: Monday 9/29

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

Assignment 3 (3%): Finalize which logline you will be developing and write a distinctive character intro for your main character.

DUE: Monday 9/29

FORMAT: printed and brought to class, and uploaded to D2L

READ: Chapters 3 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay)

Pages 23-79 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)

Chapters 7-9 Field (The Screenplay)

Book Report/Discussion #2 (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 9/29

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

Class 3 Monday 9/29

DUE: Assignment 2: 3 Act Structure, Assignment #3 Main character intro, Book Report #2 plus comments

IN CLASS:

Character Arcs

Build a character exercise

Developing the Narrative

Endings and Beginnings

Two Incidents

Plot Points review

Building the Story

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment 4 (4%): Character Bio, Craft a character bio for your protagonist. See description on D2L for details.

DUE: Monday 10/6

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

READ: Chapters 5 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay)
Pages 83-132 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)
Chapters 12 Field (The Screenplay)

Book Report/Discussion #3 (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 10/6

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

Class 4 Monday 10/6

DUE: Assignment #4 Character Bio, Book Report #3 plus comments

IN CLASS:

Treatments

Step Outlines

The Screenplay format

Screenwriting software

Scene

Sequence

Production focused ideas

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment 5 (4%): Write a step outline of your final project

DUE: Monday 10/13

FORMAT: In-class students- PRINTED and brought to class, ALSO Uploaded to D2L

READ: Chapters 4 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay)
Pages 135-173 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)
Chapters 10 & 11 Field (The Screenplay)

Book Report/Discussion #4 (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 10/13

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

Class 5 Monday 10/13

DUE: Assignment 5- Step Outlines, Book Report #4 plus comments

IN CLASS:

Presentation/Discussion of Step Outlines

Dialogue

Exposition

ASSIGNMENTS:

WRITE: First and second act of your script*

DUE: Monday 10/20

FORMAT: CELTX document, Uploaded to D2L

*I am asking for a volunteer to turn in a completed first draft for an in-class workshop on 10/20

READ: Pages 175-228 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)

Book Report/Discussion #5 (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 10/20

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

Class 6 Monday 10/20

DUE: Book Report #5 plus comments, first and second act of your screenplay, volunteer's completed first draft,

IN CLASS:

In-depth discussion of A Writer's Journey

Critique of first draft—volunteer

ASSIGNMENTS: Assignment 6 (8%): Analyze a film listed on D2L using the Hero's Journey as a model and write a paper discussing the structure outlined in the book. (further details on d2l)

DUE: Monday 11/4

FORMAT: Uploaded to D2L

READ: Pages 231-291 Vogler (The Writer's Journey) for help with your paper

WRITE: Complete first draft of your script

DUE: THURSDAY 10/23 by midnight

FORMAT: CELTX document preferred if using the desktop software. Otherwise a pdf uploaded to D2L

CRITIQUE: Read the first half of your group's screenplays, and fill out the critique form to bring to class 10/27 for workshop

Class 7 Monday 10/27

DUE: Completed 1st drafts (were due Thursday 10/23) Critique of first half of group's screenplays

IN CLASS:

First draft workshop Pt 1

ASSIGNMENTS: Revise 1st Drafts

CRITIQUE: Read the second half of your group's screenplays, and fill out the critique form to bring to class 11/3 for workshop

Class 8 Monday 11/3

DUE: Hero paper, 2nd half of your group's critiques

IN CLASS:

First draft workshop Pt 2

ASSIGNMENTS: Complete 2nd Draft

DUE: Monday 11/10

FORMAT: CELTX document preferred if using the desktop software. Otherwise a pdf, Uploaded to D2L by 2:30PM—I will print them and make copies for you, but I need them uploaded early to do this.

Class 9 Monday 11/10

DUE: Completed 2nd Drafts

IN CLASS: 2nd Draft Workshop I

ASSIGNMENTS: Revise 2nd Drafts

Class 10 Monday 11/17

DUE: Journals, Any Extra Credit Assignments

IN CLASS:

2nd Draft Workshop II

ASSIGNMENTS: Complete 3rd Draft (Final)

DUE: Monday 11/24

FORMAT: CELTX document, Uploaded to D2L—If selected for in class critique please upload by 2:30pm so I can make copies for the class.

FINAL EXAM PERIOD Monday 11/24 5:45-8:00pm

DUE: 3rd/POLISHED DRAFT OF FINAL SCRIPT

3rd Drafts (20%) due at the beginning of the class period (uploaded to D2L)

2 of these will be read aloud in class, if selected for class reading, please upload a copy by 2:30pm so I can make copies for class. **Attendance to this class is mandatory. If you do not attend class you will receive a 0 on your final draft! This draft is worth 20% of your grade.**