

## **DC 402 Writing the Feature I**

Winter 2014/2015

Wednesday 5:45pm – 9:00pm

CS&TC Room 202

Instructor: James Choi

[Jchoi26@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:Jchoi26@cdm.depaul.edu)

Office: 464 (243 S Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL 60604)

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:30pm – 5:30pm

### **Summary of the Course**

This course focuses on creating a well vetted original concept, step outline and the first act for a feature length screenplay. Students will analyze the conventions of plot and character driven narratives and participation in workshop sessions in an effort to develop their unique voice on the page. This script should be completed, revised and polished in DC 403 and DC 404.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Students will enhance their knowledge of screenwriting conventions and script analysis through assigned readings and in-class workshops.
- Students will develop a feature length outline that adheres to three act dramatic structure.
- Students will learn techniques to enhance audience identification for their story.
- Students will complete two drafts of the first act of a feature length screenplay.

### **Textbooks and Printed Resources**

“Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” by Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon

### **Prerequisites**

DC 501 Storytelling for the Screenwriter

### **Grading**

Class attendance and participation	15%
Premise and Plot Point Assignment	10%
Feature Length Step Outline	10%
Draft of First Act	20%
Final Draft of First Act	30%

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

## **Attendance**

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. 3 absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

## **D2L**

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. You will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

## **In-Class Workshops**

Every student will have pages of their screenplay work-shopped in class.

## **Course Outline**

Week 1 – January 7<sup>th</sup>

Course Introduction, Business of Screenwriting, Loglines

Assignment: Three Premise Ideas, “Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” Chapters 1-3, Script read TBD

Week 2 – January 14<sup>th</sup>

Structure, Pitch Premise Ideas

Assignment: Plot Points, “Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” Chapter 23, Script Reading TBD

Week 3 – January 21<sup>th</sup>

Plot Point Workshop

Assignment: Feature Length Outline, “Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” Chapters 24 and 25, Script Reading TBD

Week 5 – January 28<sup>th</sup>

Act One, Tone and Voice – Step Outline Due

Assignment: Feature Length Outline, “Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” Appendix Sample Outlines, Script Reading TBD

Week 6 – February 4<sup>th</sup>

Dialogue & Exposition

Assignment: Pages 10-20

Week 7 – February 11<sup>th</sup>

Scenes and Sequences

Assignment: Script Pages 20-30

Week 8 – February 18<sup>th</sup>

Genre Writing – First Act Due

Assignment: Rewrite First Act, “Writing Movies for Fun and Profit” Chapter 11

Week 9 – February 25<sup>th</sup>

Workshop

Assignment: Rewrite First Act

Week 10 – March 4<sup>th</sup>  
Workshop  
Assignment: Rewrite First Act

**\*\*FINAL DRAFT Due March 18<sup>th</sup> @9pm\*\***

### **Assignments**

Three Premise Ideas

Develop three premise ideas to pitch in class on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a feature length script for your final project. Each premise should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Please submit a copy to the D2L

### **Plot Points:**

Develop brief description for your plot points – due January 21<sup>st</sup> via D2L. Present your logline (one sentence description of your script) and plot points in the following format:

Logline:

Hook:

1<sup>st</sup> Act Turning Point:

2<sup>nd</sup> Act Turning Point:

Climax:

Resolution:

### **Step Outline:**

A feature length outline should have anywhere from 50-100 scenes depending on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character driven story/more scenes for plot driven material). It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the length of a feature film. Coming up with 40 scenes or less is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Each scene of your step outline will contain a slugline for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene. Additional sample outlines are provided in the appendix of "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit."

### **Example:**

Scene 1: INT. DON CORELONE'S OFFICE – DAY

AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men. Don Corelone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corelone's daughter, is very matter of fact/business like.

### **General Guidelines**

- Use 12pt Courier New Font
- Make sure your scene descriptions are in present tense
- Use all CAPS when introducing a new character

This assignment should be submitted to D2L before class on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **First Act**

You are expected to submit the first act of your feature length screenplay (minimum 30 pages) to D2L before class on February 25<sup>th</sup>. A couple things to keep in mind, as this assignment is 20% of your final grade:

- Show, don't tell. Show, don't tell. Show, don't tell.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count – proofread your work, proofread it again and proofread it again one more time to just be sure.
- Follow standard screenwriting formatting
- Action description should be lean – only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen. Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue – always ask yourself, “is there a way I can communicate this information visually?”
- Your first act must be at least thirty pages, but should not exceed forty pages.
- Ask questions if you need help
- Don't wait till the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative – You won't be able to do it in one night.

### **Final Draft**

You are expected to submit your revised first act (minimum of 30 pages) for your final assignment before class on Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> to D2L before 9pm. A couple of things to keep in mind as this assignment is 30% of your final grade:

- The final version of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort
- You must include a cover page
- Use notes you received together with script workshops to craft your revised draft.
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely re-evaluated and enhanced.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count – proofread your work!
- Re-read your narrative for clarity – may be a good idea to have your friend/family look over script as well
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required.
- Your submission must be at least 30 pages.

### **Attitude**

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measureable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking other's opinions, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using internet. If any of these issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom.

### **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 and posted under announcements on D2L.

### **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](#).

### **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 your professor.

### **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.

### **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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296