

DePaul University
School of Cinema and Interactive Media

DC 509 801: Writing for TV Thesis II

T 5:45 – 9:00 PM, CDM Center 920

Instructor: Heather Ash

Office: CDM 709

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

Phone: 312-362-1279 (Do not leave messages at this number – use only if coming to my office.)

Office hours: Wednesday 2 – 3:30 pm

Course Management system: D2L

Friday, Jan. 16, 2015 - Last day to drop classes with no penalty

Friday, Feb. 20, 2015 - Last day to withdraw from WQ2015 classes

Description

In this second course of a two-part sequence, students will pitch, develop and write:

1. The final draft of a complete one-hour teleplay and series concept overview, with outlines for three first-season episodes.

- **OR** -

2. A final draft of a complete half-hour teleplay and series concept overview, with pitches for three first-season episodes, **PLUS:**

A first draft of a spec half-hour episode for an existing series, with series analysis.

The thesis project serves as the culminating piece in the student's MFA writing portfolio, and must be approved by a thesis committee in order for a student to graduate.

Objectives

- Close examination of the rewrite process
- Developing tools to successfully sift through and implement notes
- Delivering professional, character and deadline-driven script revisions
- Continued mastery of cinematic writing style and narrative technique
- Exposure to a professional writing pace
- Fostering and maintaining the environment of a professional writers' room
- Refining and advancing the practices of giving and receiving criticism
- Consistent delivery of outstanding creative work every single week

Outcomes

- A full revision of the original pilot script based on notes from the thesis committee and instructor
- A full revision of the series overview document based on notes from the thesis committee and instructor
- For hour-long writers, three beatsheets/outlines for follow-up episodes of their original series
- For half-hour writers:
 - a first draft spec of an existing half-hour series
 - three loglines for follow-up episodes of their original series

Required Texts

1) Various readings and resources will be posted to D2L and/or handed out. These will be tailored to the specific questions and needs of our class as the semester progresses. The intent is to educate, not overwhelm.

Preparation for first class

Several items are due on Sunday, January 4th:

1. Three pilot scripts that match the plot/tone of your original pilot
Submit as pdfs to discussion board for week 1
2. Half-hours: Beatsheet for your spec episode
Print for class, and submit in week 1 discussion board
3. Hours: One-page treatments for each of your three original episodes
Print for class, and submit in week 1 discussion board

Please make sure all are labeled with your name, title and headers and page numbers.

SCHEDULE

All assignments are due by 2pm on the Sunday before class.

Assignments not submitted on time will receive no credit and will not be workshopped.

Week 1: 1/6

All assignments due (see above.)

- Workshop – Group A’s spec outlines
- Screening & Discussion – *Bernie Mac, The Americans*
- Homework
 - 1) Pick one (Group A) or two (Group B) of your three chosen pilots that are closest to your show. Make notes on the main elements of each of them and how they’re introduced (see notes from tonight’s class). *Post to Week 2 Discussion Board.*
 - 2) Reread your own pilot. **Do not rewrite it**, but go ahead and make quick notes on things you’d like to change. Compare it to the pilots you’ve read and viewed – how can you make yours stronger?
 - 3) Group A – begin writing your spec.

Week 2: 1/13

Receive notes from committee.

- Workshop – Group B’s spec outlines and drama stories.
- Screening & Discussion – *half-hour dramedy*
- Homework
 - 1) Everyone: Create a **Revision Plan** based on notes from your committee and your own notes from last week. Summarize the general notes and how you plan to address them in the next draft of your pilot. Begin the rewrites of your pilot. Please schedule a meeting with me if you get conflicting feedback or anything is unclear. *Submit to Discussion Board Week 3.*
 - 2) Group B – (1/2 hour) begin writing your spec, (1 hour) begin rewriting your pilot

Week 3: 1/20

Revision plan due from everyone – post to discussion board

- Workshop: Group A – spec Act 1
- All: Discuss revision plans with class.

Week 4: 1/27

- Workshop: Group B – spec Act 1 (comedy), Act 1 of pilot (drama)
Drama writers: We will read 10 pages out loud. Please cast in advance.

Week 5: 2/3

- Workshop: Group A – complete spec script (workshop only second half)

Week 6: 2/10

- Workshop: Group B (half-hour) – complete spec (second half workshopped); drama – Act 2 & 3
** All half-hour writers - spend the next four weeks revising your spec episodes based on notes, as well as your pilots **

Week 7: 2/17

- Workshop: Group A – Act 1 of pilot
We will read 10 pages out loud. Please cast in advance.

Week 8: 2/24

- Workshop: Group B – Act 1 of pilot (comedy); Act 4 & episode outline #1
We will read 10 pages of comedies out loud. Please cast in advance.

Week 9: 3/3

- Workshop: Group A – Completed pilots and series overview revisions (notes only on second half)
Will read out loud if time allows.

Week 10: 3/10

- Workshop: Group B – Completed pilots and series overview revisions (notes only on second half)
Group B (drama) – Episode outlines 2 & 3 and series overview revisions.
Will read out loud if time allows – drama writers can pick any 10-15 pages.

Week 11: 3/17

Please leave this day open to meet. Topic TBD.

Friday, March 20th – all final thesis packets should be emailed to the committee members **by 5:00pm sharp.**

GROUP A	Thesis Committee	GROUP B	Thesis Committee
Tyler Bourdeau Hannah Leskosky	<i>Chris Parrish & Benjamin Kunning</i>	Megan Binnie Celia Blundo Allison Gilbert Candice Hudson	<i>Nate Dewitt & Jessica King</i>
Jared Pettit Kelly Woodall	<i>Shayna Connelly & Jose Soto</i>		
Marcus McCoy	<i>Matt Quinn & Ron Eltanal</i>		

Procedures

Classes may include lectures but will always feature a workshop session. It is essential that all students submit their work on time, and that all students pre-read the material thoroughly before class to make detailed notes. Your participation is vital, and is the only way we can be efficient and effective in our discussions.

We will focus on the “big-picture” notes in class. Smaller page notes will be handed or sent to each writer, from each writer, in each and every class.

Proofreading

If your work is being read by anyone else, at any stage, then it must be error-free. We write to transport the reader to a different world, and every typo yanks the reader out of the experience. Another person is taking the time and effort to help you improve your work; respect that by taking the time and effort to proofread. This is a non-negotiable part of being a professional writer. It is also a basic expectation of all college students, particularly those in a graduate level writing program.

Software

Final Draft is industry standard, but Movie Magic Screenwriter 6 is also used. You should own one of these and be using it by now. ALL work must be submitted in PDF format to avoid any platform issues.

Grading

30%	Total of weekly scores for writing work. Note: Lack of proofreading will drop this grade.
20%	Weekly participation (includes submitted comments)
20%	Midterm: ½ hour spec OR drama revisions to date
30%	FINAL THESIS PACKET
100%	TOTAL

A = 93-100

C = 73-77

A- = 90-92

C- = 70-72

B+ = 88-89

D+ = 68-69

B = 83-87

D = 63-67

B- = 80-82

D- = 60-62

C+ = 78-79

F = 0-59

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 no interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance is inadequate.

Attendance

Tardiness and absences are counterproductive for you and your classmates. Contact me ASAP if you will be late or absent. Unapproved absences (per university definitions) and/or tardies forfeit an entire letter grade.

Behavior

We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. It is part of being a professional writer. 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.

What happens in thesis stays in thesis. Please respect the privacy of people's personal stories and ideas by limiting that discussion to the room.

Electronics

Professional writers do not sit in meetings staring at a screen. They talk to each other and their employers. In fact, many writers' rooms now have a "no electronics" policy. If I so much as suspect you of online activities unrelated to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones should be on silent or vibrate and put away. Do not text when class is in session.

Integrity

Plagiarism will get you fired and sued professionally, and it will earn you an immediate F in this course. Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the *Student Handbook* or by visiting <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>.

Disabilities

Students who feel that they need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their needs as soon as possible.

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.

From the University...

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 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.

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: csd@depaul.edu.

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