

**WRITING FOR TELEVISION: THESIS I (AUTUMN 2016)**

DC 508 708

TUESDAYS (5:45 - 9:00)

243 South Wabash Ave. #924

Instructor: Christopher Parrish

Advising Hours: Mondays (1:30 - 4:30) \* Making appointments in advance strongly encouraged \*

Office: CDM465

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Office #: (312)362-5534

**TYPE OF INSTRUCTION:**

Writers' workshops with peers, Script readings, Lectures, Powerpoint presentations, Screenings

**SOFTWARE:** Final Draft strongly recommended

**MATERIALS:** Pen, Access to Xerox machine

**REQUIRED READING:** Classmates' Pilots, Outlines, Revised Original Series Bibles, Instructor Provided Materials

**RECOMENDED READING:**

Instructor Provided Pilot Scripts on D2L

Writing the Pilot by William Rabkin

Automatic Pilot by Bill Taub

Writing the TV Drama Series by Pamela Douglas

**WITHDRAWAL DROP DATES:**

September 20, 2016 - Last day to drop classes with no penalty.

October 25, 2016 - Last day to withdraw from Autumn Quarter classes.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is largely conducted in a workshop environment. Within this workshop environment, you will receive extensive feedback from your Instructor and Peers. The thesis project is designed to serve as the cumulative centerpiece of written work in the student's MFA screenwriting portfolio. In order to graduate, your completed script(s) must be approved by the Thesis Committee.

This is the first of the two courses taken back-to-back (DC 508 followed by DC 509: Writing for TV Thesis II.)

For DC 508, students will complete a Revised Series Bible for their Original Pilot, an Outline for the Pilot and a Completed First Draft of the Pilot.

Students will also complete ten loglines of possible concepts for a spec TV script.

As a second year graduate student, you are expected to give extensive feedback. You will be expected to offer and receive constructive criticism in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Also, the giving and receiving of thorough notes factors significantly into your final grade.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- \*To create an original television pilot script that conveys the writer's "sound" (voice, unique perspective, repetitive exploration of theme, statement to the viewer)
- \*To demonstrate a complete mastery of narrative television script format and structure
- \*To demonstrate the professional screenwriter's ability to work within a limited timeframe and consistently meet deadlines
- \*To conduct one's self in the manner of a working professional screenwriter treating peers with respect, reading others work on a weekly basis and consistently offering courteous and constructive criticism

**COURSE OUTCOMES:**

- \*Instructor approved completion of a professional-level Pilot Outline
- \*Professional-level Revised Original Series Bible
- \*Delivery of a completed First Draft Pilot
- \* 10 Loglines for a spec script of an existing series (applicable to sitcom writers) -or- 10 Loglines for future episodes of student's original show

Based on feedback from Instructor and Students, each person will email in their **completed** Revised Pilot script to Instructor **due by 11:59 PM C.S.T. on Thursday, December 15, 2016.** (Note: This is during the break between Autumn and Winter Quarters.)

**PREREQUISITE(S):**

DC 497: Writing for TV Thesis Development  
DC 498: Writing for Film Thesis Development

It is absolutely vital for the course and your grade that you read all of your classmates' work before class and be prepared to give notes.

The instructor will guide students on how to strike the delicate balance between writing an episode that embodies the characters, structure, tone, and dialogue of an existing show while expressing the student's own creative voice, point of view and style.

As the course progresses, students will engage in their own “punch-up” sessions. Over the course, each student will have their teleplay or script read aloud in class by “casting” their classmates in the roles for a “Table Reading.” Constructive criticism and active participation is mandatory, as is assigned homework.

Schedule permitting, students will also have the opportunity for a classroom Q&A (via Skype) with Hollywood professionals who have written for and/or been involved with primetime network sitcoms and/or hour-long dramas.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

You and your classmates will engage in a mutually beneficial contract with one another by reading each other’s work and giving respectful and constructive criticism. **Class participation is mandatory.**

### **DEADLINES:**

When professional screenwriters are hired to write on assignment, **MEETING DEADLINES IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL.** In this second year MFA course, the same is expected of you. As a professional, your work is expected to be submitted on time, free of typos and misspellings. You are also expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. Arriving more than 15 minutes late is considered an absence. Three absences will result in your failure of the course.

### **!!!IMPORTANT!!!**

**Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments will be due on D2L EVERY SUNDAY BY 4 PM, C.S.T.** Any work not submitted by this time forfeits any rights to be read and reviewed by Instructor and Classmates. Unexcused, late work may also result in a zero for the assignment.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

**All written assignments must be typed in 12 pt. Courier font in a pdf file and posted on D2L.** Scripts should also be free of spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors, unless the dialogue or storyline otherwise calls for it. All scripts and scenes are to be done in proper television format. Most professionals use Final Draft but it is not required for the course. **Please make certain all assignments include your name, the course title and number and the date of the assignment due.**

### **EMAILS:**

Please sign your first and last name with every email you send. I check my email every day and should have a response for you within 24 hours. **My email is cparris6@cdm.depaul.edu**

**POLICY ON PEER-TO-PEER CRITICISM:**

When writers share their work with others, it can be an emotionally charged situation leaving the writer feeling very vulnerable. Throughout your screenwriting careers, you may occasionally receive mean-spirited and/or nonproductive criticism of your work. However, in our classroom, absolutely none of it will be tolerated. If and when there is something you dislike about a classmate's writing, it is your obligation to express it. But more importantly, it is your responsibility to express why it is you think so respectfully and suggest a way to fix it. At the same time, the person receiving constructive criticism from their peers will do so in a polite, non-defensive and professional manner. Adherence to this is a crucial part of your grade in this course.

If I suspect students are not reading one another's work before class time, I reserve the right to require written notes from all students on all peer-to-peer readings.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN:**

12 Minute Pitch of Original Series: 10%  
Revised Series Bible: 10%  
Outline (First Draft): 15%  
Outline (Revised): 10%  
Pilot Script Pages: 30%  
Loglines: 5%  
Class Participation: 20%

Course Calendar:

**9/13/ 2016 - Week #1:** "Intros, Syllabi, Expectations, Show Bibles and Speechless"

Lecture: Class Introductions. Review of Syllabus and Course Expectations.

Classroom Activity #1: Workshop Show Bibles

Classroom Activity #2: SPEECHLESS Pilot Screening, Article Reading and Discussion (\*Time Permitting\*)

Speechless Article: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-ca-st-fall-preview-minnie-driver-speechless-20160827-snap-story.html>

Speechless Pilot:

<http://abc.go.com/shows/speechless/episode-guide/season-01/1-series-premiere-p-i-pilot>

**Homework Assignment:** Practice Your 12 Minute Pitch for Thesis Committee (FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>.) **IT IS IMPERITIVE YOU ARE PRESENT FOR YOUR PITCH TO THE COMMITTEE.** DUE: Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. Practice Thesis Pitches will be made during Class 2. **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**

**9/20/2016 - Week #2:** “And Here’s the Pitch”

Lecture: “Refresher on Pitching Strategies”

Classroom Activity: 12 Minute Pitches of TV Series

**Homework Assignment:** Based on Class and Instructor notes, begin changes to your Revised Series Bible. (Revised Bible Due Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L.)

**9/23/2016 - Week #2: THESIS COMMITTEE PITCHES**

**SEE SCHEDULE ON D2L.** (There are back-to-back pitches all day. Be sure to arrive early.)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Based on Thesis Committee, Class and Instructor notes, make changes to your Revised Series Bible. (Revised Bible Due Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L.)

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of your classmates’ Revised Series Bibles emailed to you on Sunday. Be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**9/27/2016 - Week #3:** “Revised Series Bibles”

Classroom Activity #1: Workshop Revised Series Bibles.

Lecture: Quick recap on Outline Pitfalls & Pluses

Classroom Activity #2: THE GHOST WHISPERER Outline to Episode Analysis (\*Time Permitting\*)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group A Outline (First Draft) Due Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> by 4pm on D2L.)

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of your classmates Group A (First Draft) Outlines emailed to you on Sunday and be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**10/4/2016 - Week #4:** Group A Pilot Outlines (First Draft)

Classroom Activity #1: Sign up online for 20 Minute Midterm Meeting with Instructor (Meet in person or by telephone during Instructor's Advising/Office Hours During Weeks 5 - 6. (Mondays 1:30-4:30 and Tuesdays 12:55 - 5:25)

Classroom Activity #2: Workshop Group A Outlines (First Draft)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group B Outline (First Draft) Due Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L.

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of Group B's (First Draft) Outlines emailed to you on Sunday and be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**10/11/2016 - Week #5:** Group B Outlines (First Draft)

Lecture: "Subtext"

Classroom Activity: Workshop Group B Outlines (First Draft)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group A (Revised Outlines) Due Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of your classmates' Group A (Revised Outlines) emailed to you on Sunday and be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**10/18/2016 - Week #6:** Group A (Revised Outlines)

Lecture: Refresher Spec Pilot and Script Do's & Don'ts

Classroom Activity: Workshop Group A (Revised Outlines)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group B (Revised Outlines) Due Sunday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> by 4pm on D2L

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of your classmates' Group B (Revised Outlines) emailed to you on Sunday and be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**10/25/2016 - Week #7:** Group B (Revised Outlines)

Lecture: Irony

Classroom Activity: Workshop Group B (Revised Outlines)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group A (Pages 1-15) Due Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**

**Homework Assignment #2:** Read all of your classmates' Group A (Pages 1-15) emailed to you on Sunday and be prepared for the next class with notes from your readings.

**11/1/2016 - Week #8:** Group A (Pages 1 - 15)

Lecture: Symbolism

Classroom Activity: Table Read & Workshop Group A (Pages 1 - 15)

**Homework Assignment:** Group B (Pages 1 - 15) Due Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**

**11/8/2016 - Week #9:** Group B (Pages 1 - 15)

Lecture: Primetime Pilot Trends for the Upcoming Season

Classroom Activity: Table Read & Workshop Group B (Pages 1 - 15)

**Homework Assignment #1:** Group A (Pages 16 - 30) Due Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS**

**Homework Assignment #2:** Groups A & B (Loglines for next TV script)  
Due Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS**

**11/15/2016 - Week #10:** Group A (Pages 16 - 30)

Classroom Activity: Table Read & Workshop Group A (Pages 16-30)

Lecture: **HOLLYWOOD SKYPE GUEST (TBD)**

Homework Assignment: Group B (Pages 16 - 30) Due Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup> by 4pm on D2L **SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS**

**11/22/2016 - Week #11:** Group B (Pages 16 - 30)

Classroom Activity: Table Read & Workshop Group B (Pages 16-30)

**Homework Assignment: Complete Thesis I pilot script with revised pages. NO EXCEPTIONS. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. DUE: Thursday, December 15th by 11:59 pm. SEE RUBRIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS.**

### **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**

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.

## **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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

## **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

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

**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.