

## **DC 301 ADVANCED SCREENWRITING I**

Section 702

Tuesdays (5:45PM-9:00PM)

14 E. Jackson, Room 211

### **INSTRUCTOR**

Jim Pomerantz – [jpomera1@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:jpomera1@cdm.depaul.edu) - (847)767-4508

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Wednesday 9:30am – 11:00am at Daley 200B

### **COURSE SUMMARY**

In this course, students study, analyze and produce motion picture scripts. This course emphasizes the use of traditional storytelling, classic mythology and how these devices apply to contemporary screenplays. Students will move from concept/treatment to a completed first act of a feature length screenplay of their own. This script will be completed, revised, and polished in DC 302 and DC 303.

### **PREREQUISITE(S)**

DC 101 or DC 201

### **READINGS**

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

ISBN-10: 1439186766

-Additional assigned readings provided by instructor

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

- Students will be able to apply traditional screenwriting techniques to develop their unique writing style in a screenplay that adheres to industry standards.
- Students will produce multiple loglines and analyze their effectiveness to decide on the story they want to write.
- Students will be able to identify story points within each act of the traditional three-act dramatic structure.
- Students will produce a completed step outline a feature length movie script.
- Students will write and edit the first act of their feature length movie script.

### **D2L**

-This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. There you will find course news, assignments and additional reading materials, and discussion boards for posting assignments and holding conversations.

-Each week’s recorded lecture and discussion (available shortly after 9PM each Tuesday) will be available here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>.

-Should you have problems accessing lectures, request assistance:

<http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx>

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An absence, which is defined by not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late, will result in a reduction in your overall grade.

## **WORKSHOPS**

Writing is a lonely endeavor, this class is meant to be a guiding reprieve. To that end, we all must offer sincere effort to assist fellow writers reach their potential. We are not here to judge. We are here to write, read and offer genuine reactions and thoughtful critiques. In short, pay attention and speak up. Participation is graded.

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

\*If you would like additional input on your work, please come to my office hours. I am there during that time to help you. If these hours do not work for you, we can work together to set up a meeting time that does work.

\*Come to class prepared. 10 class sessions will go by quick and we owe it to each other to waste as little time as possible.

\*Don't let me see your phone. We will break in the middle of each class to allow for bathroom breaks and cell phone checks. I get personally offended when the person I am speaking to is staring at their phone. Please do not offend me.

\*Be nice. Writing is personal. This is not the place to put others down or judge the quality of someone's writing. We are here to provide notes, ideas and possible alternatives.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Tuesday, September 13**

Lecture: Course intro. and goals. How do you get into a story? Techniques, methods and pitfalls. How a well-crafted logline builds a solid foundation for a script.

In-Class: Cringe-worthy memories. Fear, love and hate. Write the loglines for 5 movies that you have seen.

Assignment(s): Write 5 loglines to potentially develop into scripts and prepare to pitch them to your group. Read script TBD.

### **Tuesday, September 20**

Lecture: Structure overview, plot points and tentpole scenes. Know your ending.

In-Class: Logline pitches-do they answer necessary questions?

Assignment(s): Plot points and 2 page story overview introducing your key characters.

**Tuesday, September 27**

Workshop: Split into groups and give story notes. What do we think? What questions and complications arise from the plot points and story overviews?  
Assignment: Step outline for act one.

**Tuesday, October 4**

Workshop: Split into groups and give story notes. Do we know where we're heading? Give the audience what they want in a way they would never expect it.  
Assignment: Step outline act two.

**Tuesday, October 11**

Workshop: Split into groups for story notes. Act Two pitfalls: where stories lose momentum and die. Keep up the momentum through conflict!  
Assignment: Step outline act three.

**Tuesday, October 18**

Lecture: What makes a successful ending. How changes at the end affect your beginning.  
Workshop: Split into groups for story notes. Approaches for Act Three.  
Assignment: Revise and complete step outline.

**Tuesday, October 25**

Lecture: How to go from outline to script pages. Great character intros and how to write effective dialogue. Make your opening memorable.  
Assignment: Pages 1-10.

**Tuesday, November 1**

Workshop: Split into groups for table reads. Instant reactions and notes. 25 minutes on each student in each group. Your fellow writer is your best friend. Ask questions and offer ideas, don't judge.  
Assignment: Pages 10-20.

**Tuesday, November 8**

Workshop: Split into groups for table reads. Instant reactions and notes. 25 minutes on each student in each group.  
Assignment: Pages 20-End of first act

**Tuesday, November 15**

Lecture: The state and future of Hollywood. Becoming a professional screenwriter. Why do we write? What I'm looking for in the rewritten first act.  
Workshop: Split into groups for table reads.  
Assignment: Rewrite First Act

**Tuesday, November 22 (FINAL DUE)**

REWRITTEN FIRST ACT (FINAL) DUE BY 9PM IN DROPBOX ON D2L

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

In order to properly prepare for class, **assignments are due in the D2L Dropbox every Monday by noon.**

Starting Week 3, we will begin in-class group workshops. These workshops will necessitate you providing copies of your assignments for the rest of the students in your group. Bring enough copies of your pages/assignments for each member of your in-class group to read along. Bringing these copies is part of completing the assignment. Copies not being provided for your group will result in a grade reduction.

### **1) Five Loglines**

Write five loglines for potential scripts. You will pick one of these to expand into your feature length script. Write BUT between two factors which oppose each other. Right off the bat you indicate the central conflict of the film, which is what movies are about...CONFLICT!

Examples:

A girl falls in love with a man BUT she's a mermaid = "The Little Mermaid"

A young man falls in love with a girl BUT she's the daughter of a sworn enemy = "Romeo & Juliet"

Two High School losers are finally invited to a cool party BUT they have to provide the alcohol = "Superbad"

A couple breaks up BUT both of their names are on the lease of a highly sought after condo = "The Break Up"

### **2) Plot Points and 2 Page Story Overview**

You will write a sentence or two for each major plot point of your script. These include: exposition/ordinary life, inciting incident, end of act one, mid point, end of act two, climax, falling action/return to the now.

From there, I want you to write a 2-page overview of what happens in your story. Give your characters urgent and specific objectives that are continually opposed to each other. Introduce conflict in every scene.

### **3) Step Outline for Act One**

No less than 10, no more than 30 scenes for Act One. You will write a slug line for each scene in your first act (location and time of day) along with a 2-

3 sentence description of what happens in each scene. Please format each scene heading and character introduction as you would a proper script.

EXAMPLE:

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

JIM POMERANTZ, instructor, writes the class goals on the chalkboard. SALLY SMITH, student, stands and objects to all of the assignments. Sally pleads with the rest of the class to join her in walking out unless the assignments are reduced.

\*Please **BOLD** your inciting incident.

#### ***4) Step Outline for Act Two***

No less than 15, no more than 40 scenes for Act Two. You will write a slug line for each scene in your first act (location and time of day) along with a 2-3 sentence description of what happens in each scene. Please format each scene heading and character introduction as you would a proper script.

\*Please **BOLD** your midpoint.

#### ***5) Step Outline for Act Three***

No less than 10, no more than 30 scenes for Act Three. You will write a slug line for each scene in your first act (location and time of day) along with a 2-3 sentence description of what happens in each scene. Please format each scene heading and character introduction as you would a proper script.

\*Please **BOLD** your climax.

#### ***6) Revised and completed step outline***

Use the notes and ideas given by your group in class to revise and complete a step outline for your feature length script. Please **BOLD** the plot points within these completed outlines. Simply putting your original outlines for all three acts into one document will suffice. I need to see that adjustments have been made based on classroom workshops and your outline adheres to the screenplay format being taught.

#### ***7-10) SCRIPT PAGES!***

Weeks 7-10 we will be writing and coming to class with completed script pages.

-Pages 1-10

- Pages 10-20
- Pages 20-End of Act One

These pages must:

- Include proper screenwriting format as gone over in class (courier font, scene headings, etc.)
- Adhere to the story structure being taught in the course.
- Include proper spelling and grammar. Proofreading is required.

### **FINAL!!!**

Submit your REVISED Act One to the D2L Dropbox link by 9PM on Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

- Your first act must be 30 pages MAXIMUM. We are going for efficiency and new writers need to practice the ability to GET TO THE POINT.
- These pages must adhere to proper screenplay formatting and structure as learned throughout the class.
- Spelling errors are unacceptable (spell-check, folks).
- These pages must reflect an awareness and evaluation of the notes received during class workshops. You do not need to take every note, but if your pages show no revisions or consideration of in-class critiques this will result in a grade reduction.
- These pages must show that they have been REVISED. Simply putting your earlier pages into one document will be apparent and will result in a grade reduction.

### **GRADING**

**Attendance: 10%**  
**Participation: 10%**  
**5 Loglines: 5%**  
**Plot Points/2-Page Story: 5%**  
**Act One Outline: 5%**  
**Act Two Outline: 5%**  
**Act Three Outline: 5%**  
**Revised Outline: 5%**  
**Pages 1-10: 10%**  
**Pages 10-20: 10%**  
**Pages 20-End of Act One: 10%**  
**FINAL: 20%**

\*Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A=95 A- =92 B+ =88 B=85 B- =80

C+=78 C =75 C- =70 D+=69 D =65

### **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](http://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](mailto: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](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session.

### **Changes to the 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.

### **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.