

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 301-502 Advanced Screenwriting I

Winter, 2017

Wednesday 1:30-4:45 PM, 14 East Jackson room 206

Professor Brad Riddell: brad.riddell@depaul.edu, 312-362-5212, @bradriddell

Office Hours: T,W,R from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM in CDM 521 and by appointment.

Description:

In this course students study, analyze, and write motion picture screenplays. We will employ elements of traditional storytelling, focusing on how these devices apply to contemporary screenplay structure. Students will move from concept to outline, and then finally write the first act of their own feature length screenplay. This script can be completed, revised, and polished in DC302 and DC303.

Prerequisites:

- DC201 Introduction to Screenwriting, or DC101 Screenwriting for Majors
- DC222 Hollywood Film Structures is suggested

Required Texts:

- Writing Movies for Fun and Profit by Robert Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon (Required) ISBN-10: 1439186766
- The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay by David Howard and Edward Mabley (Required) ISBN-10: 0312119089
- Additional assigned readings will be provided by the instructor on D2L.

Screenwriting Software

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a serious career focus on screenwriting, producing, and/or directing. The software is \$99 with a student discount at: <http://www.finaldraft.com/edu>.

You may also obtain a free download of the Celtx screenwriting program at:

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at:

<https://storywriter.amazon.com/>. Adobe Story can be found here:

<https://story.adobe.com/en-us/> **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Objectives:

- Express a clear rationale regarding individual project selection
- Describe a project using professional-quality loglines and treatments
- Develop fresh, three-dimensional characters
- Apply sequence structure toward the design of a professional-quality step outline
- Analyze the work of others in a constructive manner
- Write visceral and visual scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice

Outcomes:

Students will emerge from this course with a professional-quality step outline for a feature screenplay, as well as the completed and revised first act of that script.

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. There, you will find course news, reading materials, and discussion boards for posting assignments and holding conversations. The *Checklist* function will be utilized in order to help you stay abreast with this syllabus.

To manage time and offer equal consideration for everyone, students will be divided into groups. When Group B presents material in Week 4, we will be reviewing their assignments from week three and four together at once. When Group A presents in Week 5, we will review their week 4 and 5 assignments together at once. Etc... Assignments for the group being discussed are due **Monday at Noon**.

Schedule:**WEEK 1 – JANUARY 4**

Course introduction. Discuss Project Selection, Development, and Notes

Assignment: loglines and one-page pitches for three potential screenplays

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 1-3 & 11, Tools “About Screenwriting,” Field (on D2L)

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 11

Discuss Structure and Character Development. Workshop **Both Groups**.

Assignment: Feature Overview Worksheet and Character Map + 1 Scene

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 23-25, Tools “Basic Storytelling,” Schechter (on D2L)

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 18

Discuss Sequences, Tension and Conflict. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Sequence Breakdown + 1 Scene

Read: WMFF&P Appendix, Howard on Step Outlines (on D2L)

WEEK 4 – JANUARY 25

Discuss Scenes and Outlining. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the end of Act 1 + 1 Scene

Read: *Arrival* (screenplay on D2L), Mamet (on D2L)

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 1

Discuss Tone, Style, and Voice. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the Midpoint

Read: *Kubric* (screenplay on D2L), McKee (on D2L)

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 8

Discuss Dialogue and Exposition. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Step Outline through the end of Act Two.

Read: *Moonlight* (screenplay on D2L), Tools “Screenwriting Tools,”

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 15

Discuss Opening a Movie. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Completed and revised Step Outline through Act Three.

WEEK 8 – FEBRUARY 22

Discuss Format and Page Craft. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Pages to the Inciting Incident

Read: WMFF&P Ch. 26, Hollywood Standard (on D2L)

WEEK 9 – MARCH 1

Discuss the Writing Process and Momentum. Workshop **Group A**.

Assignment: Pages to the End of Act One

Read: The War of Art (on D2L)

WEEK 10 – MARCH 8

Discuss finishing a screenplay. Workshop **Group B**.

Assignment: Revise Act One

FINAL ACT ONE REVISION DUE: MARCH 15 at 5:00 PM in Dropbox on D2L

Grading:

Assignments for each group's five workshop sessions are worth a maximum of twenty points each, totaling 100, which comprises one third of your grade. You will be evaluated on effort, creativity, originality, and the application of course materials and discussion to your writing. The attached rubric will be employed for the evaluation of creative work.

You will receive a maximum of ten points per week for participation, adding up to another 100 total points, or a third of your overall grade. You will be expected to actively participate in the conversation every week. This means you should thoroughly read all of your classmates' submitted material for a given week, and then formulate clear, supportive feedback, as well as thoughtful, engaging responses to the assigned reading.

The final, revised first-act of your screenplay is worth 100 points, and should represent the very best writing you can put forth. It must be between 25-30 pages.

Late work will not often be accepted. These values are minimums for each grade:

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:

Absent students forfeit both their participation and assignment grade for each class they miss (20 total points or 6% of the final grade). Tardiness will be considered an absence.

In-Class Workshops

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share his/her work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused for the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class, or direct personal attacks on members of the class will not be tolerated in course material. If you feel you are being individually targeted by material written or discussed in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

Decorum and 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.

Laptops/Cell Phones:

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

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. But know this: plagiarism will earn you an 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.

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.
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](#).

SCA Screenwriting Grading Rubric

	UNSATISFACTORY	COMPETENT	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
CONCEPT	Does not possess a concept that can support the intended format – short film, feature, TV pilot	Contains a practical, yet ultimately derivative concept that supports the intended format – short film, feature, TV pilot	Contains an original and viable concept that supports the intended format – short film, feature, TV pilot	Contains a cinematically innovative and viable concept that supports the intended format – short film, feature, TV pilot
CHARACTER	Lacks developed character(s) that consistently struggle to evoke empathy and/or intrigue, dialogue has little distinction of character and purpose	Presents common archetypal character(s), dialogue is often on-the-nose, yet passable	Presents well-developed and active character(s) that evoke empathy and/or intrigue, dialogue is paced appropriately and serviceable throughout	Presents complex, original, and active character(s) that garner empathy and/or intrigue from the onset, dialogue is efficient, engaging, and organic to the world of the story
PLOT	Fails to develop a discernable set-up, through-line, and resolution	The set-up, through-line, and resolution is evident, but largely by-the-numbers	There is a serviceable set-up, through-line, and resolution	There is an interesting set-up, compelling through-line, and satisfying resolution
MARKET	Struggles to grasp the basic conventions of the intended genre(s) and does not appeal to the target audience	Follows the basic conventions of the intended genre(s) – labors to draw target audience	Follows the conventions of the intended genre(s) – appeals to the target audience	Follows and elevates the conventions of the intended genre(s) – resonates with the target audience
TECHNICAL	Consistently lacks understanding of industry standard script format – spelling and grammar errors throughout, action description struggles to capture what can be seen or heard on-screen, and/or fails to meet the required page length for the intended format	Displays some understanding of industry standard script format – few spelling and grammar errors, action description is serviceable, and meets the required page length for the intended format	Displays an understanding of industry standard script format – free from spelling and grammar errors, action description reveals only what can be seen or heard on-screen, and meets the required page length for the intended format	Displays a mastery of industry standard script format – free from spelling and grammar errors, action description showcases the writer's unique voice, and meets the required page length for the intended format