DC 201
INTRO TO SCREENWRITING
Summer 2017
Mon./Wed. 5:45 - 9:00 PM

INSTRUCTOR: Gary Novak
Office: CDM 405
Office Hours: Mon. 4:00 - 5:30 PM
**   Wed. 4:00 - 5:30 PM**
Phone: 312-362-7200
E-mail: gnovak@depaul.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to and overview of the elements of theme, plot, character, and dialogue in dramatic writing for cinema. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in terms of action and the reality of characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Development of synopsis and treatment for a short theatrical screenplay: theme, plot, character, mise-en- scene and utilization of cinematic elements. Prerequisites: None

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will analyze produced feature films and animated shorts in depth and will provide a final short screenplay of their own which adheres to a traditional dramatic structure. In-class readings of selected screenplays will also be required of all students, each student taking on an appointed role at least once during the quarter.

The following topics will be covered:
    Basic screenplay structure in three acts
    In-depth study of characters, storyline, and dialogue
    Plot structure and its relation to conflict and rising action
    Critical analysis of the traditional stories and interactive stories

LEARNING DOMAIN:

This course has Arts & Literature Liberal Studies Credit. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts while developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity, come to better understand the original audience that witnessed a work of art and how its meaning and significance changes over time. These courses focus on works of art or literature, however the process of analysis may include social, cultural, and historical issues. Genres covered in this domain include literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music, and theater.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students should be able to:
    - Identify and describe specific forms or genres in different disciplines.
    - Explain what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
    - Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
    - Assess the formal aspects of their subject using specialized vocabulary.
    - Consider the original audience of a work of art and how their expectations differ from our own.
    - Explain how aesthetic elements comprise a particular style in the arts.

REQUIRED TEXT:
The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard, ISBN-13**:** 978-0312119089
The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley, ISBN-13**:** 978-1932907636

COURSE POLICIES:

-Attendance:
Each week's class consists of lectures and screenings; attendance is mandatory. For the purposes of this class an absence is defined as not showing up for class or showing up 15 minutes, or more, late for a class. All absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

-Assignments:
Reasonable deadlines are given for completion for each assignment. Consequently late assignments will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

-Plagiarism:
Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you are in doubt about the definitions of plagiarism, consult your student handbook.

-Course Lectures/Reading Assignments:
Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The textbooks offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lecture presentations. The instructor will use both the classroom and the textbooks. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

-Content Changes:
Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

-Sexual Harassment:
The policy as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this class.

-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 undisruptive 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.

GRADING:

Class attendance and participation	10%
Morning pages/Journal	10%
First Fifteen Pages of Screenplay	15%
Assignments	35%
Final Draft of Screenplay	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. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

C O U R S E   O U T L I N E

W E E K   O N E

Monday:

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE AND REQUIREMENTS
- Screenwriting vs. traditional writing (novels, plays, etc.).
- Why we need to tell stories.
- Why we write.

KEY TO CREATIVITY
- Right brain versus left brain
- Don't think, don't censor, just do.
- Morning Pages.
- Artist dates.

WRITING WHAT YOU KNOW
- Turning your life experiences into drama.
- Confronting who you are - goals, needs, and desires.
- One true sentence.

Read: Howard – Introduction, Pages 1 - 17

<u>**Assignment #1**</u>: Buy a notebook and start morning pages. Write at least two pages a day, everyday, from now until the beginning of Week Three. These pages can be about anything. They don't have to be profound or particularly insightful; for that matter, they don't even have to make sense – just write. I won't read what you write in the notebook (unless you want me to); however, I will count the number of pages you write.

<u>**Assignment #2**</u>: Write about five incidents from your own life that you consider movie moments. This can be either an incident that seems like a scene from a movie or an incident that could be the idea for a movie.

Wednesday:

CHARACTER
- What defines character?
- Action and character.
- Behavior.
- Environment, as it relates to character.

Read: Howard – Pages 19 - 65

<u>**Assignment #3**</u>: Writing from an Image. The details for this will be handed out and discussed in class.

<u>**Assignment #4**</u>: Create a character. Write a character biography for the potential protagonist of your story. Use the in-class discussion and handouts as a guide. Remember, the key to a dimensional character, write in the first person, and in complete sentences. Be as specific as you can – the more details the better. Also, keep in mind that nothing is chiseled in stone.

<u>**W E E K   T W O**</u>

 Monday:

  CONFLICT
   - Cause and effect and obstacles.
   - Change in character.

  STRUCTURE
   - Beginning, middle and end.
   - Plot points.
   - The pulse of a script.
   - The Aristotelian curve.

<u>**Assignment #5**</u>: Outline *The Graduate* hitting all the major beats and plot points. Follow the format used in class and the template posted on D2L. Record the time into the movie that the major beats occur (the fifteen minute sequences).

 Wednesday:

  SHORTS
   - Writing the short.

  TREATMENTS
   - Step outlines.

  Read: Howard – Pages 66 - 94

<u>**Assignment #6**</u>: Write a step outline for your story.   You will present your outline next class.

<u>**W E E K   T H R E E**</u>

 Monday:

  PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION OF STEP OUTLINES

  SCENES
   - Defining goals of each scene.
   - The function of each scene.
   - Beats.

  DIALOGUE
   - Good and bad dialogue.
   - Character voices.
   - Ear training.

<u>**Assignment #7**</u>: Begin writing your screenplay. The first fifteen pages are due next week.

Wednesday:

    PREMISE
        - Premise/Plot/Theme.
        - The unifying element.
        - Loglines

    WRITING IN VISUAL TERMS
        - Metaphor.

    SCREENPLAY FORMAT
        - The method to the madness.
        - Script writing software.

W E E K   F O U R

Monday:

    FIRST FIFTEEN PAGES OF SCREENPLAY DUE
        - Bring copies to class.

Assignment #8: Continue writing the first draft.

Wednesday:

    INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES
        - Meet one on one to discuss screenplay.

Assignment #9: Finish writing the first draft.

W E E K   F I V E

Monday:

    REVISING/REWRITING
        - Final scripts due FRIDAY.
        - Getting through writer's block.
        - Review of format.

Wednesday:

    TBD

Friday:

    FINAL DRAFT OF SCREENPLAYS ARE DUE
        - Submit via the dropbox on D2L.

<u>**SCHOOL POLICIES:**</u>

- 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 Instructor Evaluation:
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 Campus Connect.

- Email:
Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at Campus Connect is correct.

- 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.

- Incomplete:
An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

- Resources for 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:

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.
Phone number: (312)362-8002
Fax: (312)362-6544
TTY: (773)325.7296