

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 101-603, Screenwriting for Majors

Autumn 2017, Tuesday/Thursday 11:50AM – 1:20PM

CDM, 243 S. Wabash Avenue, Room 228

Instructor: Anna Hozian

Office: CDM 463

Office Hours: TU, TH 10:00AM-11:00AM

WED 4:00PM - 5:00 PM

ahozian@depaul.edu

Summary of Course and Outcomes

This course introduces digital cinema majors to scripted dramatic writing for media production. The topics covered include screenplay format, visual writing style, scene craft, story structure, character development, and dialogue. In addition to completing several writing assignments, students will develop and write one short screenplay.

Course Objectives

- Students will be able to employ standard screenplay format
- identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- prepare original writing projects on a deadline
- analyze and assess their own work and that of their peers

Textbooks and Printed Resources

"Tools of Screenwriting" by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089
(Required)

"The Hollywood Standard" by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637 (Required)
Additional readings provided by instructor

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 can 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/>. **All assignments are to be saved in PDF.**

Course Management

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late — or leaving early — constitutes a reduction in your participation grade.

Grading Policy

Class attendance and participation: 15 points

Scene Assignments: 25 points

Loglines: 5 Points

Treatments/Outlines: 10 points

Short Script Draft: 15 points

Short Script Draft 2: 15 points

Final Draft Short Script: 15 points

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, F is substantially unsatisfactory.

Course Outline

(T = Tuesday, TH = Thursday)

Week 1

Thurs. 09/07 Lecture: Course Intro, What is a Story? What is a Screenplay? Creating Mood and Atmosphere

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: About Screenwriting and Basic Storytelling (3-40), Visuals (88-90)

The Hollywood Standard: Forward, Introduction, and Quick Start Guide (through page 27)

ASSIGNMENT: *Mood and Atmosphere* - DUE BY SUNDAY, 09/10 at 11:59PM

Tues. 09/12 Workshop: *Mood and Atmosphere*

Week 2

Thurs. 09/14 Lecture: Character

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: Characterization (63-65), Planting and Payoff, Elements of the Future (pages 72-76)

The Hollywood Standard: Shot Headings (29-62), Direction (63-80)

ASSIGNMENT: *Preparation for a Date* - DUE BY SUNDAY, 09/17 at 11:59PM

Tues. 9/19 Workshop: *Preparation for a Date*

Week 3

Thurs. 09/21 Lecture: The Scene: Conflict & Goals, Stakes & Urgency

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: Protagonist, Conflict, Obstacles (43-49), Activity and Action (81-83), The Dramatic Scene (91-94)

The Hollywood Standard: Dialogue (81-102)

Mamet (on D2L)

ASSIGNMENT: *Interrogation - DUE BY SUNDAY, 09/24 at 11:59PM*

Tues. 09/26 Workshop: *Interrogation*

Week 4

Thurs. 09/28 Lecture: Exposition

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: Exposition (60-62)

The Hollywood Standard: Transitions, Punctuation (103-111)

ASSIGNMENT: *Seduction - DUE BY SUNDAY, 10/01 at 11:59PM*

Tues. 10/03 Workshop: *Seduction*

READING: *The War of Art, Script Frenzy (on D2L)*

Week 5

Thurs. 10/05 Lecture: Dialogue and Dramatic Irony

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: Dramatic Irony (68-70), Dialogue (84-87)

The Hollywood Standard: Special Pages (131-139)

ASSIGNMENT: *The Wrongest Person - DUE BY SUNDAY, 10/08 at 11:59AM*

Tues. 10/10 Workshop: *Wrongest Person*

Week 6

Thurs. 10/12 Lecture: Writing the Short Script Part I; What is a Pitch?

READING:

Tools of Screenwriting: Premise, Main Tension, Theme, Unity (49-59), Outlining, Plausibility (76-80)

ASSIGNMENT: *Three Loglines for Short Script - DUE BY SUNDAY, 10/15 at 11:59PM*

Tues. 10/17 Workshop: Pitch Three Loglines for Short Scripts

Week 7

Thurs. 10/19: Lecture: Writing the Short Script Part II

ASSIGNMENT: *Treatment or Step Outline - DUE BY SUNDAY, 10/22 at 11:59PM*

Tues. 10/24 Workshop: *Treatments and Step Outlines (One-on-Ones)*

Week 8

Thurs. 10/26 Lecture: Process, Professionalism, and The Rewrite Plan (including how to take notes)

ASSIGNMENT: *First Draft of Short Script - DUE BY SUNDAY, 10/29 at 11:59PM*

Tues. 10/31 Workshop: *First Draft of Short Script*

Week 9

Thurs. 11/02 Workshop: *First Draft of Short Script*

READING

Tools of Screenwriting: Rewriting (95-97)

ASSIGNMENT: *Second Drafts of Short Scripts* - DUE BY SUNDAY, 11/05 at 11:59PM

Tues. 11/07 Workshop: *Second Drafts of Short Scripts*

Week 10

Thurs. 11/09 Workshop: *Second Drafts of Short Scripts*

ASSIGNMENT: *Third Draft of Short Script* - DUE BY SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19 at 11:59PM

Bonus:

Tues. 11/14 Screenwriting Exam

Final

Third Draft of Script Due - Sunday, November 19th by 11:59PM

Assignments

Scene Assignments

You will write a total of five scene exercises throughout the quarter based on the topics we cover in class – specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided on D2L. These exercises will typically be assigned on Thursday and will be critiqued in class the following Tuesday. You are expected to bring a printed copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L AND to the proper discussion board. Each scene assignment is 5% of your final grade (25% in total). Please save files as a PDF, and use your last name and the name of the assignment:

YourNameInterrogationScene.pdf

You will be graded on:

- Style and Format
- Creative execution of the assignment within the given parameters
- Use of dramatic techniques presented in class and the readings

Loglines, Treatments, and Step Outlines

You will come in with three story ideas that can be conveyed in a short film, and you will pitch them to the class. After a brief discussion, you will choose one to write for your 10-page script. Then you will develop a treatment or step outline for the short film, which will also be workshopped prior to the writing of short scripts.

Short Script Draft I

You will submit a first draft of a short script that is to be no longer than 10 pages. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.

- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count - proofread your work, proofread it again, and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required.
- You must include a properly-formatted cover page.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - it may be a good idea to have a friend look over the script as well.
- Action description should be lean - only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Develop a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Avoid exposition-heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative - you won't be able to do it in one night and achieve the grade you want.

You will be workshopping these scripts in class with your peers, not with me. I will not give you notes on your first drafts, only your second and third.

Short Script Draft II

Points to consider:

- The second draft of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort. Correcting typos and making small tweaks is not a rewrite.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops, and your own self-evaluation to craft your revised draft. Get outside opinions if you can.
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count even more. Proofread again.

Short Script Draft III

This is your final writing assignment. The final script is to be no longer than 10 pages. Again, it should be a marked improvement over your second draft.

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](#).

	UNSATISFACTORY (10)	COMPETENT (15)	PROFICIENT (17)	DISTINGUISHED (20)
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