

DC 101 Syllabus - Screenwriting for Majors - Fall Quarter 2017 - Brian Mellen

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Office hours: Tu 1:30pm to 5:30pm - 14 E. Jackson Rm. 200B By Appt. Only

Summary of Course:

This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, story structure, character, and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. Students are expected to develop and write a short screenplay.

Prerequisites: None.

** Syllabus is subject to change*

Course Objectives:

By the end of the term students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of effective storytelling.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the three act screenplay structure.
3. Write a complete short screenplay focusing on developing characters and creating tension.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will develop a solid understanding of the relationship between character and story structure.
2. Students will be able to identify the various narrative tools available to filmmakers in the writing and producing process.
3. Students will develop a cinematic vocabulary with which to discuss films critically.

Course Management System: D2L

Textbooks and printed resources:

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting, Newly Revised & Updated,
Field, Syd, 2005. ISBN: 978-0385339032

The Hollywood Standard: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Script Format and Style,
2nd edition, Riley, Christopher, 2009. ISBN 13: 9781932907636

Recommended Texts:

Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay,
Howard, David, 1995. ISBN 13: 9780312119089

The Art of Dramatic Writing

Egri, Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1972. ISBN: 978-0671213329

Software for formatting a screenplay:

You will be required to use screenwriting software toward the end of the course. Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a focus on screenwriting, producing and/or directing – The software is \$129.99 with a student discount at:

<http://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-10-edu.html>

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

www.celtx.com

Drop Dates:

Wednesday, Sept. 13 (by 8am): Last day to add (or swap) classes

Tuesday, Sept. 19: Last day to drop classes with no penalty

Tuesday, Oct. 24: Last day to withdraw from classes

Grading:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Professionalism	10%
Quizzes	10%
Morning Pages/Journal	10%
First Draft of Screenplay	5%
Assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Screenplay	20%

Grading Scale:

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82- 80, C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, 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

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.

Student responsibilities:

Each student is responsible for their time management and for meeting the expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines in class. In the event of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for an assignment sheet detailing any homework. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus you are still responsible for completing the assignment on time.

Deadlines, Excuses, and Professionalism:

This course is designed to teach professional conduct. Time management skills are essential for all endeavors. Modern technology makes it easy to stay organized, on time and on task. Please remember, an excuse is just that—an excuse. Here are just a few examples of excuses for not meeting class obligations that won't be accepted:

- I submitted to D2L last minute and it wasn't working...
- I have a life...
- I forgot...
- I didn't realize...
- I mixed up the dates...
- I don't "do" books...
- My alarm didn't go off...
- I was busy working on other projects so I didn't...
- I didn't look on the syllabus...
- My hard-drive crashed and I didn't back up my work...
- The internet was slow when I tried to turn in my project...

Late assignments will not be accepted for grading and written feedback will be given at the instructors discretion. You will not be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

Attendance & Participation:

This course demands class participation - attendance is mandatory. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late, or leaving before class is dismissed will be considered absent. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences. After that, each successive absence will affect your Participation grade. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized.

Examinations:

Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam.

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: 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
Fax: (312)362-6544
TTY: (773)325.7296

Plagiarism:

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

Content Changes:

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

CLASS SCHEDULE

** Syllabus schedule is subject to change*

Week One 09/06 and 09/11

Introduction to Course and Requirements, Screenwriting vs. Traditional Writing, What is a movie? Conflict

Readings: Field Ch. 1-3

Assignment #1 (Due at 10/16): Buy a notebook and start writing your morning pages. Write at least two pages a day, five days a week, from now until the midterm. 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).

Assignment #2 (Due 09/13): Write about three different moments in your life or someone else's that could make a good starting point for a movie. Write about why you think each of these moments could make an interesting basis for a story in a movie. Devote at least a paragraph for each moment. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Two 09/13 and 09/18

What defines character?

Readings: Field - Ch. 4-6, Riley pp. 1-11, 20-21

Assignment #3 (Due 09/20): Create a character. Write a character biography for the protagonist of your story. Be as specific as you can - the more details the better. Also, keep in mind, nothing is chiseled in stone.

Also, turn your three movie moments ideas into loglines. Include your loglines on your Assignment #3 document. You will share these ideas in class next week.

Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Quiz #1 Due 09/20

Week Three 09/20 and 09/25

Story Structure, Plot Points, Aristotelian Curve

Readings: Field - Ch. 7-9, Riley - pp. 23-62

Assignment #4 (Due 9/27): Outline a feature film hitting all the major beats and plot points. Record the time into the movie that the major beats occur (the 10's).

Also, on a separate sheet, find (3) great character intros from produced screenplays and write them down. You don't need to write these yourself, you can just copy them from the screenplay. Make note of which movie they're from.

Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Quiz #2 Due 09/27

Week Four 09/27 and 10/02

Premise, Treatments, Screenplay Format

Readings: Field - Ch. 10-12, Riley - pp. 63-80

Assignment #5 (Due 10/04): Write a step outline for your story. You will present your outline to the class next week. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Assignment #6 (Due 10/04): Read a screenplay from the "Best Screenplays of All Time" link on D2L. Many screenplays can be found by a simple Google search or you can try looking for it on the "Simply Scripts" link found on D2L. It has to be a movie you've never seen. After reading the screenplay, watch the movie. You can watch the movie on Netflix, iTunes, or wherever you can find it. The DePaul Library in Lincoln Park has a pretty good selection of DVDs too. Write one-page about your impressions on reading a screenplay and then watching the movie. Were there any differences between the screenplay and the movie? Was there anything that surprised you about the way the movie turned out? Upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Five 10/04 and 10/09

Presentations/Discussion of Step Outlines, Review for Midterm, Screenplay Format Cont'd

Readings: Read assigned screenplay

Assignment #7 (Due 10/11): Write the opening scene or scenes to your movie. **Make sure it's a scene with dialogue.** It must be at least one page. Must be uploaded to D2L as a .PDF. Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Six 10/11 and 10/16

Midterm on 10/16

Readings: Field - Ch. 13-15, Riley - pp. 81-102

Assignment #8 (Due 10/18): Begin writing your screenplay. The first three pages are due next week. Bring five copies to class next week. Must be uploaded to D2L as a .PDF. Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Assignment #9 (Due 11/08): Genre assignment - A man and a woman arrive separately to a bookstore. She is concealing something in her clothing. He has a secret. Write 2 different 3-5 page scenes using the proper screenplay format. Include a clear beginning middle and end to the scene (think of it as a very short film).

Choose 2 from the following genres:

- a. An Action film
- b. A Drama
- c. A Romantic Comedy
- d. A Mystery or Thriller

Week Seven 10/18 and 10/23

Dialogue

FIRST THREE PAGES OF SCREENPLAY DUE 10/18

Bring five copies.

Readings: Field - Ch. 16-18, Riley - pp. 103-113

Assignment #10 (Due 10/25): Continue writing the first draft. First seven pages due next week. Must be uploaded to D2L as a .PDF. Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Quiz #3 Due 10/25

Week Eight 10/25 and 10/30

Scenes

FIRST SEVEN PAGES DUE 10/25

Readings: Riley - pp. 115-139

FIRST DRAFT (Due 11/01): Finish writing the first draft. Upload to D2L as .PDF only.
Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Nine 11/01 and 11/06

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Meet one on one to discuss final screenplay.

Assignment #9 (Due 11/08): Genre assignment - A man and a woman arrive separately to a bookstore. She is concealing something in her clothing. He has a secret. Write 2 different 3-5 page scenes using the proper screenplay format. Include a clear beginning middle and end to the scene (think of it as a very short film).

Choose 2 from the following genres:

- a. An Action film
- b. A Drama
- c. A Romantic Comedy
- d. A Mystery or Thriller

Readings: Riley - pp. 113-119

Quiz #4 Due 11/08

Class Ten 11/08 and 11/13

REVISING/REWRITING

Final scripts due in ONE WEEK.

Getting through writer's block.

Review of format.

FINAL DRAFT OF SCREENPLAYS ARE DUE Nov. 15, 2017 by 11:59pm.