

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 300, Section 701 - Story Development

Fall 2017

Tuesday 5:45 – 9:00PM, 14 East Jackson, Room 209

Professor Keely Wise: keelywise@yahoo.com

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00PM and by appointment
14 E. Jackson, Office 200B

Description

Students will develop an original feature length movie or TV pilot story from concept to scene-by-scene outline. This will be accomplished by progressing weekly through a set of story summaries – Logline, Character Map, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, Outline – as tools to develop characters and narrative structure. Each class meeting will feature a lecture, class discussion, and extended group workshops in which students will provide and receive feedback on their evolving stories. The course will culminate with a complete Scene-By-Scene Outline, which students can use as a blueprint to write a first draft of their script in DC 301, DC 306 or DC 307.

Objectives

- Learn basic tools of story development through lectures on a variety of topics related to the story development process
- Generate and assess story concepts, learn to compare the merits of multiple projects, and learn to identify and select strong, viable concepts for development
- Learn character development tools and apply said tools to the story-crafting process
- Produce a Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, and finally a Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writers' materials and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline, and in so doing learn and hone skills for writing on assignment

Outcomes

Multiple iterations of a strong story concept in a progressive set of narrative forms, including a viable Logline, a Character Map, a Synopsis, a Breakdown, a Treatment, and a Scene-By-Scene Outline, all of which can be used as a blueprint for writing a first draft of a feature film or TV pilot.

Required Reading

Peer writing assignments, writing assignment examples and *Go Into The Story* posts as linked on the D2L course site and assigned in class.

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There, students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion forums, and additional class materials.

In Week 1, the class will be divided into three groups for workshop purposes: Group A, Group B, and Group C. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's assignment, after which we will break into Groups to workshop each student's story. For shorter assignments, including the Logline, Character Map and Synopsis, students are required to read all class members' work prior to class. For longer assignments, including the Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet and Outline, students are required to read only their Group Members' work prior to class. Written comments on Group Members' work shall be posted on D2L prior to class every week. Students should come to class prepared to constructively discuss their comments and ideas each week.

Assignments

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered, and shall include a title page as follows:

Student Name

Course Number

Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs, in the following file name format:

WA1 Chayefsky

WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due by **MIDNIGHT on the SUNDAY prior to the class when said assignment is due**. To be considered timely submitted, you must upload your assignment to that week's Submissions forum **and** your group's Discussion List forum on the D2L site. This is to provide your instructor, classmates and Group Members sufficient time to read and assess your work prior to class. Late posts will result in reduced credit.

NOTE: You are responsible for reading the weekly writing assignments before every class session (see above for whether you are required to read all class submissions or only your Group's submissions). You are required to provide written comments on your Group Members' work every week via D2L, and to come to class prepared with constructive

feedback, including:

- What you liked about the story / what worked for you
- What issues or problems you experienced in considering the story
- What suggestions you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

Course Schedule

Week 1 – September 12

Introductions

Syllabus and course review

Group assignments

Lecture: An Overview of Aristotle and The Hero's Journey; How to Generate and Assess Story Concepts

Writing Assignment (WA1)

Movie Writers: 5 story concepts

TV Writers: 5 series concepts

Refer to examples on D2L: Story / Series Concepts

Week 2 – September 19

Story concept discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Loglines

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Logline for preferred story or series concept

Refer to examples on D2L: Logline, Genre, Movie / TV Associations, Movie Studios / TV Networks

Week 3 – September 26

Logline discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Character Development

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Protagonist Biography, Questionnaire, Interview, Monologue

Refer to example on D2L

NOTE: Schedule a one-on-one meeting in my office (14 E. Jackson, 200B) either this week or next to discuss your goals in and out of this class, and any issues you may be experiencing in generating and developing your story idea.

Week 4 – October 3

Character development discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Transformation

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

Refer to example on D2L

Week 5 – October 10

Character map discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Synopsis

Writing Assignment (WA5)

Synopsis

Refer to example on D2L

Week 6 – October 17

Synopsis discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Breakdown

Writing Assignment (WA6)

Breakdown

Refer to example on D2L

NOTE: From this point forward in the class you are only required to read your Group's work prior to class. That said, you are encouraged to read as much of your classmates' work as possible, as this will enrich our class discussions and add to both your and your classmates' growth as writers.

Week 7 – October 24

Breakdown discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Treatment and The Whammo Theory

Writing Assignment (WA7)

Treatment

Refer to example on D2L

Week 8 – October 31

Treatment discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Beat Sheet and Narrative Throughline

Writing Assignment (WA8)

Beat Sheet

Refer to example on D2L

Week 9 – November 7

Beat Sheet discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Note Cards and Plotting

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

Refer to example on D2L

We will set aside 20 minutes for course evaluations in class this week. You may complete the evaluation on a laptop or mobile device.

Week 10 – November 14

Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Seeing the Movie

Writing Assignment (WA10)

Final: Revised Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

Revised final Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) due in the appropriate D2L Submissions folder by 8:15 PM, November 21, 2017.

Grading

Point totals for this course's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development (WA3), Character Map (WA4)

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Treatment (WA7), Beat Sheet (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9)

20 points: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10)

10 points: Participation

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

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

Participation

This class is a workshop. This means you are expected to focus on each writer's assignments, assess what works and what, in your opinion, needs work, express your thoughts, and come up with suggestions to improve the story. Students will also be called upon to offer comments related to the reading and writing assignments. Students are expected to answer these questions to the best of their abilities and to meaningfully engage in related discussions.

Even if your story is not being reviewed in class, you must participate in workshop discussions. This is not only part of your grade, but also a way to develop your critical analytical skills. For more on this topic, please refer to the post on D2L called "Constructive Critique."

Attendance

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class, you must email me in advance of the class for it to be considered an excused absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a

grade reduction.

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 while the instructor is speaking, mocking another's work or opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet for purposes other than those approved for class. If any issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students to navigate such student issues.

Workshop Guidelines

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally. Given the unique nature of our class, and its emphasis on creativity, personal storytelling and developing a strong, unique voice, students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about stories which may include potentially controversial subject matter, including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's work and opinions. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Focus your comments on the story, not the writer.

In general, we want to create a positive and respectful evaluative environment where we acknowledge what works in a story, address and analyze issues and concerns in a story, and collectively brainstorm possible solutions and suggestions.

Laptops/Cell Phones

Since we will need to access the D2L site in order to facilitate small group workshop sessions, please bring your laptop to class. That said, I trust that, on your honor as a DePaul University student and as a creative individual who aspires to learn the writing craft, you will not stray into any form of social media during class. Phones must be silenced and stowed at all times, except during breaks.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to DePaul 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.

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

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.

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 a key component to providing 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.

Office Hours and One-On-One Meetings

My office hours will be held on Tuesdays from 3:00-5:00PM at 14 E. Jackson St., in Room 200B. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, or anything else that's on your mind.

In addition, we will schedule a **one-on-one meeting** to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the story development process.