

***DC308/408: Advanced  
Writing on Assignment  
Winter 2017 - 2018  
Wednesday 5:45 - 9:00 PM  
CDM 214***

***Instructor: Lee Madsen  
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Office: CDM 434  
Office Hours:  
W 1:45PM to 4:45PM***

### **Course Description:**

Modeled after professional writing assignments, this advanced course challenges students to complete a feature-length screenplay with specific parameters provided by the instructor in ten weeks. Lectures and strict, weekly page submission deadlines provide a practical framework on how to write quickly without sacrificing quality. Constructive analysis will be used in discussing produced scripts, weekly assignments and group workshops to reveal the writer's unique voice and perspective.  
PREREQUISITE(S): DC 101, 201, or 501.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students develop the ability to create realistic goals and meet strict submission guidelines. Students will improve their ability to receive constructive criticism through workshops and how to employ these notes in their writing. □ Students learn to write efficiently by focusing on manageable sequences and embracing three- act structure.

Students will complete a feature-length screenplay in ten weeks.

### **Texts and Films:**

Readings and films will be assigned and provided by the instructor throughout the course.

### **Required Software:**

Final Draft or comparable screenwriting software.

### **Grading:**

**Script Pitch and Plot Points (10% of Final Grade) □ Attendance,**

**Participation, and Workshops: (20% of Final Grade) Ten-Page Weekly Assignments (70% of final 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,

## **D2L:**

You will be using D2L in this course. To log on, go to:  
<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/orgtools/CAS/Default.aspx> and enter using your campus connect logon and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, discussion forums, and weekly assignments.

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.

## **Class Outline:**

**Week One, January 3rd:** Course Intro and Expectations, What does Writing on Assignment mean? Assignments Distributed, Budgets, Character and Structure Basics, The Pitch Assignment (Due January 8th on D2L): Script Pitches and Plot Points

**Week Two, January 10th:** Pitches of Screenplays and Plot Points Assignment (Due January 15th on D2L) : Pages 1 to 10

**Week Three, January 17th:** Structure Lecture Assignment (Due January 22nd on D2L): Pages 11 to 20

**Week Four, January 24th:** Finding You in Every Script Assignment (Due January 29th on D2L): Pages 21 to 30 \*Pages 1 to 30 must be also uploaded by the 29th into an individual thread in the Assigned Discussion Forum. You must read each person's script in your assigned group by the start of class on February 8th and be ready to workshop them.

**Week Five, January 31st:** Taking and Giving Notes/Producers and Pitch Meetings Assignment (Due February 5th on D2L): Pages 31 to 40

**Week Six, February 7th:** First Workshop (pages 1 to 30) Assignments

**(Due February 12th on D2L): Pages 41 to 50\*\*\*Pages 31 to 50 must also be uploaded by the 12th into an individual thread in the Assigned Discussion Forum. You must read each person's script in your assigned group by the start of class on February 22nd and be ready to workshop them.**

**Week Seven, February 14th: Act III Lecture□Assignment (Due February 19th on D2L): Pages 51 to 60**

**Week Eight, February 21st: Second Workshop (pages 1 to 50)□Assignment (Due February 26th on D2L): Pages 61 to 70\*\*\*Pages 51 to 70 must also be uploaded by the 26th into an individual thread in the Assigned Discussion Forum. You must read each person's script in your assigned group by the start of class on March 8th and be ready to workshop each of them.**

**Week Nine, February 28th: The Next Steps: First Drafts and Rewriting Assignment: Pages 71 to 80**

**Week Ten, March 7th: Third Workshop (pages 1 to 70) Assignment: Pages 81 to 100**

**Final, Week Eleven, March 14th: Final Pages Due by 11:59PM**

**Assignments:**

*Late assignments will not be accepted.*

**Script Pitch and Plot Points (10% of Final Grade)**

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**Attendance, Participation, and Workshops: (20% of Final Grade)**

**Ten-Page Weekly Assignments (70% of final grade)**

**Each week you must submit the assigned ten pages to the specified D2L Dropbox. Additionally, there are three large submissions which will be workshopped your group.**

**\*Large Submission 1: Pages 1-30 are due by Monday, January 29th at NOON. You must upload a copy to the D2L Dropbox AND you must**

create a thread in your Assigned Workshop Discussion Forum. Once you create a thread, you will have access to the other students' scripts in your workshop group. You must be ready to workshop the other students' work in class on February 7th.

**\*\*Large Submission 2:** Pages 31 through 50 are due by Monday, February 12th at NOON. You must upload a copy to the D2L Dropbox AND you must create a thread in your Assigned Workshop Discussion Forum. Please note any changes you made to the first thirty pages that might affect the current pages. Once you create a thread, you will have access to the other students' scripts in your workshop group. You must be ready to workshop the other students' work in class on February 21st.

**\*\*\*Large Submission 3:** Pages 51 through 70 are due by Monday, February 26th at NOON. You must upload a copy to the D2L Dropbox AND you must create a thread in your Assigned Workshop Discussion Forum. Please note any changes you made to the first thirty pages that might affect the current pages. Once you create a thread, you will have access to the other students' scripts in your workshop group. You must be ready to workshop the other students' work in class on March 7th.

*A few things to keep in mind as you write your scripts:*

- 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. ☐
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the ☐ script as well. ☐
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to The

Hollywood Standard, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.

- Action description should be lean - Only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Ask questions if you need help.
- Please make sure your page submissions are saved as a PDF.  
Please submit all assignments to the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L. **Final Draft of Your Screenplay** You are expected to submit the final draft of your completed feature length screenplay by 11:59PM on Wednesday, March 14th via the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L for a final evaluation. Late submissions will not be accepted. A few things to keep in mind: • You must include a cover page. • Your submission must be at least 90 pages and should read as a complete screenplay in the correct

☐ format. ☐ • Please make sure the script is saved as a PDF. ☐

## **Attendance**

Attendance and participation is mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up for class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction on your overall grade.

## **Participation**

You may be called upon to discuss various topics on screenwriting and storytelling during class and discussions may develop throughout the course online, with which you are required to participate.

## **Workshops**

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in three workshop sessions throughout the course. Please be sure to adhere to the following workshop guidelines.

## **Workshop Guidelines**

- First and foremost, a workshop is about the piece of writing, not the writer. Both the writer and those critiquing the piece need to keep in mind that the goal is to make the writing the best it possibly can be. ☐
- Workshops are never destructive. They are constructive. Writing is never “bad.” The writing is addressed so that it can get stronger. ☐
- Always start with something that is working in the piece. ☐

- Then go on to the aspects that are not yet fully developed or that are not quite working yet. ☐
- The writer must stay quiet during the workshopping of her or his piece. ☐
- If the majority of the readers agree on a particular element of the piece that is working or not working, ☐ listen. If the readers are completely divided, it simply may just be a matter of opinion. ☐
- The writer should always listen, but ultimately must trust his or her gut. The writer's name will be on ☐ the page when all is said and done. ☐
- All people must have time to participate for each writer. No single person should dominate the ☐ conversation. ☐
- The writer may speak and ask questions at the end of the workshop.

## ☐ **Additional Policies and Information:** ☐

### **Attitude and Civil Discourse**

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.

### **Changes to the 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 Course Evaluations**

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course



and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor. ☐ ✕

### **Withdrawal☐**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system at <http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>. Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

## **Retroactive Withdrawal**

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval. College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

- Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
- Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
- Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
- Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

## **Excused Absence**

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html> . Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

## **Incomplete**

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when

otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process on [my.cdm.depaul.edu/](http://my.cdm.depaul.edu/).

All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.

- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form. ☐
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor. ☐
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter. ☐ **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):

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

☐ Phone number: (773) 325.1677 ☐

Fax: (773) 325.3720 ☐

TTY: (773) 325.7296

☐ [http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.as](http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx)

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