

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 403 – WRITING THE FEATURE II

Spring 2018

When: Tuesdays, 5:45 – 9:00PM

Where: 14 East Jackson, Room 211

Instructor: Professor Keely Lewis Wise
keelywise@yahoo.com

Office Hrs.: Tuesdays, 3:00 - 5:00 PM
14 East Jackson, 200B
(312) 362-1306
Conferences may also be scheduled by appointment.

Summary of Course

This course focuses on completing the first draft of an original feature length screenplay developed in DC 402. Emphasis will be placed on a foundation of character, structure, plot, and theme to bring the writer's vetted concept to fruition. The lectures, in-class workshops, and aggressive page deadlines are designed to culminate in a spec screenplay that showcases voice and command of screenwriting conventions. This feature length screenplay should be revised and polished in DC 404. Prerequisite: DC 402.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Write at a professional pace and deliver pages on deadline.
- Write visceral and visual scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice.
- Create three-dimensional characters with unique voices, clear motivations, and compelling character arcs.
- Apply established narrative techniques to scenes, sequences and acts.
- Create a fully developed narrative throughline.
- Evaluate the work of peers and formulate constructive feedback.
- Receive and implement notes and feedback from peers.

Outcomes

Students will complete the first draft of an original feature length screenplay. Minimum: 90 pages.

Required Reading

Peer writing assignments, selected scripts and text excerpts, as made available on D2L.

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 \$129.99 with a student discount at <http://store.finaldraft.com>. You may also obtain a free download of Celtx screenwriting program at <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at <https://storywriter.amazon.com>. **All assignments must be delivered in .pdf format.**

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L** exclusively. 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, review and analysis of a demonstrative script and film, and a full class workshop of the assigned group's pages. Students are required to read the assigned group's pages prior to class each week. Students should come to class prepared to constructively discuss their comments and ideas each week. Class participation in these discussions is mandatory and one third of your grade.

Assignments

All assignments must be typed in screenplay format with pages numbered, and shall include a title page. All assignments must be submitted in PDF format.

If it is your Group's week to workshop, your writing assignment is due by MIDNIGHT on SUNDAY before the class when said assignment is due. If it is NOT your Group's week to workshop, your writing assignment is due before the start of Class. To be considered timely submitted, you must upload your assignment to that week's Submissions forum **and** your group's Discussion forum on the D2L site. This is to provide your instructor and your classmates sufficient time to read and assess your work prior to class. Late posts will result in forfeited workshop time and reduced credit.

NOTE: You are responsible for reading the weekly writing assignments before every class session. You are required 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/ideas you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

Course Schedule

Week 1 - March 27, 2018

Introductions

Syllabus and course review

Discuss/Pitch Student Projects

Lecture: Sequencing Review & Openings

Writing Assignment

Sequence 1

Read

Lady Bird, pages 1 through 15.

Prep

Group A: Submit Sequence 1 by Sunday

All: Read Group A's pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group A's pages

Week 2 – April 3, 2018

Sequence 1 Due (all groups)

Watch *Lady Bird*, Sequence 1 & Discuss

Workshop Group A's pages

Lecture: Setting up the Main Tension

Writing Assignment

Complete Act I (Sequence 1 and 2)

Read

Lady Bird, pages 15 through 31.

Prep:

Group B: Submit Act I by Sunday

All: Read Group B's Act I pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group B's Act I pages

Week 3 – April 10, 2018

Act I Due (all groups)

Watch *Lady Bird*, Sequence 2 & Discuss

Workshop Group B's pages

Lecture: Fun & Games

Writing Assignment

Sequence 3

Read

Lady Bird, pages 31 through 47.

Prep

Group C: Submit Act I + Sequence 3 by Sunday

All: Read Group C's pages (Act I + Sequence 3) before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group C's pages

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 writing your first draft.

Week 4 - April 17, 2018

Act I + Sequence 3 Due (all groups)

Watch *Lady Bird*, Sequence 3 & Discuss

Workshop Group C's pages

Lecture: Hitting the Midpoint

Writing Assignment

Sequence 4 (through the Midpoint)

Read

Lady Bird, pages 47 through 62.

Prep

Group A: Submit pages through the Midpoint by Sunday

All: Read Group A's new pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group A's new pages

Week 5 - April 24, 2018

Pages through the Midpoint Due (all groups)

Watch *Lady Bird*, Sequence 4 & Discuss

Workshop Group A's pages

Lecture: Using Subplots

Writing Assignment

Sequence 5

Read

Lady Bird, pages 63 through 77.

Prep

Group B: Submit pages through Sequence 5 by Sunday

All: Read Group B's new pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group B's pages

Week 6 – May 1, 2018

Pages through Sequence 5 Due (all groups)

Watch: *Lady Bird*, Sequence 5 & Discuss

Workshop Group B's pages

Lecture: Rising Action – Avoiding the Act II Sag

Writing Assignment

Complete Act II (Sequences 1-6)

Read

Lady Bird, pages 77 through 92.

Prep

Group C: Submit complete Act II by Sunday

All: Read Group C's new pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group C's pages

Week 7 – May 8, 2018

Act II Due (all groups)

Watch: *Lady Bird*, Sequence 6 & Discuss

Workshop Group C's pages

Lecture: The new Main Tension

Writing Assignment

Sequence 7

Read

Lady Bird, pages 92 through 104.

Prep

Group A: Submit pages through Sequence 7 (through the Climax) by Sunday

All: Read Group A's new pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group A's pages

Week 8 – May 15, 2018

Pages through Sequence 7 Due (all groups)

Watch: *Lady Bird*, Sequence 7 & Discuss

Workshop Group A's pages

Lecture: Resolution – How to Bring it All Home

Writing Assignment

Complete Act III (Sequences 1-8)

Read

Lady Bird, pages 104 through 115.

Prep

Group B: Submit complete first draft (through Fade Out) by Sunday

All: Read Group B's new pages before Class

All: Be prepared to discuss Group B's pages

Week 9 – May 22, 2018

Act III Due (all groups)

Watch: *Lady Bird*, Sequence 8 & Discuss

Workshop Group B's pages

Lecture: Revising a First Draft

Writing Assignment

Prepare a Revising Plan

Prep

All: Submit Revising Plan

All: Read Group C's Act III

All: Be prepared to discuss Group C's Act III pages

NOTE: 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 – May 29, 2018

Discuss Final Submission

Workshop Group C's Act III pages

Lecture: Seeing the Movie

FINAL EXAM

FINAL REVISED SCRIPT DUE **JUNE 5, 2018 AT 6:00 PM** IN SUBMISSIONS ON D2L. **NO EXCEPTIONS OR EXTENSIONS.**

Grading

Each of the eight weekly writing assignments is worth a maximum of twelve and a half (12.5) points, totaling 100 possible points, and comprising one third of your grade. These assignments will be evaluated on effort, creativity, originality, structure, character development, format and style, and the application of course materials and discussions to your writing.

You will receive a maximum of ten (10) points per week for active and thoughtful participation, totaling one hundred (100) points, or a third of your overall grade. You are

expected to actively participate in the conversation every week. This means you should thoroughly read ALL assigned material before class, and then formulate clear, supportive feedback, and thoughtful, engaging responses to all of the assigned reading. **Your job is to prove to me that you have read and considered the material carefully.** Failure to read material in advance or to provide thoughtful feedback in class will result in a diminished participation score for that day.

The final, revised screenplay is worth one hundred (100) points, and comprises the final one third of your overall grade. It should represent the very best writing you can put forth in the time we've had together. It must be free of typographical errors, submitted in proper screenplay format, include a title page, and be at least ninety (90) pages and no longer than one hundred and twenty (120) pages in length.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 78	D-	= 60
A-	= 90	C	= 73	F	= 0-59
B+	= 88	C-	= 70		
B	= 83	D+	= 68		
B-	= 80	D	= 63		

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion prior to class. Late work will only be accepted under extreme extenuating circumstances.

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 ideas and 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. Absent students forfeit their participation grade for each class they miss. We begin class right on time. Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence.

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, Creative Subject Matter & Civil Discourse

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 but not limited to sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. Students have a right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues in others' writing so long as the work or commentary does not glorify or promote hate of any kind.

During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's work and opinions. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that portion of the class without penalty. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Comments should focus on the story, not on the writer. Inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material. 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 any such issues should they arise.

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 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, email, or other non-class related sites 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/>.

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 that has been prepared by someone else.

If you have any questions about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge

source materials, be sure to consult with the 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.

Withdrawal

Students who timely withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connect system: <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 when extenuating circumstances prevent 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. This form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>.

Students must submit supporting documentation alongside this 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 an 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 in MyCDM.

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptional cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirements 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) 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

My office hours are listed above and on Blue Star. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, or anything else that's on your mind.