

**DePaul University**  
**School of Cinematic Arts**

**SCWR 500/ 550 Thesis Development**

Spring 2020

Thursday 5:45 – 9:00PM Online

Professor Scott Myers

[smyers15@depaul.edu](mailto:smyers15@depaul.edu)

312-362-1120

Office Hours: TUE 2:00-5:00PM by appointment via Zoom

**Description**

Students will develop a feature-length thesis screenplay or television pilot in preparation for writing the first draft of their project in SCWR 501 (Film) or SCWR 551 (TV). The development process will include assignments designed to aid students in choosing their thesis project, fostering a strong personal connection to that project, creating compelling three-dimensional characters, and designing a clear, effective narrative structure for the screenplay or pilot. This course will culminate with a completed scene-by-scene feature film outline or scene-by-scene outline for a TV pilot.

**Objectives**

- Evaluate and compare the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what they will write
- Define motivations and priorities in the stories student chooses to tell
- Apply a unique and repeatable process to story development
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain the creative environment of a professional writer's room
- Complete outstanding creative writing on a deadline

**Outcomes**

- Personal statement of purpose for the thesis project
- Logline and one-two page treatment
- Professional-quality pitch of up to ten minutes
- Detailed scene-by-scene outline for a feature screenplay or scene-by-scene outline for a TV pilot

**Required Reading**

Lectures, movie and TV scripts, Go Into The Story posts as linked on the D2L course site.

## **Course Management**

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. On a weekly basis:

- Announcements: Detailing that week's writing and reading assignments
- Content: Home to weekly lecture and reading content
- Submissions: Where you will upload your writing assignments
- Discussion: Where you will provide feedback on classmates' script pages

Students will be divided into three groups: Group A, B, and C. Workshopping will be comprised of break-out sessions for each group and entire class discussions.

In addition, students will meet with the professor one-on-one via Zoom during Weeks 2-4. This will be an opportunity to learn more about each student's creative and professional aspirations, and discuss their thesis project.

**A significant target date is Week 8 where each student will pitch to a committee of faculty advisers. We will work on two practice pitches in advance of the formal pitch to give students sufficient story development and rehearsal time.**

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name

Course Number

Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs and with this file name (see example):

WA1 Chayefsky

WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due each **WEDNESDAY by 5PM**. Upload to the appropriate Submissions folder and Discussion forums on the D2L site.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 – April 2**

Course intro, syllabus review, and brief in-class discussion of each student's story

*Lecture:* Story Concepts

Schedule GROUP A in-office meetings

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lectures 1-6: Concept (D2L)

### Writing Assignment (WA1)

Movie Writers: 5-10 story concepts

TV Writers: 3-5 series concepts

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

### **Week 2 – April 9**

Story concept discussion and group workshop

*Lecture:* Protagonist Character Treatment

Schedule GROUP B in-office meetings

### Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 7: Protagonist Character Treatment (D2L)

### Writing Assignment (WA2)

Protagonist Character Treatment(s)

Project Statement of Purpose

Refer to examples (D2L)

### **Week 3 – April 16**

Protagonist Character Treatment discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture:* Master Brainstorming List

Schedule GROUP C in-office meetings

### Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 8: Master Brainstorming List

### Writing Assignment (WA3)

Master Brainstorming List

Refer to example (D2L)

### **Week 4 – April 23**

Master Brainstorming List discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture:* Character Archetypes and Story Structure

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lectures 9-15: Character Development Keys

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 5 – April 30**

Character Map discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture: Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)*

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 16: Ten Major Plotline Points (Movie)

Mickey Fisher's "Extant" diary (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA5)

Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

Refer to examples (D2L)

**Week 6 – May 7**

Five Primary Plotline Points / Pilot Structure discussion and break-out workshop

*Lecture: On Pitching*

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 17: Pitching a Movie

Lecture 18: Pitching a TV series

Writing Assignment (WA6)

Pitch Treatment

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 7 – May 14**

Pitch trial runs

*Lecture: Plotting and the Magical Power of Index Cards*

Schedule one-on-one in-office pitch rehearsals

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 19: Working With Index Cards

Writing Assignment (WA7)

Index Cards

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 8 – May 21**

Index card discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture: Beat Sheet*

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 20: Beat Sheet

Writing Assignment (WA8)

Beat Sheet

**Week 9 – May 28**

Beat sheet discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture: Scene-By-Scene Outline*

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 21: Scene-By-Scene Outline (Movies)

Lecture 22: Scene-By-Scene Outline (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Outline

**Week 10 – June 4**

Outline discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture: Revising Your Outline*

Writing Assignment (WA10)

Revise Outline

**Revised final scene-by-scene outline due in the appropriate D2L Submission Forum by 9:00PM, June 11.**

## Grading

Each writing assignment is worth 10 points.

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

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

## Participation

This class is a workshop. That 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.

**Even when 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, see separate post on the D2L site called Constructive Critique.

You are expected to provide feedback in three areas:

- Class discussion
- Break-out group sessions
- Group Discussion forums

## Attendance

Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you do 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.

## Office Hours and One On One Meetings

TUE 2:00PM-5:00PM. You can schedule via BlueStar for a Zoom 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, etc.

In addition, we will schedule a **one on one meeting** with each student during the quarter

to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the script process, plus a **one on one pitch rehearsal meeting**. Both will be via Zoom.

### **Workshop Ground Rules**

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 their 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 should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about some stories which include varied subject matter including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues.

If you become uncomfortable with a story or script pages for personal reasons, email me if you would prefer not to provide feedback for that project.

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 on the Discussion forums, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

### **Reflections on Constructive Critique**

In the D2L Content section, download and read this document as it provide guidelines how to create a positive evaluative class environment.

### **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.

### **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 the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate 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](http://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](mailto: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](#) or via a mobile device during Week 9.