

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

SCWR 354/454-301 Rewriting the TV Pilot

Fall 2020

Thursdays 5:45pm-9:00pm (CST)

Remote

Instructor: Fatou Samba

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:30pm (CST), Wednesdays and Thursdays 11:45am-1:15pm (CST) or by appointment. Drop-ins won't be available. Please schedule a Zoom meeting with me in Blue Star or by email.

Phone: I will provide my cell number during our first Zoom session.

Email: fsamba@depaul.edu

Course Description

This class focuses on practical ways to approach the process of rewriting a script; specifically, this class will focus on students' original television pilots. Through group workshops, lectures, readings, and assignments, students identify and improve problems in various areas of their teleplay including, but not limited to: plot, character development, dialogue and pacing. By the end of the quarter, students will have completed a full rewrite of their complete pilot script; therefore, students must possess a complete television pilot in order to enroll in the course. This course is repeatable.

PREREQUISITE(S): SCWR 352/452-Writing the Sitcom - OR - SCWR 353/453-Writing the Episodic Drama

Course Outcomes:

- Students will learn various rewriting techniques designed to enhance their television pilot scripts in the areas of plot, structure, dialogue, character development, pacing, tone, etc.
- Students will learn and execute skills pertaining to exchanging constructive criticism with writing peers.
- Students will complete a revised show “bible” for their individual television pilot script.
- Students will complete a rewrite of their television pilot script.

Learning Objectives:

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

- prepare a revised show “bible” for their television pilot script.
- evaluate storytelling conventions to enhance plot, structure, dialogue, character development, pacing and tone
- complete a rewrite of their television pilot script.
- critique screenplays both from professionally produced shows and from their peers shows.
- write a polished, peer-reviewed original series ready for production

Required Textbooks:

None. We will be reading several pilot scripts throughout the quarter. All readings will be posted by the instructor on D2L

Required Software:

Final Draft is the industry standard and is highly recommended. A student discount can be found here: <https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-11-edu.html>

All assignments are to be saved in PDF!

Previous Course Number: DC 354

COURSE MANAGEMENT

This class will be run synchronously.

Synchronous online learning means working together at the same time. For the purposes of this class, it means that we'll be conducting weekly synchronous Zoom sessions, both as a whole class and in groups. During these meetings I'll give short lectures, we'll discuss the weekly pilot readings, as well as conduct class exercises and workshops.

These meetings will always be held every week during the allotted class time (Thursdays between 5:45pm and 9:00pm Central Standard Time).

In the event that technology fails us during any of our Zoom sessions, which is likely to happen at some point, I will be sure to create discussion boards on D2L where students can post their work, answers, and feedback.

If I find that the Zoom sessions aren't as effective in terms of lecturing and/or providing feedback, or we continue to experience technical difficulties, the class may become partially asynchronous. If that happens, you will post your answers to the screening prompts on the discussion board on D2L. I will also have you read each other's work on your own time and provide written feedback on the discussion board before the given deadline. You will be appraised of any such changes.

D2L:

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your campus connect username and password.

Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

Zoom:

We will also be using Zoom extensively in this course. You will not need to sign up for an account. I will post weekly links to our sessions on D2L, and you should be able to simply run it through your browser to attend the meetings. You can also download the Zoom app, if preferred.

You will need internet access, a camera and a microphone to fully participate with Zoom. It is possible to use a phone or a tablet, though a computer or laptop is preferable. In addition to communicating through video conference, Zoom will also allow you to share your screen and chat with me or with each other during our sessions. When the time comes for workshopping, Zoom also allows me to send you into breakout rooms where you can workshop in groups.

Student Participation Guidelines

The DePaul [Code of Student Responsibility](#) applies to online behavior as well as in-person or classroom behavior. The following are policies for the course meetings with Zoom:

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name and last name. If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal; try to locate an internet-enabled device to use for this course. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications.
- Video – Turn on your video when possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. You may elect to turn off your video if you have limited internet bandwidth, no webcam or if you're unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions.
- Audio – Mute your microphone when you are not talking. Be in a quiet place when possible and turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.
- Sharing the meeting link, ID number, or password with anyone outside of the class is prohibited.
- Sharing meeting recordings with anyone outside of the class is prohibited.

Technology Considerations

- If you need assistance during a video call, contact DePaul's Technology Support Center at 312.362.8765.
- If connectivity issues impact your audio/video quality, try turning off your camera.
- If you're experiencing issues with Zoom, you can use a site like [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net) to check your internet connection speed. A good minimum upload/download speed for video conferencing is at least 1.5Mbps.

Participation Expectations

- Treat video conferences as you would a regular class session on campus. Be prepared to be attentive and engaged during meetings.
- Be on time or notify your instructor if you will be late or unable to attend.
- Minimize distractions, such as televisions and cell phones, when possible.
- Don't engage in other activities during sessions (driving, cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- If you think you might have trouble actively participating in meetings, let your instructor know in advance, if possible.

If students would like pro accounts to host meetings of their own, they can follow these steps.

- Go to depaul.zoom.us and sign in with your Campus Connect credentials.
- Visit zoom.us/download to download the Zoom Client for Meetings. You can also download the mobile and desktop apps from this site.
- When using the app, log in using your new Username@depaul.edu email address and existing Campus Connect password. Choose the “Sign in with SSO” option and specify the “depaul.zoom.us” domain, if prompted.

If you have trouble with the link or app, you can also call a phone number to listen in on the meeting. Call one of these numbers:

+1 646 876 9923
 +1 669 900 6833
 +1 301 715 8592

Then, enter our Meeting ID.

Visit the link below for more information on how to use Zoom:

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206175806-Top-Questions?flash_digest=0d96b1924dbc68c124d363d5d255d51fda1a78e2

Tech Support:

Students having any tech issues this quarter should email scaavsupport@depaul.edu.

This new resource is for general tech support and will serve as a unified point of contact for these issues. This email address will be monitored by during the following hours:

Monday through Friday: 8:30am – 8:30pm

Saturday: 10:00am – 6:00pm

Sunday: 12:00pm – 6:00pm

Weekly Readings and Discussions:

- You are required to read several pilot scripts throughout the quarter. Some of them will be table read during class, but you’ll have to read most of them on your own time.
- You are required to read the pilots even if you’ve watched them before. There are two reasons for this:

1: The point of the reading is to *analyze*, something we rarely do when just watching TV for fun. As such, I want you to read through an analytical lens, keeping in mind the standards and practices you’ve learned. I’m also of the opinion that reading quality scripts makes you a better writer.

2: The episode should be fresh in your mind to ensure you’re able to properly participate in the post-screening discussions.

3: Our discussions will center around the written pilot, not the final aired episode. In many cases the two are different.

- I highly encourage you to take notes, either while reading or directly after. Bring your notes to the Zoom meetings to ensure you're prepared for the discussion. You may think you'll remember everything, but trust me, you won't.
- These discussions count towards your attendance and participation grade. Please come prepared to talk about the episodes based on the prompts provided by me. Again, this is why taking notes is important.

Attendance:

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to Zoom sessions, constitutes a reduction in your participation grade. Missing 3 or more sessions will result in an automatic failure in the class.

If you have to miss a Zoom session or a deadline, plan ahead and inform me in advance. Be sure to also let me know if you're having technical problems that are preventing you from joining the session on time. Letting me know in advance does not automatically excuse an absence or a missed deadline, but it is the only way to present your case. If you fail to communicate before the next class period to explain an absence or a missed deadline, they will not be excused.

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss sessions 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.

Participation:

At this level students should be interested in the subject of the class. The only way to see this is through participation during our Zoom sessions, either asking questions, participating in class discussions, or adding constructive comments to other student's presentations and works. Feedback is an essential part of the class, and it's the only way for you to learn and grow as a writer. Students who don't provide feedback on their classmates' work can't expect to receive feedback on theirs. Failure to participate will result in a reduction of your grade.

Online activities:

For obvious reasons we will all be on our computers, tablets or phones during class sessions. That does not mean that you are free to browse online, be on social media or do other things not related to the task at hand. If I so much as suspect you of unrelated online activities, you will be asked to leave the session, which will also result in a reduction of your participation grade.

Assignments:

All assignments for this course must be typed, free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality. Assignments must be submitted on D2L and saved as PDF. Assignments not saved as PDF will receive a reduction in points, and you will be asked to reupload it correctly.

Assignments will be treated like absences, meaning that without prior approval and a documented reason for missing the deadline, LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Workshops:

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 his/her 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 have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused for the remainder of that class without penalty. 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 in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

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 your professor. But know this: plagiarism will earn you an 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 who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection 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.

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

Grading:

Reflection/self-critique: 10%, Rewrite plan: 10%, Peer feedback/participation: 10%, Character treatments: 10%, Outline: 10%, Revised Bible: 10%, Revised draft: 40%

Grading Rubric:

A	95-100	C	73-76
A-	90-95	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	0-60

Undergraduate students

Students in all undergraduate classes, with the exception of those in CEO cohort programs, may opt to change the grading basis for any or all of their courses to Pass/D/Fail. A grade of Pass (P) will indicate that the student's work met expectations for a grade of at least C-. Work that would merit a grade of D+ or D in the traditional grading basis would still earn a D+ or D. Work that does not merit a passing grade will earn a Fail (F). The Pass/D/Fail grading option may apply to any graduation requirement, including courses in the major, minor, Liberal Studies Program or open electives.

<https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx>

Graduate students

Students in graduate classes may opt to change the grading basis for any or all of their courses to Pass/D/Fail. A grade of Pass (P) will indicate that the student's work met expectations for a grade of at least C-. Work that would merit a grade of D+ or D in the traditional grading basis would still earn a D+ or D. Work that does not merit a passing grade will earn a Fail (F). The Pass/D/Fail grading option may apply to any graduation requirement.

Time Zones:

Some of us will be in different time zones for the duration of the quarter. All times provided by me, including Zoom sessions and due dates/times will be in Central Standard Time. It is your responsibility to ensure you are present and on time for the meetings and that you turn in your work on time no matter what time zone you're in.

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. Be sure to check D2L and emails frequently for the latest updates.



Course Schedule

Week 1

September 10

Course introduction.

Who are you? What new shows are you watching? What shows do you not like? What do you think makes the shows you've been watching a hit or a flop? Is tv/the pilot changing?

LECTURE: Story, Theme, and Voice, giving and receiving notes

DISCUSSION: *The Chi*, *The Mindy Project* (Come to class prepared to discuss both pilots)

HOMEWORK:

Upload your initial pilot draft to the submissions folder AND discussion board

Due: Tomorrow (Friday 9/11) at 12:00pm

Reflection/self-critique. Upload to submissions folder.

Due: Wednesday 9/16 at 4:00pm

Read group member's scripts & provide written feedback

Prepare at least 3 questions for each of their protagonists

Due: Thursday 9/17 before the start of class

Week 2

September 17

LECTURE: Characters

WORKSHOP: Give feedback on your group member's pilots. Writer should take detailed notes!

EXERCISE: Protagonist hot seat – be interviewed by class members as your protagonist

HOMEWORK:

Rewrite plan (1-3 single spaced pages). Upload to submissions folder.

Post the character introduction in your pilot you feel needs the most work to the discussion board

Read: *Seven Seconds* Pilot

Due: Thursday 9/24 at 5:45pm

Week 3

September 24

LECTURE: Dialogue

DISCUSSION: *Seven Seconds* Pilot

WORKSHOP: Workshop the character introduction of your choice

HOMEWORK:

Character treatments. Upload to submissions folder

Post the scene in your pilot you feel needs the most work to the discussion board

Read: *Atlanta* Pilot

Due: Thursday 10/1 at 5:45pm

Week 4

October 1

LECTURE: Narrative Structure

WORKSHOP: Problem scene

DISCUSSION: *Atlanta*

HOMEWORK:

Revise your outlines. Upload to submissions folder AND discussion board.

Read: *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* Pilot

Due: Thursday 10/8 at 5:45pm

Begin revising your bibles!

Week 5

October 8

LECTURE: Tone & Pacing

DISCUSSION: *Crazy-Ex Girlfriend* Pilot

WORKSHOP: Revised Outlines

HOMEWORK:

Revise your Teaser and Act One (Group 1). Upload to discussion board.

Read: *Barry* Pilot OR *Orange is the New Black* Pilot & respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussion board (Group 2)

Due: Thursday 10/15 at 5:45pm

Week 6

October 15

WORKSHOP: Teaser + Act one (Group 1). Both groups are still coming to class.

HOMEWORK:

Revise your Teaser and Act one (Group 2). Upload to discussion board.

Read: *Barry* Pilot OR *Orange is the New Black* Pilot & respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussion board (Group 1)

Due: Thursday 10/22 at 5:45pm

Week 7

October 22

WORKSHOP: Teaser + Act One (Group 2). Both groups are still coming to class.

HOMEWORK:

Revise Act Two (Group 1). Upload to discussion board.

Read: *Atypical* Pilot OR *American Crime Story* Pilot & respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussion board (Group 2)

Due: Thursday 10/29 at 5:45pm

Week 8

October 29

WORKSHOP: Act Two (Group 1). Both groups are still coming to class.

HOMEWORK:

Revise Act Two (Group 2). Upload to discussion board.

Read: *Atypical* Pilot OR *American Crime Story* Pilot & respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussion board (Group 1)

Due: Thursday 11/5 at 5:45pm

Week 9

November 5

WORKSHOP: Act Two (Group 2). Both groups are still coming to class.

HOMEWORK:

Revise Act Three (Both Groups). Upload to discussion board.

Due: Thursday 11/12 at 5:45pm

Week 10

November 12

WORKSHOP: Act Three (Both Groups).

HOMEWORK:

Complete and submit the full revised pilot

Revise and submit show bible

Upload to corresponding submissions folder. Drama writers will ALSO upload to discussion board.

Due: Thursday 11/19 at 5:45pm

Week 11

November 19

No class! **Revised pilot and bible due Thursday 11/19 at midnight.**

Provide written feedback on your group members' Act 4 on the discussion board.

Due: Monday 11/23 at MIDNIGHT