

SCWR 406 The Art of Scene Writing

When: Wednesdays · 5:45pm-9pm
Instructor: Erin Rodman · erod917@gmail.com · (310) 927-2525
Office hours: Email me to set a time. I'm available to meet Tues, Wed or Thursdays.

→ Course Description

This course focuses on analyzing and developing the fundamental building block of film and television writing: the scene. Students will gain a greater understanding of how to craft engaging scenes and refine their unique voice on the page through weekly lectures, writing exercises, and workshops.

The advanced course asks students to move beyond convention in an effort to deconstruct the core elements of a scene: location, subject, conflict, and exposition. Through weekly lectures, writing exercises, and workshops we will examine a number of innovative screenwriting techniques to refine the writer's unique voice and enhance the commercial viability of their work.

→ Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Recognize the elements, narrative functions and the various types of scenes in a screenplay or film.
- Understand the importance of individual scene work as a key component of successful screenwriting.
- Revise and rewrite various scenes in order to make them more effective within a script.
- Evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback.

→ Course Outcome

Students will complete a portfolio of rewritten and polished scenes from original writing during this course as well as scenes curated from their existing work.

→ Assignment Details

Attendance and Participation (25% of final grade)

Students are encouraged to ask questions during lectures and Q&A's with industry professionals.

For peer-to-peer workshops, every student is required to read their designated classmates' work prior to class and participate in discussions during the workshop session.

Weekly Scene Assignments (50% of final grade)

There will be **seven** scene assignments, starting in session 2. These assignments will constitute half your grade. All Scenes and Scripts must be in proper Screenwriting format.

Students will be instructed each week whether they will be writing a scene from scratch or whether they will be re-writing a scene from their existing scripts.

Each class we will divide in 4 groups of 4 students. Each group will discuss each student's weekly assignment. I suggest that the team sets a limit of 20 minutes for the discussion of each scene.

All scenes should be posted to "Submissions and Discussions" Mondays by 11.30 pm. This will allow students in the groups to read and prepare their feedback.

Final - Scene Portfolio (25% of final grade)

Students will be required to submit a Scene Portfolio with **three** revised scenes (the result of the weekly workshops) by the day of the Final.

Screenwriting is a demanding endeavor, it requires writers to submit scenes, pages and drafts always on time, this charge carries over to those who are preparing for it, which is why **missed deadlines will result in assignment failure**. All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality.

→ **Grading**

Attendance and Participation	25%
Weekly Scene Assignments	50%
Final	25%

A= 100-93, A-=92-90, B+=89-88, B=87-83, B-=82-80, C+=79-78, C=77-73, C-=72-70, 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 Schedule**

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Please consult class calendar and professor emails for the most up to date schedule for student postings, readings, assignments and all due dates.

Week 1 – September 9

Introduction. Review syllabus, class requirements, Zoom protocols, elements of a scene.

Assignment 1: Write a 3-5 page scene between a rideshare DRIVER and PASSENGER than ends with the passenger behind the wheel and the driver in the backseat. Due Monday, September 14 by 11:30pm

Week 2 – September 16

Character introductions, descriptions and turning points. Workshop Assignment 1.

Assignment 2: Write a scene introducing a character. Due Monday, September 21 by 11:30pm

Week 3 – September 23

Action descriptions, montage and flashback. Workshop Assignment 2.

Assignment 3: Write a scene that contains a montage or flashback sequence. Due Monday, September 28 by 11:30pm

Week 4 – September 30

Dialogue, monologue, and voice-over. Workshop Assignment 3.

Assignment 4: Write a dialogue heavy meet-cute or an argument. Due Monday, October 5 by 11:30pm

Week 5 – October 7

Tension, conflict, stakes and “trailer moments.” Switch Workshop Groups. Workshop Assignment 4.

Assignment 5: Write a new scene or rewrite an existing scene that features high stakes conflict and tension. Due Monday, October 12 by 11:30pm

Week 6 – October 14

Guest speakers. Workshop Assignment 5.

NO ASSIGNMENT this week.

Week 7 – October 21

Theme, subtext, and the details of a scene.

Assignment 6: Rewrite an existing scene that most exemplifies the theme of your script. Due Monday, October 26 by 11:30pm

Week 8 – October 28

First scenes, entrances, exits, and endings. Workshop Assignment 6.

Assignment 7: Rewrite an existing first or last scene of your script. Due Monday, November 2 by 11:30pm

Week 9 – November 4

NO CLASS.

One-on-one feedback sessions available with me any day that week.

Week 10 – November 11

Communicating perspective, making exposition interesting, and questions to ask if scenes are giving you trouble. Workshop Assignment 7.

Week 11

FINAL DUE BY 11:30pm November 18.

Students will submit a Scene Portfolio with **three revised scenes** from the weekly workshops.

→ **Course / School Policies**

Attendance: Classroom attendance is MANDATORY. More than one “excused” absence will result in a lowering of grade per each absence.

Deadlines: Strict Adherence to deadlines is expected. Materials presented or posted late will result in a negative grade for the particular assignment.

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day’s topic. Participation allows the instructor to “hear” the student’s voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

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 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.

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.

Cell Phones/On Call: If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an unobtrusive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.

Online Instructor Evaluation - 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 two weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online at <https://mycti.cti.depaul.edu/mycti>

Email - Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at CampusConnect is correct.

Academic Integrity Policy - This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>

Plagiarism - 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.

Incomplete - An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

Resources for 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: Student Center, LPC, Suite #370 Phone number: (773)325.1677 Fax: (773)325.3720 TTY: (773)325.7296

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns - Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>