

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 307: Adaptation

Winter, 2021

Thursday 1:30 PM - 4:45 PM, Online

Professor Brad Riddell (he/him): brad.riddell@depaul.edu

Office Hours: M: 11AM-1PM, T: 3-5PM, TH: 11AM-1PM and by appointment.

Course Description:

This advanced course focuses on identifying and developing source material for the screen. Emphasis is placed on learning to negotiate the public domain when searching for material to adapt, as well as practical ways to acquire copyrighted material. Students will choose material from the public domain to adapt, and then create a logline, short pitch, treatment, and first act of a feature screenplay (or two acts of a teleplay).

Prerequisites: SCWR 302 or SCWR 352 or SCWR 353

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- relate the history and relevance of adaptation in film and television.
- analyze a piece of source material and its adapted screenplay to identify the unique techniques and choices implemented in the adaptation.
- utilize the public domain for access to material.
- create a unique, well-structured, character-driven cinematic adaptation of existing source material.
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback.

Outcomes:

- Students will complete one short script adaptation, plus a treatment or series bible for a long-form adaptation, as well as 15 pages of the script.
- One short essay will demonstrate understanding of the adaptation process.

Required Textbooks and Printed Resources:

- [Ted Chiang, *Stories of your Life and Others*](#)
- [The Best Small Fictions, 2019](#)
- Screenplays and other readings are available under "Content" on D2L

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and submissions can be found there, as well as the assignment calendar and updates.

Screenwriting Software

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft, Fade In, and Highland are among the best available. **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Each unexcused absence beyond the first equates to a loss of ten points from the student's final score.

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.

Course Operation

Lectures will be conducted asynchronously, so you are to watch them on your own time, before the next class.

During class, all students will meet together at the start to catch up and hold short discussions. Then, our workshop times will be split in two. There will be a 1:45-3:15 PM session and 3:15-4:45 PM session. Group 1 will take the early session for the first half of the quarter, then in week 6, Group 2 will take over the early session.

Assignments:

There is a five-point quiz on this syllabus located on D2L. It must be completed by the start of class, Week 2.

You will be required to make one discussion post analyzing the adaptation of the *Lovecraft Country* pilot, and a reflection post following the Courier 12 discussion with *Arrival* screenwriter, Eric Heiserer.

You will be assigned a five-to-seven page (double-spaced) reflection paper to present your take on how the *Arrival* adaptation succeeded or failed, specific challenges the screenwriter faced, how they overcame those challenges, and how you might have done the work differently if the project was yours. The papers must be well-organized, tightly written, reference both the screenplay (not the film) and the short story, express a unique take, and must be grammatically correct throughout.

Screenwriting assignments must demonstrate professionalism and investment in the material, showcase techniques and ideas discussed in class, offer a unique take on the original work with a clear voice, and demonstrate proper grammar, format, and style.

Papers and discussion posts will be submitted to D2L by the start of class on the day they are due. Screenwriting assignments are to be submitted to D2L on TUESDAY by MIDNIGHT unless otherwise noted.

Students are expected to have read and annotated the work submitted by their groupmates each week **BEFORE** class begins. Your participation grade is determined by your demonstrated preparation and informed involvement in discussions.

Late work will not be accepted without a valid excuse, and out of fairness to all, it cannot be workshopped in class.

Grading:

• Syllabus Quiz:	5 Points
• <i>Lovecraft Country</i> Discussion Post:	5 Points
• <i>Arrival</i> C12 Discussion Post:	5 Points
• Weekly Participation:	10 points
• <i>Arrival</i> reflection paper:	10 Points
• Adaptation Plan:	10 Points
• Completed Script pages:	15 Points
• Flash Fiction Adaptation:	20 Points
• Completed Treatment / Bible:	<u>20 Points</u>
	100 Total

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.

Course Schedule:

Each class may include a lecture, screening, or guest speaker in addition to workshop.

CLASS 1, Jan. 7: Discuss the history and relevance of adaptation in the industry. Read and watch *Ada Blackjack Rising* for discussion in class.

Due Thursday, Jan. 14:

- Read source material samples and script for *Lovecraft Country* and post your analysis in Discussions on D2L.
- Logline and one-page synopsis for your Flash Fiction adaptation choice.

CLASS 2, Jan. 14: Discuss material adaptation challenges. Workshop and discuss Flash Fiction selections.

Due Tuesday, Jan 19:

- First draft of Flash Fiction adaptation (8-10 pages).

CLASS 3, Jan. 21: Discuss the Public Domain, and Authorial Agency in Adaptation. Workshop and discuss Flash Fiction first drafts.

Due Thursday Jan. 28:

- revision of Flash Fiction adaptation
- three loglines for potential long-form public domain adaptations.

CLASS 4, Jan. 28: Discuss Projection Selection and Portfolio Building + Treat and Bible Introduction. Workshop potential long-form adaptations.

- Due Tuesday, Feb. 2: Adaptation Development Plan
- Due Thursday, Feb. 4: *Arrival* reflection paper

CLASS 5, Feb. 4: Discuss *Arrival* adaptation. Workshop Adaptation Plans.

Due Tuesday, Feb. 9:

- Feature Treatment to the end of Act 1, *or*
- Series Bible: Your Inspiration/Personal Connection + Relevance/Market/Audience + Your overall approach.

CLASS 6, Feb. 11: Discuss Key Scenes and Obligatory Moments in Adaptation. Workshop adaptation materials.

Due Tuesday, Feb 16:

- Feature Treatment to the midpoint, *or*
- Series Bible: Character descriptions + World + Theme

CLASS 7, Feb. 18: Discuss How Marvel Handles Adaptation. Workshop adaptation materials.

Due Tuesday, Feb. 23:

- Feature treatment to the end of Act 2, *or*
- Series Bible: Pilot treatment

CLASS 8, Feb. 25: Guest Speaker on acquiring copyrighted material. Workshop adaptation materials.

Due Tuesday, March 2:

- Feature treatment to the end of the film, *or*
- Series Bible: season arc and future seasons

CLASS 9, March 4: Approaching Content Creators. Workshop adaptation materials.

Due Tuesday, March. 9:

- Revised treatments and Bibles

CLASS 10, March 11: Individual meetings with instructor.

FINAL DUE: Thursday March 18 in Submissions by 11:59 PM: first 15 pages of script.

In-Class Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly small group workshop sessions. Show your classmates the courtesy of reading their material as they should yours. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

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.

Zoom Policies:

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

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name, last name, and pronoun preferences (if you so choose). If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal, so 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 whenever 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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you are uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Please follow up with the instructor immediately if such a situation arises. Stories developed in class may involve issues such as hate and violence, but writing with a point of view that glorifies hate and violence will not be tolerated. Inclusion of individuals from the class in submitted creative materials is not acceptable.

Changes to 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 students will be notified via email.

Academic Support Resources

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

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 (<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.

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 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 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) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677

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!