

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

School of Cinematic Arts

Writing the Feature 1 | SCRW 401 | Winter 2020-2021

WED 5:45 – 9:00 | WEB SYNC

Instructor: Kat O'Brien | Email: kobrie55@depaul.edu

Office Hours: **Please email for appointment.** WED 9AM-130PM via Zoom

SCRW 401 WRITING THE FEATURE 1

This course focuses on creating a vetted concept and step outline for a feature length screenplay. Emphasis is put on idea origination and world building, forming engaging characters, and structuring an affecting plot with cause and effect storytelling. Through script readings, weekly assignments, and in-class workshops, students will hone their unique voice to craft the dramatic template for a cinematically viable story. The feature length screenplay developed in this course should be written, revised, and polished in DC 403 and DC 404.

Prerequisite: None

Learning Objectives:

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

- apply established narrative techniques toward the development of a feature story with a well-structured plot and thoroughly developed characters
- utilize the sequence approach to create consistent tension and effective story organization
- create a complete, professional-quality step outline for a feature screenplay
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Required Textbooks:

- Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach by Paul Gulino, ISBN 13: 9780826415684
- Produced feature screenplays in PDF format

Previous Course Number: DC 402

COURSE MANAGEMENT

This course is managed on **D2L**. There, students will find the syllabus, course outline, announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion boards, and additional materials. Log in to D2L enter using your campus connect logon and password. Once you are logged in, click on the course number link and you will find our home page and links to the course content.

Throughout the course, you will be asked to workshop each other's stories in class and outside of class by reading work in advance and/or commenting in forums. If and when writing is not due in class, it may be due a few days prior to allow sufficient time to read and discuss online and/or for class that next week. Upload to that week's Submissions forum and your group's Discussion List forum on D2L.

***NOTE: You are responsible for reading each of your group's weekly writing assignments before every class session, unless otherwise noted.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One

TOPIC: Course Intro. Overview: From Concept to Step Outline. Ideation Strategies.

WORKSHOP: Finding The Magic Idea, POV and Artist Statement

ASSIGNMENT ONE: *5 Magic Ideas, Artist Statement / Website*

Week Two

TOPIC: What is this story about? Exploring Concept, Premise, Theme, World, Character, Mood, Tone

WORKSHOP: Story Bible Development, Pitch Decks

ASSIGNMENT TWO: *Story Bible & Look Book and/or Internal Pitch Deck*

Week Three

TOPIC: Whose story is this? Crafting engaging, authentic characters.

WORKSHOP: Lajos Egri's *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Ch. 3: *Character*. Who is your protagonist & why?

ASSIGNMENT THREE: *The Egri Character Bio x all major characters*

Week Four

TOPIC: Pitching the Concept

WORKSHOP: Loglines, Quick Pitches

ASSIGNMENT FOUR: *Logline and Quick Pitch for preferred concept*

Week Five

TOPIC: Story Structure Basics

WORKSHOP: Connecting the Character Transformation to a Basic Outline

ASSIGNMENT FIVE: *Character Transformation Map and Basic Outline*

Week Six

TOPIC: Cinematic Storytelling

WORKSHOP: Story Mapping: Top 5 Moments, Set Pieces, Cause and Effect

ASSIGNMENT SIX: *The Story Map*

Week Seven

TOPIC: Sequencing and Reeling

WORKSHOP: The Sequence Outline

ASSIGNMENT SEVEN: *Sequence Outline*

Week Eight

TOPIC: Beat Sheets and Basic Step Outlines

WORKSHOP: The Blake Snyder Beat Sheet

ASSIGNMENT EIGHT: *Revised Sequence Outline or Beat Sheet / Basic Step Outline*

Week Nine

WORKSHOP: Exploring Details via Discovery Pages

ASSIGNMENT NINE: *Rough Draft - Detailed Step Outline*

Week Ten

WORKSHOP: Scriptment and Scene by Scene Outline

ASSIGNMENT TEN: *Final Draft Detailed Step Outline for Finals Week*

FINAL: FINAL DRAFT DETAILED STEP OUTLINE due Wednesday March 17 at 6PM

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance and participation is mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction in your overall grade.

Assignments

There are ten weekly assignments to be completed as a product of our ten workshops. The first eight assignments are process-driven steps to take, one at a time, to get you from concept to step outline in 10 weeks. Assignment 10 is your final assignment due Finals Week (there is no exam).

All assignments should be submitted to the relevant Submissions Folder and also to the relevant Discussions Forum as requested. You should be prepared to reference and revise these assignments in class during small group workshop time.

Active participation is requirement in this class. **You are responsible for reading each of your group's weekly writing assignments before or during every class session as directed.**

Be prepared with feedback:

- Observations/Reflections: What is happening in the story and why?
- Interpretations: Does the story resonate with you? Why? Why not?
- What suggestions you have to resolve those issues and make the story more resonant?

Grading

Late work will not be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. Your grade in this class will be based on active participation, timely completion of the workshop assignments, and effective incorporation of feedback. Attendance (in class) and Participation (feedback) is factored into your Workshop/Assignment grade each week.

Grade Breakdown: TOTAL 100 Points / 100%

Assignments 1-10: 10 points / 10%

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.

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.

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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues so long as the work does not glorify hate of any kind. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Obvious inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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.

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!

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

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.

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 exceptions 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