DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
School of Cinematic Arts
Writing the Feature Film Script | SCRW 302 | 2021 Winter
TUES 5:45PM – 9PM | WEB SYNC
Instructor: Kat O'Brien | Email: kobrie55@depaul.edu
Office Hours: ***Please email for appointment***. WED 9AM – 1:30PM | via Zoom

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SCWR 302 Writing the Feature Screenplay

This course focuses on completing the first draft of a feature length screenplay. Emphasis will be placed on a foundation of character, structure, plot, and theme to bring the writer's vetted concept to fruition. The lectures, in-class workshops, and aggressive page deadlines are designed to culminate in a spec screenplay that showcases voice and command of screenwriting conventions. This feature length screenplay should be revised and polished in DC 303.

Prerequisite: SCWR 301

Course Outcomes: Students will complete the first draft of a feature-length screenplay.

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

- demonstrate the ability to write at a professional pace
- write visceral and visual scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice
- create three-dimensional characters with unique voices and clear motivations
- apply established narrative techniques to scenes, sequences, and acts
- 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

COURSE MANAGEMENT
This course is housed and 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 login 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.

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, we will have weekly opportunities for feedback and support in a number of ways: reading outside of class and discussing online or in small groups during class, and/or writer's room "talk throughs" or table-reading during class in larger groups.

Week 1, the class will be divided into reading / support groups to help create a mini-cohort within our class that will get you through the drafting process. ***NOTE: You are responsible for reading / supporting your group each of your group's weekly writing assignments before every class session, *unless otherwise noted*.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Mapping the First Draft (Pitch & Outline/Treatment)
ASSIGNMENT ONE: Progress Check – Page 10 due in D2L Week 2

Week Two
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Structure, Sequencing, Screenplay Format
ASSIGNMENT TWO: Progress Check – Page 20 due in D2L Week 3

Week Three
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Nailing the Set Up (Act 1A, Act 1B Review)
ASSIGNMENT THREE: Progress Check – Page 30 – Act 1 done due in D2L Week 4

Week Four
WORKSHOP: Story Meetings Act 1
ASSIGNMENT FOUR: Progress Check – Page 40 due in D2L Week 5

Week Five
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Character Arc of Transformation: Goals and Stakes
ASSIGNMENT FIVE: Progress Check – Page 50 due in D2L Week 6

Week Six
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Story Meetings Act 2, Part 1
ASSIGNMENT FIVE: Progress Check – Page 60 Act 2, Part 1 done due in D2L Week 7

Week Seven
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Cinematic Storytelling: Visual, Visceral Action Description
ASSIGNMENT SEVEN: Progress Check – Page 70 due in D2L Week 8

Week Eight
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Story Meetings Act 2, Part 2
ASSIGNMENT EIGHT: Progress Check – Page 80 due in D2L Week 9

Week Nine
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Dialogue: Subtext and Voice
ASSIGNMENT NINE: Progress Check – Page 90 due in D2L Week 10

Week Ten
LECTURE & WORKSHOP: Story Meetings Act 3
ASSIGNMENT TEN: COMPLETE FIRST DRAFT due Final Exam Week Wed March 17 by 1:30PM (30%)

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance / Participation is mandatory and will count as 10% of your overall grade. 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. In order to participate in group feedback, you need to be present in class and/or post feedback as relevant when opportunities arise for online forum feedback.

Assignments
To complete this script in 10 weeks, you will be put on a professional writing pace of 10 pages / week. **Assignments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9** will be turned in at the start of class each week, and selectively reviewed in class for feedback based on your readiness. Keeping up with this pace by completing the weekly page target / progress check assignments is **45% of your grade**, or 5% for each of the 9 progress-check assignments. You get full credit if you hit the page count, and turn it in to D2L on time. **Assignment 10**, your first completed draft, is worth **45% of your grade.** You can find the rubric for how that will be graded below.

ASSIGNMENT 10 – FIRST COMPLETE DRAFT
Tips to keep in mind, as this assignment is 45% of your final grade:
- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again, and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to texts for the course, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Action description should be lean - Only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Ask questions if you need help.
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative - You won't be able to do it in one night.

You will be asked to complete a self-assessment on your first draft, setting goals for yourself and analyzing whether you achieved those goals. This will factor into your evaluation of final work.

RUBRIC
0: does not meet objective 1: somewhat meets objective 2: meets objective (3: exceeds objective)
You will receive a score of 0-3 in each of the following categories:
- Follows proper screenplay format; proofread for grammar, spelling and typos
- Clear act breaks in the story structure
- Cause and Effect is clear in the scene order
- Develops dimensional characters with clear motivations, arc of transformation
- Visceral and visual scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice

Grading
Attendance/Participation 10%
Progress Checks 45%
First Complete Draft 45%

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.

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