SCWR 101-403: Screenwriting for Majors
Autumn 2021
Mon. & Wed. 11:50am-1:20pm
Location: in-person; 14EAS 00801 at Loop Campus

Instructor: Abby Plante
Office Hours: Mondays 1:30pm-2:15pm cst LOOP OFFICE LOCATION; Tuesdays 12pm-12:45pm cst virtually via Zoom. Please schedule with me via email or via Blue Star (additional availability provided on a case by case basis).
Email: gplante@depaul.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response or 48 if over the weekend)

Course Description:
This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, story structure, character, and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. Films and scenes examined in this class will highlight creators and characters from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities.

Prerequisites: None

Previous Course Number: DC 201

Course Outcomes: In addition to completing several writing assignments, students are expected to develop, outline, and write a short screenplay.

Learning Objectives:
Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:
- employ standard screenplay format
- identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development
- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- produce original writing projects on a deadline
- revise their writing based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Required Textbooks:
Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089
The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637

Additional Material:
Additional reading and screenings may be provided by the instructor. Specifics to be outlined during the course.

Screenwriting Software
You are required to use screenwriting software in this course. Students interested in developing their screenwriting skills beyond this course may consider purchasing the industry standard Final Draft (available to students at a discount here. Free options include Writerduet, Highland, & Celtx. All assignments are to be saved in PDF.

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 login and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

Course Policies
All students should use their depaul.edu email addresses and ensure this information is up to date in D2L.

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 sent via email.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions
Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the City of Chicago Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

All faculty, staff and students must inform the university if they have tested positive for COVID-19, received a COVID-19 diagnosis, they learn of a positive COVID-19 case at DePaul, or

they believe they were exposed to COVID-19. Learn more and find how to report a case about yourself or someone else on DePaul's [COVID-19 Reporting Protocol webpage](#).

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values
At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include a range of authors, perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and I will strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives. If at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

Online Course Evaluations
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 three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Please see https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity. More information can be found at https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx.

Posting work on online sites, such as Hero

All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

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: http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx

Incomplete Grades

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. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx

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 a preferred name and/or personal pronouns. 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

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus (312) 362-8002; Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677; Email: csd@depaul.edu

Please note this is a safe space and any need for an accommodation due to a disability of any kind will be honored by me. Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible. Please see https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx for Services and Contact Information.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

Grading:

10% - Journals (1, 2, 3)*
20% - Participation (including Assigned Readings, Character Biographies*, Table Reads, Participation in classroom discussions, Workshops,)
10% - Submitted story analysis (including Disney short, FIVE FEET AND RISING, THE HALF OF IT)*
5% - Loglines
15% - Step Outline/Treatment
10% - Short Script Draft 1
15% - Short Script Draft 2
15% - Final Short Script Draft

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, F is substantially unsatisfactory

*As this is a creative writing-based course, the asterisked assignments are in part subjective but with objective components (these are the components the assignment states you need to include). In evaluating, I will be measuring effort given for asterisked items. Students who apply thoughtful analysis, insightful critique and reach the minimum page count (if stated) will receive full credit for their work.

Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and may result in a reduction in the student's grade. All work submitted should be to D2L and in pdf form, unless otherwise stated.

Journals – 10%

Journal #1

- Goal: free write to jumpstart ideas that can be used as a concept for your short film. (Even if you have an existing idea you'd like to use, use this journal as practice for fleshing it out.) Journals are to be a creative brainstorm, unfiltered, and a device for idea generation. This journal should be no shorter than one page, double spaced and turned into D2L. A few writing prompts to get you started: What images or events can you clearly recall from notable moments in your life? What themes do you find yourself attracted to in cinema? What are your favorite examples of style or genres in films you love or hope to create? Percolate if you gravitate toward narratives about family relationships, love triangles, underdog victories, or particular historical periods, to name a few, and write what comes to mind. Perhaps you're drawn to moments, set-pieces, lines of dialogue, settings, or wardrobe. Draft ideas based on what inspires you in the moment. Don't worry about if you'll include all of these elements in your short script or not, these exercises serve as part of the creative development process. (*Learning Objectives applied: identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Journal #2

- Using brainstorming techniques as outlined in journal #1 and in class discussion, brainstorm ideas using scene elements from the lecture on crafting a scene, conflict, goals, stakes, exposition, pacing, and others mentioned. Journal should be 1.5 pages minimum, double spaced. Turn in to D2L. (*Learning Objectives applied: identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Journal #3

- Using brainstorming techniques as outlined in journal #1 and in class discussion, brainstorm ideas for plot points for your short, using the structural elements discussed in the lecture on set up, plot points, two incidents, climax, and resolution. Journal should be 1.5 pages minimum, double spaced. Turn in to D2L. (*Learning Objectives applied: employ standard screenplay format; identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Participation – 20%

Assigned Reading

- Students are expected to complete and adhere to assigned readings as noted in the syllabus schedule. (*Learning Objectives applied: employ standard screenplay format; identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development; identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; demonstrate expanded visual writing skills; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Character Biographies

- Using at least two of the methods covered in the Character lecture, draft TWO separate character biographies for potential characters to be included in your short script. Biographies should be 1.5 pages minimum each, double spaced. Turn in to D2L. (*Learning Objectives applied: identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development; identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; apply a work-flow process to creative writing; demonstrate expanded visual writing skills*)
- (Note: these ultimately do not *have* to be characters used in your final short but will be helpful in voicing your character(s) if used.)

Class Discussion

- Students are expected to participate in the classroom by participating in table reads and contributing to the discussions on story analysis for the three scripts/films as outlined under the Story Analysis Assignment heading. If there are no volunteers for participation, the instructor will call upon students at random. Please come to class prepared to engage. Additionally, as feedback is essential to the writing process, students will participate in workshop sessions in small groups that will allow students to both give and receive critiques on their work. Please be sure to adhere to the following workshop guidelines:

- Workshop Guidelines
    - First and foremost, a workshop is about the piece of writing, not the writer. Both the writer and those critiquing the piece need to keep in mind that the goal is to make the writing the best it possibly can be.
    - Workshops are never destructive. They are constructive. Writing is never "bad." The writing is addressed so that it can get stronger.
    - We will always start with something that is working in the piece.

- Then we will go to the aspects that are not yet fully developed or that are not quite working yet.
- If the majority of the readers agree on a particular element of the piece that is working or not working, listen. If the readers are completely divided, it simply may just be a matter of opinion.
- The writer should always listen, but ultimately must trust one's own gut. The writer's name will be on the page when all is said and done.
- Writing can be personal, and as expected of DePaul students, workshops are to be conducted with respect to one another's experiences and writing. Failure to do so will result in consequences as laid out in the syllabus.
  (*Learning Objectives applied: revise writing based on feedback from professor and peers; evaluate work of peers and formulate helpful feedback*)

Story Analysis – 10%

Analysis #1
- After viewing the Disney Plus short on D2L (or in class), draft the noted plot points following the structure laid out in the Crafting a Scene and Structure lectures, including but not limited to set up, plot points, two incidents, climax, and resolution. Additionally, note examples for the following, including but not limited to conflict, goals, stakes, and character development, and analyze what worked well and what didn't work well. Be mindful of how the range in experience and perspective affects the story and character's development. **Remember to write in the present tense and use visual writing. Turn in to D2L upon completion and be prepared to discuss in the next class meeting. (*Learning Objectives applied: identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; demonstrate expanded visual writing skills; identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Analysis #2
- After viewing the film AND reading the short script for *Five Feet and Rising* on D2L (or in class), draft the noted plot points following the structure laid out in the Crafting a Scene and Structure lectures, including but not limited to set up, plot points, two incidents, climax, and resolution. Additionally, note examples for the following, including but not limited to conflict, goals, stakes, and character development, and analyze what worked well and what didn't work well. Be mindful of how the range in experience and perspective affects the story and character's development. ALSO, referencing the lecture on Premise, write a logline that you feel best encapsulates the story.
  **Remember to write in the present tense and use visual writing. Two pages minimum,

double spaced. Turn in to D2L upon completion and be prepared to discuss in the next class meeting. (*Learning Objectives applied: Employ standard screenplay format; Identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; Identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development; Demonstrate expanded visual writing skills; Apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Analysis #3
- After viewing the film AND reading the feature length script for *The Half of It* on D2L (or in class), draft the noted plot points following the structure laid out in the Crafting a Scene and Structure lectures, including but not limited to set up, plot points, two incidents, climax, and resolution, noting the differences (if any) from script to screen. Additionally, note examples for the following, including but not limited to conflict, goals, stakes, and character development, and analyze what worked well and what didn't work well. Be mindful of how the range in experience and perspective affects the story and character's development. ALSO, referencing the lecture on Premise, write a logline that you feel best encapsulates the story. **Remember to write in the present tense and use visual writing. Two pages minimum, double spaced. Turn in to D2L upon completion and be prepared to discuss in the next class meeting. (*Learning Objectives applied: employ standard screenplay format; Identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure; identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development; demonstrate expanded visual writing skills; apply a work-flow process to creative writing*)

Loglines – 5%
Develop three premise ideas for your short film. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a short screenplay. Each premise should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Be mindful of the aim and limitations of the short film medium. Please submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L. (*Learning Objectives applied: identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure*)

Step Outline/Treatment – 15%
Taking your chosen idea, please develop a scene-by-scene outline for your short film. Use your plot points. Please submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L. (*Learning Objectives applied: Revise writing based on feedback from professor and peers; Evaluate work of peers and formulate helpful feedback*)

Short Script Draft 1 – 10%
A few things to keep in mind as you write your scripts:
- 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/colleague 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.
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Your script must be at least 6 pages (not including title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.
- Ask questions or come to office hours 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.
- Please submit a pdf to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.
  (Learning Objectives applied: revise writing based on feedback from professor and peers; evaluate work of peers and formulate helpful feedback)

Short Draft 2 – 15% and Final Short Draft – 15%

A few things to keep in mind as you REWRITE your scripts:
- The rewrite of your script need be a marked improvement over your first draft.
- You must include a cover page.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops and self-evaluation in order to craft your revised draft.
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to the textbook for this class, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Your script must be at least 6 pgs. (not including title pg.), but should not exceed 10 pgs.
  (Learning Objectives applied: revise writing based on feedback from professor and peers; evaluate work of peers and formulate helpful feedback)

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction
Wednesday, 9/8
Syllabus Overview
Lecture: Introduction: brainstorming, basics, formatting, visual storytelling

Assignment due by next class:
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting* (1-37)
Write: Journal #1 (see Assignments section for details)

Week 2: Character
Monday, 9/13
Lecture: Character Exploration

Assignment due by next class:
Read: Mo Black's essay on character here, and linked on D2L:
Read: Scanned pdf available on D2L - Syd Field *Screenplay* pages 31-88

Wednesday, 9/15
Lecture: Getting Into Character
Discussion(If time): character creation exercise

Assignment due by next class:
Write: two character biographies/portraits using methods covered in today's lecture (see Assignments section for details)

Week 3: Story and Structure
Monday, 9/20
Lecture: Crafting a Scene: Conflict, Goals, Stakes, Exposition, Pacing
Screen: select scenes

Assignment due by next class:
Write: Journal #2
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting* (43-49, 52-65)
Read: *The Hollywood Standard* (Quick Start Guide section)
Review: *The Hollywood Standard* (sections on Single-Camera Film Format, Dialogue, Appendix A: Single-camera film format sample script pages)

Wednesday, 9/22

Lecture: Structure: plot points, two incidents, climax, set up and resolution

Discussion: script formatting examples; format tutorial

Screening (if time): Disney Plus Launchpad short

Assignment due by next class:

Watch: Disney Plus Launchpad short, posted on D2L

Write: Story Analysis #1

Write: Journal #3

Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting* (66-75, 81-83, 88-94)

Week 4: Dialogue and Premise

Monday, 9/27

Class Discussion: Disney Plus short analysis

Short Lecture: Dialogue

Screen: select clips

Assignment due by next class:

Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting* (49-51, 84-87)

Wednesday, 9/29

Lecture: Premise & Loglines

Screen: CANDYMAN Short: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9O9_-bv5qE

Discussion: structure and logline for CANDYMAN

Table read (if time): *Five Feet and Rising*

Assignment due by next class:

Read: *Five Feet and Rising* script posted here and on D2L

Screen: *Five Feet and Rising, here and on link on D2L*

Write: Story Analysis #2

Week 5:

Monday, 10/4

Class Discussion: *Five Feet and Rising* analysis

Free writing: draft loglines

Lecture: Outline/Treatment

Assignment due by next class:
Write: craft three Loglines (using feedback on Journals)

Wednesday, 10/6
Screen: *The Half of It* posted on D2L

Assignment due by next class:
Read: *The Half of It* script, posted [here](#)and on D2L
Write: Story Analysis #3

Week 6:
Monday, 10/11
Class Discussion: *The Half of It* analysis
Class Discussion: choose logline for short script
Lecture: Writing a Short: part 1

Assignment due by next class:
Write: plot point outline for short (see today's lecture for overview; this is NOT to be turned in yet but will be used next class)

Wednesday, 10/13
Workshop: plot points in small groups
Free writing: treatment
Housekeeping: sign up for one on one meetings next week

Assignment due by next class:
Write: step outline/treatment. Turn in to D2L BY 8:00AM ON MONDAY, 10/18

Week 7: ONE ON ONE Meetings
Monday, 10/18
Groups A, B, & C Meet with instructor for one on one feedback on treatment. Bring questions.

Wednesday, 10/20
Groups A, B, & C Meet with instructor for one on one feedback on treatment. Bring questions.

Assignment due by next class:
Write: Groups A, B, & C FINALIZE and TURN IN treatment to D2L by 10/25

Week 8:
Monday, 10/25
(TBD/HOLD for potential Group D; Group D Meet with instructor for one on one feedback on treatment. Bring questions.)

Assignment due by next class:
(TBD/HOLD: Group D: FINALIZE and TURN IN treatment to D2L by 10/27)
Write: Groups A, B, & C begin writing short script draft 1 (due 11/1); reference *The Hollywood Standard* when needed

Wednesday, 10/27
Lecture: TBD

Assignment due by next class:
Write: ALL GROUPS draft short script draft 1 (due 11/1); reference *The Hollywood Standard* when needed

Week 9:
Monday, 11/1
Lecture: Rewrite
Workshop: small groups

Assignment due by next class:
Write: draft short script draft 2 (due 11/8)

Wednesday, 11/3
Workshop: small groups

Assignment due by next class:
Write: short script draft 2 (due 11/8)

Week 10:
Monday, 11/8
Workshop: short script draft 2

Wednesday, 11/10
Workshop: short script draft 2

Last class:

Monday, 11/15

Class Discussion/Table Read: selected student scripts

FINAL SCRIPT DUE:

Monday, 11/22 by 6pm cst to D2L