

# DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

## **SCWR 101: Introduction to Screenwriting**

Fall Quarter 2021

Thursdays, 1:30 – 4:45PM, 14 East Jackson, #209

Professor Scott Myers: [smyers15@depaul.edu](mailto:smyers15@depaul.edu)

312-362-1120

Office Hours: **Online Only.** TUE 1:00PM-4:00PM (Zoom), by appointment only

### **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.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

### **Learning Objectives**

- 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

### **Course Outcomes**

- Outline for a short screenplay
- Short screenplay (5-10 pages)

### **Course Management**

This course is managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and submission folders can be found there as well. Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to that session's D2L Submission Forum. **This must be done by Wednesday 5PM. Format: PDF.**

Instructor feedback will consist of in-class comments during workshop sessions and audio or written notes uploaded to the D2L site on weekly writing assignments.

### **Screenwriting Software**

You are required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft, Fade In, Writer's Duet, Highland, and Celtx are popular options. **All assignments are delivered as PDFs.**

## **Course Schedule**

**WEEK 1, September 9:** Course and Student Introductions. Syllabus review. Lecture: History of the Screenplay. Table read: *Up* (excerpt).

- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Up*

**WEEK 2, September 16:** Discussion: *Up*. Lecture: Screenplay Elements. Divide class into Groups A, B, C, D, E, and F for workshop sessions. Table read: *Psycho* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Scene Format Exercise
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Psycho*

**WEEK 3, September 23:** Discussion: *Psycho*. Workshop (Group A): *Psycho* Scene Format Exercise. Lecture: Story Concept: How to Generate, Assess, and Develop Story Ideas. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Parasite* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Three Short Film Story Concepts
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Parasite*

**WEEK 4, September 30:** Discussion: *Parasite*. Workshop (Group B): Three Short Film Story Concepts. Lecture: Character Development. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Nomadland* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Character Development Exercise
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Nomadland*

**WEEK 5, October 7:** Discussion: *Nomadland*. Workshop (Group C): Character Development Exercise. Lecture: Three-Act Structure. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Get Out* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Four Plotline Points
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Get Out*

**WEEK 6, October 14:** Discussion: *Get Out*. Workshop (Group D): Four Plotline Points. Lecture: Scene-Writing. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Booksmart* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Scene-Writing Exercise
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Booksmart*

**WEEK 7, October 21:** Discussion: *Booksmart*. Workshop (Group E): Scene-Writing Exercise. Lecture: Scene-By-Scene Outline. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Moonlight* (excerpt).

- Writing Assignment: Scene-By-Scene Outline
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Moonlight*

**WEEK 8, October 28:** Discussion: *Moonlight*. Workshop (Group F): Scene-By-Scene Outline. Lecture: First Draft. Screen: Short Film. Table read: *Logan*

- Writing Assignment: First Draft Short Film Script (Groups A, B, and C)
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Logan*

**WEEK 9, November 4:** Discussion: *Logan*. Table Read: First Draft Short Film Scripts (Selected from Groups A, B, and C). Lecture: Rewriting. Table read: *Jojo Rabbit*. OTE.

- Writing Assignment: First Draft Short Film Script (Groups D, E, and F)
- Reading Assignment: The movie script *Jojo Rabbit*

**WEEK 10, November 11:** Discussion: *Jojo Rabbit*. Table Read: First Draft Short Film Scripts (Selected from Groups D, E, and F). Lecture: Polish and Edit.

- Writing Assignment: Revised Draft Short Film Script (All Groups)

Final Revised Draft Short Film Script due: **Thursday, November 18 at 5PM Central.**

### **Grading**

Each writing assignment is worth 10%. Class participation, workshop and online feedback is worth 20%

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.

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

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

### **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. Three unexcused absences result in automatic course failure.

### **Excused Absence**

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.

### **In-Class Workshops**

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share their work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. We must respect each other,

our collaboration, and the work at hand. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

**NOTE:** Students will be divided into six groups (Groups A, B, C, D, E, and F), and will be expected to provide feedback on their fellow group members' writing assignments in the D2L Discussion forums.

### **Creative Subject Matter**

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. Students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about some stories which include varied subject matter including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues.

If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused for the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class, or direct personal attacks on members of the class will not be tolerated in course material. If you feel you are being individually targeted by material written or discussed in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

### **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.

### **Laptops/Cell Phones**

I will trust that on your honor as a DePaul University student and as a creative individual who aspires to learn the writing craft, you will not stray into any form of social media during class – except for classroom breaks. Phones must be silenced and stowed unless needed for course work.

### **Academic Support Resources**

A complete listing of student support resources can be found under Content on the class D2L page.

### **COVID Social Distance and Mask Policy**

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty, and staff are expected to (1) wear a cloth face covering at all times while on campus, both inside buildings and outside on the grounds; (2) maintain physical distance (at least six feet) in all DePaul spaces (including classrooms, meeting rooms, hallways, rest rooms, offices, and outdoor spaces); (3) conduct a daily self-screening process for the symptoms of COVID-19 using the #CampusClear app before coming to campus; (4)

complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (5) abide by the City of Chicago Emergency Travel Order. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who have a medical reason for not complying should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

### **Food and Drink**

Eating and drinking in class are not allowed at this time. Students needing accommodation should contact the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#). Faculty needing accommodation should contact [Human Resources](#). We will take at least two breaks in class to allow for fresh air, hydration, and eating.

### **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

### **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](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **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**

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. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Class 8 session.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

**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 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.