

SCWR 400 FOUNDATIONS OF SCREENWRITING

Fall 2020 | W 5:45-9:00 | 14 E Jackson Room 209

Instructor: Wendy Roderweiss Office: CDM 513

Email: wroderwe@depaul.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response)

Course Management system: D2L

Type of Instruction: Lecture/discussion/workshop

Drop dates and deadlines: <https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx>

This syllabus is subject to change (Document date 9/7/21)

Office Hours: T 5:00-5:30 (on zoom, sign up on bluestar for an appt.) W 9:00-10:00pm in the classroom

Course Description:

Students begin their screenwriting journey with a strong foundation in the basic building blocks of solid, engaging storytelling. Students will mine their own lives in order to create memorable stories, characters, and settings. Films and other creative works analyzed in this class will reflect creators and stories from underrepresented groups, highlighting a wide range of diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities. Additionally, students will learn basic screenwriting skills such as character development, constructing atmosphere, and the fundamental components of a scene.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

Course Outcomes:

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

Learning Outcomes

- 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 across multiple genres
- demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- produce original writing projects on a deadline
- assess their own work and that of their peers

Texts and Films:

Required:

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

Additional essays may be provided by the instructor.

Some short films will be screened in class, but students may be required to view additional films outside of class.

Required Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software throughout the course. A word processing program is not acceptable.

Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a focus on screenwriting, producing and/or directing – The software is \$99 at:

<https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-11-edu.html>

An alternative (and cheaper) option is Fade In which is \$50 for students:

<https://www.fadeinpro.com/page.pl?content=students>

Also: Writer Duet, which is wonderful for online collaboration: <https://www.writerduet.com/>

They are monthly based program and also have student pricing if you contact them.

A couple of free options, though not ideal are Celtx: <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>

And I have not used it but have heard good things about Highland:

<https://highland2.app/screenwriters.php>

D2L:

We will be using D2L for this course. To log on, go to <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home>

Enter your campus connect login and password. Once you are logged in, click on the course link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, submission folders, discussion forums and weekly assignments.

Grading

20% Attendance and Participation (participation includes discussions, workshops, Morning Pages/Spark Journals)

20% First Three Creative Assignments

5% Loglines

10% Step Outline of Short

15% First Draft

15% Second Draft

15% Final Draft and Refined Pitch and Logline

Grading Scale

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

F=62-0

A indicates excellence

B indicates good work

C indicates minimum satisfactory work

D work is unsatisfactory in some respect

F is substantially unsatisfactory work

Assignments and Exercises – Class Work Assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. Do not use class time to finalize your projects.

Special Accommodations: If you have any special considerations please see me.

Critiques: Due to limited class time, not everyone's work will get a full review during class. If you'd like more feedback, arrange to discuss your work with me during my office hours.

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.

SCHEDULE

Class 1 9/8

Please get “The Hollywood Standard” as soon as possible.

IN CLASS: Introduction to the course and syllabus
Storytelling Basics
Intro to Visual Storytelling
Screenplay Formatting

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages xi-29; 43 through 54; 63 through 76; 78 through 83
Giving and Receiving notes
Watch: Next Floor (Short)
The Crush (Short)
Write: Creative Assignment: Preparation for a Date
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages (including prompt 1)

Class 2 9/15

IN CLASS: Conflict and Characters
First Workshop: Creative Assignment: Preparation for a Date

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 30 through 39; 60 through 62; 84 through 90
Watch: *New Boy* (Short)
Writing Outside your Demographic workshop if you didn't get to it before class began (link in d21)
Write: Creative Assignment II: Roommates
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages (including prompt 2)

Class 3 9/22

IN CLASS: Visual Storytelling
Dialogue and Exposition
Loglines
Second Workshop: Creative Assignment II: Roommates

ASSIGNMENTS:

Watch: *Enough Said* (Feature)
Write: Creative Assignment III: Interrogation
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages (including prompt 3)

Class 4 9/29 WORKSHOP ONLY

In class: Third Workshop: Creative Assignment III: Interrogation
Recorded Lectures: Three act structure (features and shorts)

Plot points
Two Incidents
Climax
Endings and Beginnings

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 91 through 94
Write: THREE LOGLINES for potential short films
Creative Assignment IV: Seduction Scene
Feedback on group's loglines
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages (including prompt 4)
Group 1 chooses a script

Class 5 10/6

IN CLASS: Step Outlines
Open Endings
Fourth Workshop: Creative Assignment IV: Seduction Scene

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 76 through 78; 55 through 59
The Elevator Pitch Part 1 and 2 on D2L
Script chosen by group 1
Write: STEP OUTLINES for short films
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages (Including Prompt 5)
Start working on your 30-60 pitch paragraph

Class 6 10/13

IN CLASS: Scenes
Character Intros
Fifth Workshop: STEP OUTLINES for short films
Presentation Group 1

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Script chosen by group 2
Write: First Draft/Revision of Outline/Character Development- will be decided by professor
Spark Journal Pages (Including Prompt 6)

Class 7 10/20

IN CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ME on Zoom (do not come to class)

ASSIGNMENTS:

FIRST SET of Scripts (Half of the Class)

Class 8 10/27

IN CLASS: Presentation Group 2
Sixth Workshop: FIRST SET of Scripts (Half of Class)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Script chosen by Group 3
Tools of Screenwriting, pages 95 through 97. Short Scripts.
Write: SECOND SET of Scripts Due (Other Half of Class)

Class 9 11/3

IN CLASS: Presentation Group 3
Seventh Workshop: SECOND SET of Scripts (Other Half of Class)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Script chosen by Group 4
Write: ALL SECOND DRAFTS DUE
Elevator Pitches

Class 10 11/10

IN CLASS: Presentation Group 4
Eighth Workshop: ALL SECOND DRAFTS, Pitch your project to the class

ASSIGNMENTS:

Write: Final Drafts of Short Films and Elevator Pitches Due by Wednesday, November 17th
at 5:45pm

Assignments:

Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and may result in a reduction in the student's grade.

Three Creative Assignments (20% of final grade)

These exercises will be based on the screenwriting conventions we cover in class. Specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided after the lectures and will be critiqued in class the following week. You are expected to bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L. Each assignment is 5% of your final grade (20% in total).

Loglines for Short Script (5% of final grade)

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 bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Outline of Short Script (10%)

Taking your chosen idea, please develop a scene-by-scene outline for your short film. Use your plot points! Be ready to pitch the document in class. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Short Script Draft I (15% of final grade)

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 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 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 bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Rewrite(s) of Short Script (15% of final grade each, the final draft includes a Pitch)

A few things to keep in mind as you REWRITE your scripts:

- The rewrite of your script 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 pages (not including the title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.

Workshops, Attendance, and Participation (20% of your final grade):

Attendance

Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15-minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically fail.** However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don't want your evil germs. Please email me at wroder@cdm.depaul.edu *before class* if you are going to miss.

Participation

You may be called upon to discuss various topics on screenwriting and storytelling during class and discussions may develop throughout the course online, with which you are required to participate. Please be prepared having read the texts and screened the assigned films. Also, spark journals and morning pages will be discussed 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 that will enable you to showcase your assignments and the first draft of your short screenplay. 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.
- The writer must stay quiet during the workshopping of her or his piece.
- 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 her or his gut. The writer’s name will be on the page when all is said and done.

COURSE POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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).

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.

Preferred Name and 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 an alternate name or gender pronoun. 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>

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion

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 diverse 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.

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.

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. 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

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>) for further details.

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>

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system at <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 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>

Online Office Hours

Faculty should be accessible to students using Zoom, Skype or other similar platforms for the duration of the office hours. Faculty must be accessible on the designated platform for the duration of the office hours.

https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/resources/faculty-staff/faculty-questions/Documents/Faculty_Resources_Online_Classroom.pdf

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success.

There are two office locations:

Loop Campus - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002

Lincoln Park Campus - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Students can also email the office at csd@depaul.edu

Students who are registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact me privately to discuss how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Writing Center

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. The Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit www.depaul.edu/writing for more information.

Dean of Students Office

The [Dean of Students Office \(DOS\)](#) promotes student learning and ethical decision making in an inclusive and validating environment. Utilizing a comprehensive approach to student advocacy that is informed by DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian, and urban mission, the office collaborates with students, staff, faculty, parents and community partners to support students in reaching their academic and personal success.

The Dean of Students Office is primarily responsible for administering and adjudicating violations of the Code of Student Responsibility at DePaul University. Additionally, the office provides the administrative withdrawal and absence notification process, and can help students identify campus and community resources in times of personal and/or family crises and medical emergencies.

University Counseling Services

DePaul University Counseling Services (UCS) is committed to providing a range of culturally aware and sensitive clinical services to help currently enrolled DePaul students remove barriers to academic and personal success by addressing emotional, psychological, and interpersonal concerns through multiple treatment modalities. Services offered include: group counseling, individual counseling, couples counseling, crisis management, consultation, referrals, and telereach/outreach workshops. All services are currently being offered on a virtual, remote basis with no fees due to COVID-19. To connect with the counseling center, contact our main number at (773) 325-7779 during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm) to schedule an initial consultation, which is typically scheduled within 1-2 business days of your call.

If you need more immediate assistance or are in acute distress, you can call the main number during regular business hours and ask to speak with a counselor. If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. The Counseling Services staff has extensive experience with providing support services to individuals of varying social identities and backgrounds. Further, our counselors know that commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and anti-racism is an ongoing and open-ended journey and, as such, our counselors frequently and regularly engage in self-reflection and training opportunities to increase cultural awareness and to challenge one's own privileges and biases.

The Help Desk

The Help Desk provides technical assistance via phone, email and web for current DePaul students, faculty and staff. The Help Desk supports computers, network access, telephones, email accounts, and university instructional and administrative software. They can troubleshoot and resolve hardware and software related issues with both the Mac and Windows operating systems. Visit <https://depaul.service-now.com/sp> to get help.