

# DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

## **SCWR 501 551: Writing for Film Thesis / Writing for TV Thesis**

Fall Quarter 2021

Tuesdays, 5:45 – 9:00PM, 14 East Jackson, #507

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312-362-1120

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

### **Description**

In this course, students complete the first draft of their MFA thesis project feature length film screenplay or original TV pilot script which they began developing in SCWR 500 / 550. The thesis project is to serve as the culminating piece in the student's MFA screenwriting portfolio and must be approved by a thesis committee in order for a student to graduate.

### **Objectives**

- Set realistic goals and meet submission deadlines
- Engage in constructive critiques while workshopping each other's script pages
- Learn specific aspects of the screenwriting and TV writing craft
- Become familiar with contemporary screenplay and TV writing style
- Practice visual storytelling

### **Outcomes**

- A 90+ page feature length original screenplay
- Or an original half-hour or one-hour TV pilot script
- TV writers will also create a series pitch deck

### **Prerequisites**

SCWR 500 or SCWR 550

### **Course Management**

This course is managed on **D2L**. There students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion boards, and additional materials.

The class will be divided into three groups (A, B, C). Every third week, each group's feature film writers will be responsible for presenting **2 sequences** (approximately 20-30 pages) for in-class workshopping. Writers working on TV pilot scripts will need to present 1-2 acts (10-25 pages) per workshop session.

Each student in that week's group will select other students as 'actors' for a table reading of the writer's pages.

**!!! HAVE YOUR CAST LIST PREPARED BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS !!!**

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to their D2L Submission folder and Discussion forum. This must be done by class time when they are scheduled to read.

Instructor feedback will consist of comments in class and a one-on-one Zoom meeting. In the event we do not get to a student's pages in class or they miss a class with an excused absence, we will set a time for the student to do a Zoom call with the instructor: The student will read their pages aloud and the instructor will provide feedback at that time.

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name

Course Number

Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

**Format: PDF.**

Weekly writing assignments are due by **Midnight Sunday**. Upload to the appropriate Submissions folder and Discussion forum on the D2L site.

Screenwriting software: Fade In, Final Draft, or Movie Magic Screenwriter. Free alternatives: Celtx (<http://celtx.com/>), Writers Duet.

**!!! MAKE SURE YOU PROOFREAD, SPELLCHECK, AND GRAMMAR-CHECK YOUR PAGES BEFORE UPLOADING TO THE D2L SITE!!!**

**Course Outline**

**WEEK 1, September 14:** Course overview and syllabus review; Discussion: Where are you with your story, plus the process moving forward; Lecture: Format, Style, Scene-Writing, and Transitions; Group assignments: Groups A, B, and C.

- Reading Assignment: *Arrival* (Film), *Breaking Bad* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group A: Film – Act One (SQ1, SQ2) / TV (1-hour) – Opening, Act One, and Act Two / TV (1/2-hour) – Tease and Act One. **Due Sunday, September 19 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 2, September 21:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Deadpool* (Film), *30 Rock* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group B: Film – Act One (SQ1, SQ2) / TV (1-hour) – Opening, Act One, and Act Two / TV (1/2-hour) – Tease and Act One. **Due Sunday, September 26 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 3, September 28:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Parasite* (Film), *Empire* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group C: Film – Act One (SQ1, SQ2) / TV (1-hour) – Opening, Act One, and Act Two. **Due Sunday, October 3 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 4, October 5:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Nomadland* (Film), *Never Have I Ever* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group A: Film – Act Two Part A (SQ3, SQ4) / TV (1-hour) – Act Three, Act Four, and Act Five / TV (1/2-hour) – Act Two, Act Three, Tag. **Due Sunday, October 10 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 5, October 12:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Get Out* (Film), *The Handmaid's Tale* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group B: Film – Act Two Part A (SQ3, SQ4) / TV (1-hour) – Act Three, Act Four, and Act Five / TV (1/2-hour) – Act Two, Act Three, Tag. **Due Sunday, October 17 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 6, October 19:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Booksmart* (Film), *Ted Lasso* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group C: Film – Act Two Part A (SQ3, SQ4) / TV (1-hour) – Act Three, Act Four, and Act Five. **Due Sunday, October 24 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 7, October 26:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's pages.**

- Reading Assignment: *Moonlight* (Film), *Killing Eve* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group A: Film – Act Two Part B (SQ5, SQ6) / TV (1/2-hour and 1-hour) – Series Pitch Deck. **Due Sunday, October 31 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 8, November 2:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's pages (Film).**

Review: **Group A's series pitch decks (TV).**

- Reading Assignment: *Logan* (Film), *Barry* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group B: Film – Act Two Part B (SQ5, SQ6) / TV (1/2-hour and 1-hour) – Series Pitch Deck. **Due Sunday, November 7 by Midnight.**

**WEEK 9, November 9:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's pages (Film)**.  
Review: **Group B's series pitch decks (TV)**.

- Reading Assignment: *Jojo Rabbit* (film), *Mare of Easttown* – pilot (TV)
- Writing Assignment: Group C: Film – Act Two Part B (SQ5, SQ6) / TV (1-hour) – Series Pitch Deck. **Due Sunday, November 14 by Midnight.**

**We will set aside 20 minutes for course evaluations in class this week. You may complete the evaluation on a laptop or mobile device (details later).**

**WEEK 10, November 16:** In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's pages (Film)**. Review: **Group C's series pitch decks (TV)**. Lecture: Script Polish and Edit.

- Writing Assignment: Groups A, B, and C: Revise final script.

**Revised final script due in your D2L Submission Folder by 5PM, November 26.**  
**Note: This draft is also due to committee members on that date and time.**

15%: Class participation and workshop feedback

15%: Opening, Act One, Act Two (1-Hour), Tease, Act One (1/2-Hour), Act One (Film)

15%: Act Three, Act Four, Act Five (1-Hour), Acts Two, Three, Tag (1/2-Hour), Act Two Part A (Film)

15%: Series Pitch Bible (TV), Act Two Part B (Film)

40%: Final Revised Script

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

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 92	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

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.