

SCWR 442-860 Studio Development

When: Tuesdays · 6:30pm – 9:45pm
Where: LA Campus

Instructor: Cory Carroll · ccarro31@depaul.edu · 323-829-0588
Office Hours: By appointment · Email to set a time

Summary of Course

This advanced course examines the development process that enables the screenplay's journey from draft to screen. By crafting professional coverage and development notes, the class will deconstruct feature length scripts and student work in an effort to forge them into cinematically viable properties. The assignments and class discussions are designed to expose the inner workings of Hollywood and provide a framework for what it takes to succeed in the entertainment industry. Enrollment is only open to MFA students.

Prerequisites

None

Course Objectives

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

- Analyze a screenplay (studio tentpole, specialty film, or animated project) and write professionally crafted script coverage and development notes to identify its viability as a feature film, and create a blueprint for how to further develop the project on the path to production.
- Evaluate the potential of a screenplay within the current Hollywood marketplace through the assessment of competitive development, talent packaging and various distribution methods.
- Explain how the development process works in the studio system and the role of production companies/creative producers.
- Find and develop an original feature film take based on existing IP.
- Identify a viable feature film script and create a creative overview based on the practices of a studio executive.

Grading

Participation	15%
Coverage Assignments	15%
Development Notes	25%
Midterm: IP Project	20%
Final: Script Development Pitch/Report	25%

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.

Textbooks

The Studio by John Gregory Dunne (Required)
ISBN-10: 0375700080

Hello, He Lied & Other Tales from the Hollywood Trenches by Lynda Obst (Recommended)
ISBN-10: 0767900413

Additional reading material provided by Instructor.

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 4th

No Class.

Week 2 – January 11th

Lecture: Course Intro, Studio System State of Affairs, Script Coverage Overview

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 1-3), *Script 1*

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Coverage 1 (**Due Sunday, 1/16 by 11:59P via email**)

Week 3 – January 18th

Lecture: Movie Studios Overview, Studio Development Process, IP/Brand Development

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 4-5), *Scripts 2 + 3*

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Coverage 2 + Coverage 3 (**Due Monday, 1/24 by 6P via email**), IP Brainstorm: Find 2-3 ideas to pitch in class for group discussions to help you identify your topic for the midterm

Week 4 – January 25th

Lecture: Developing a major studio film ("tentpoles") - Script Development

Presentation: IP Brainstorm

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 6-9), *Scripts 4 + 5*

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Development Notes 1 + Development Notes 2 (**Due Monday, 1/31 by 6P via email**)

Week 5 – February 1st

Lecture: Producers + Production Companies + Slate/Financing Partners

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 10-11)

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Midterm Presentations + Creative Brief (**Hard copy of brief due in person at the end of class on 2/8**)

Week 6 – February 8th

Presentation: Midterm IP Presentations

Lecture: Developing an animated film - Script Development

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 12-14), *Script 6*

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Development Notes 3 (**Due Monday, 2/14 by 6P via email**)

Week 7 – February 15th

Lecture: Developing a speciality film ("arthouse") - Script Development

Reading: Hello, He Lied (Chapters 1-4), *Scripts 7 + 8*

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Development Notes 4 + Development Notes 5 (**Due Monday, 2/21 by 6P via email**)

Week 8 – February 22nd

Lecture: Studio Television Divisions, Agents & Managers, Packaging/Optioning Material

Reading: *Hello, He Lied* (Chapters 5-7), Script 9

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Development Notes 6 (**Due Monday, 2/28 by 6P via email**)

Week 9 – March 1st

Lecture: Hollywood 3.0: The Global Streaming Wars

Reading: *Hello, He Lied* (Chapters 8-10), Script 10

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Development Notes 7 (**Due Monday, 3/7 by 6P via email**)

Week 10 – March 8th

Lecture: Guest Speakers: Studio Executives (Development, Casting)

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Final Presentation + Report (**Hard copy of report due in person at the end of class on 3/15**)

Week 11 – March 15th

Presentation: Script Development Pitch + Report Final Assignment

Assignments

Participation/Industry Roundup (15% of final grade)

Each class we will start with a group discussion of the assigned scripts for coverage/development notes, a conversation about the assigned textbooks through the lens of contemporary Hollywood, an analysis of the weekend box office report, film releases from the previous weekend, and an industry recap of the past week. Each student is encouraged to bring their own findings to the discussion, as well as be prepared to discuss at least one new film each week.

Coverage Assignments (15% of final grade)

There are 3 coverage assignments for this class. Due dates are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. Scripts will be provided by the Instructor for each assignment. The purpose of each coverage assignment is to evaluate a piece of material through the lens of a studio executive and determine the viability of the project within the current marketplace. In addition to an overview top sheet, each assignment should consist of a 2-page synopsis and 1-page of comments. Guidelines will be discussed at length in class.

Development Notes (25% of final grade)

There are 7 development notes assignments for this class. Due dates are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. Scripts will be provided by the Instructor for each assignment. The purpose of each development notes assignment is to create a workable and feasible blueprint for each script for how to best develop it as it goes into a rewrite on the path to production. Guidelines will be discussed at length in class.

Midterm: IP Project Presentation + Creative Brief (20% of final grade)

Over the course of the first half of the class, we will explore intellectual property (IP) that now dominates the Hollywood marketplace and we will look at available material (e.g. public domain, historical/public figures, etc.) that can be developed into an original contemporary film. For the midterm project, each student will first select 2-3 potential IP ideas, present them to the class for feedback and discuss how to develop the properties, and then choose one of them to focus on for your midterm presentation (~10-20 minutes) and write a creative brief (~3-5 pages) that further builds out the idea for how to develop and produce it as a studio feature film. Guidelines will be further discussed at length in class.

Final: Studio Development Pitch + Report (25% of final grade)

Throughout the course, we will analyze how and why a script is selected for development at a studio and the factors that go into shepherding each project toward production. For the final project, each student will select an available screenplay and develop a report and corresponding pitch that evaluates why this script is a viable candidate for studio development, how you would further develop the project if optioned (hint, hint: development notes go here), talent lists (directors, leading cast) that you believe would be potential targets for the material, and a list of competitive development titles (produced and unproduced) that highlight the benefits and potential pitfalls that the project may face in the marketplace. Guidelines will be further discussed at length in class.

Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change is to be made, it will be thoroughly addressed during class and disseminated via email.

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 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).

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University

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.

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>.

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>

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 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>

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>

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.

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.