

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

SCWR 353/453 Writing the Episodic Drama

Spring 2022

Wednesdays 5:45pm-9:00pm

14 E. Jackson, Room 211 (Loop)

Instructor: Fatou Samba

Office Hours (ONLINE ONLY):

Mondays 2:00pm-3:30pm - <https://depaul.zoom.us/j/92260454965>

Wednesdays 3:45pm-5:15pm - <https://depaul.zoom.us/j/93858925443>

Drop-ins won't be available. Please schedule a Zoom meeting with me in Blue Star or by email to meet during my office hours or by appointment.

Email: fsamba@depaul.edu

Course Description:

In this course, students analyze hour-long dramatic teleplays and examines the storytelling techniques necessary to write an hour-long television dramatic series with an emphasis on characterization and structure. This course also features a specific focus on successful dramatic predecessors, various formats of hour-long drama teleplays, and the definition and significance of "show bibles". Students will create an original hour-long pilot.

Prerequisite: SCWR 250

Course Outcomes: Episodic outline, series bible, original one-hour drama pilot

Learning Objectives:

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

- create an original one-hour drama pilot
- develop a series bible to showcase the unique tone and tenor of the show
- analyze the current market for one-hour drama series on network, cable, and streaming services
- assemble a practical episode outline for the one-hour drama series pilot
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

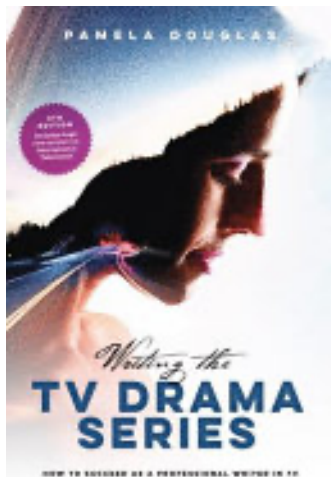
Previous Course Number: DC 307 or DC 407

Required Software: Final Draft is the industry standard and is highly recommended. A student discount can be found here: <https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-12-edu.html>

All assignments are to be saved in PDF!

Recommended (not required) Textbooks:

- Writing the TV Drama Series: How to Succeed as a Professional Writer in TV by Pamela Douglas ISBN13: 9781615932931
- Writing the Pilot by William Rabkin



Any other required supplementary reading materials such as pilot scripts will be posted on D2L.

Online Streaming Services:

For the first few weeks, you will watch a number of television pilots based on the weekly lectures. This will require you to have access to two streaming services, specifically Hulu & Netflix. If you aren't already subscribed, sign up here: www.netflix.com & www.hulu.com

- You are required to watch the assigned episodes even if you've watched them before. There are two reasons for this:
 - 1: The point of the screenings is to *analyze*, something we rarely do when just watching TV for fun. As such, I want you to watch the episode through an analytical lens, keeping in mind the standards and practices you've learned that week.
 - 2: The episode should be fresh in your mind to ensure you're able to properly participate in the post-screening discussions.
- I highly encourage you to take notes, either while watching or directly after.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 MARCH 30

Introductions, favorite shows, what you're currently watching

LECTURE: Creating the TV drama series – Concept, Conflict & Theme,
The Business of TV – getting staffed, pilot season, the writer's room.

HOMEWORK:

READING: Netflix' Series Pitch Guide

3-5 LOGLINES for TV show ideas. Be prepared to pitch them to the class.

Upload to the Submissions Folder AND Discussions Board

SCREENING & ANALYSIS: *The Shield*: Pilot (Hulu)

Watch the pilot and respond to the prompts on the corresponding Discussions Board. We'll discuss *The Shield* during our next session.

DUE: Wednesday April 6th at 5:45pm

WEEK 2 APRIL 6

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: *The Shield*

LECTURE: Characters

WORKSHOP: Logline Pitches

HOMEWORK:

PITCH BRIEF & VERBAL PITCH (**GROUP 1**):

Upload to Submissions Folder AND Discussions Board

DUE: TUESDAY April 12th at 5:45pm

PILOT READING & ANALYSIS (**GROUP 2**): *The Good Wife*: Pilot OR *You*: Pilot

Read the pilot and respond to the prompts on the corresponding Discussions Board.

SCREENING & ANALYSIS (**BOTH GROUPS**): *Little Fires Everywhere*: Pilot (Hulu)

Watch the pilot and respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussions board. We will discuss *Little Fires Everywhere* during our next session.

DUE: Wednesday April 13th at 5:45pm

WEEK 3

APRIL 13

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: *Little Fires Everywhere*

LECTURE: The Pilot Story, Dialogue and Exposition – setting up the world of your story

WORKSHOP: Pitch your show to the class (5-10 minutes) (**GROUP 1**)

HOMEWORK:

PITCH BRIEF & VERBAL PITCH (**GROUP 2**)

Upload to Submissions Folder AND Discussions Board

DUE: Tuesday April 19th at 5:45pm

LECTURE: Structure, Beat Sheet

PILOT READING & ANALYSIS (**GROUP 1**): *The Good Wife*: Pilot OR *You*: Pilot

Read the pilot and respond to the prompts on the corresponding Discussions Board.

SCREENING & ANALYSIS (**BOTH GROUPS**): *When They See Us*: Part One (Netflix)

Watch the first episode and respond to the corresponding prompts on the discussions board. We will discuss *When They See Us* during our next session.

DUE: Wednesday April 20th at 5:45pm

WEEK 4

APRIL 20

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: *When They See Us*

LECTURE: Structure, The Beat Sheet, Outlines

WORKSHOP: Pitch your show to the class (5-10 minutes) (**GROUP 2**)

HOMEWORK:

Create a BEAT SHEET for your pilot.

Upload to Submissions Folder ONLY.

DUE: Monday April 25th at 11:59pm

WEEK 5

APRIL 27

Synchronous Zoom Session: (Individual meetings with me)

Come prepared to discuss your beat sheet and your series idea overall.

HOMEWORK:

Develop your Beat Sheet into a STEP OUTLINE

Upload to Submissions Folder and discussions board.

DUE: Wednesday May 4th at 5:45pm

WEEK 6

MAY 4

LECTURE: The Series Bible

WORKSHOP: Step Outlines

HOMEWORK:

Write ACT ONE of your episode, including the TEASER (if you have one)

Upload to Submissions Folder & Discussions Board.

DUE: Wednesday May 11th at 5:45pm

WEEK 7
MAY 11

WORKSHOP: Teaser & Act One

HOMEWORK:

Write ACT TWO of your episode.

Upload to Submissions Folder & Discussions Board.

DUE: Wednesday May 18th at 5:45pm

WEEK 8
MAY 18

WORKSHOP: Act Two

HOMEWORK:

Write Act Three of your episode.

Upload to Submissions Folder and Discussions Board.

DUE: Wednesday May 25th at 5:45pm

WEEK 9
MAY 25

WORKSHOP: Act Three

HOMEWORK:

Write Act Four of your episode

Upload to Submissions Folder and Discussions Board

DUE: Wednesday June 1st at 5:45pm

WEEK 10
JUNE 1

WORKSHOP: Act Four

HOMEWORK:

Revised & Completed Pilot Scripts

DUE: Wednesday June 8th at 5:45pm

Completed Show Bibles

DUE: Wednesday June 8th at 11:59pm

Upload to Submissions Folder ONLY.

WEEK 11

JUNE 8

No class!

ALL PILOT SCRIPTS DUE: 5:45pm

Your script should meet the minimum page requirement for a 1-hour show (45 pages) and be free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality.

ALL SHOW BIBLES DUE: 11:59pm

Grading:

Final grades will be based on the development of a Pitch Brief and Bible, an Outline and a TV Pilot, class participation and attitude. Because it has to present shows on time every hour of every day, television is one of the most demanding industries. This charge carries over to those who are preparing for it, which is why missed deadlines without prior approval from me will result in assignment failure.

Loglines – 5%, Pitch Brief – 15%, Beat Sheet – 5%, Outline – 15%, Pilot First Draft – 30%, Series Bible – 15%, Participation – 15%

All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality. All Scenes and Scripts must be in proper Screenwriting format.

Grading Rubric:

A	95-100	C	73-76
A-	90-94	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	0-60

COURSE MANAGEMENT**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 username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

Screenings & Readings:

As a part of this class you will be required to watch, read and analyze several pilot scripts. The analysis portion will consist of responding to a series of prompts about the reading on the corresponding discussions board. Failure to complete the readings and respond to the prompts will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

Attendance:

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to class, constitutes a reduction in your participation grade. Missing 3 or more sessions will result in an automatic failure in the class.

If you have to miss a class or a deadline, plan ahead and inform me in advance. Letting me know in advance does not automatically excuse an absence or a missed deadline, but it is the only way to present your case. If you fail to communicate before the next class period to explain an absence or a missed deadline, they will not be excused.

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss sessions 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.

Participation:

At this level students should be interested in the subject of the class. The only way to see this is through participation, either asking questions, participating in class discussions, or adding constructive comments to other student's presentations and works. Feedback is an essential part of the class, and it's the only way for you to learn and grow as a writer. Students who don't provide feedback on their classmates' work can't expect to receive feedback on theirs. Failure to participate will result in a reduction of your grade.

Assignments:

All assignments for this course must be typed, free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality.

Assignments must be submitted on D2L and saved as PDF. Assignments not saved as PDF will receive a reduction in points, and you will be asked to reupload it correctly.

Assignments will be treated like absences, meaning that without prior approval and a documented reason for missing the deadline, late work will not be accepted. Any assignment submitted after the deadline will automatically receive zero points. As such, once the deadline has passed, there's no reason to submit. To avoid this, I suggest not waiting until the last minute to upload your homework. Be sure that you're also submitting the correct assignment. If for some reason D2L is giving you a hard time uploading, email it to me instead.

That said, I can be flexible about this as long as you communicate with me about how and when you will fulfill the requirements for any late assignments. If you need an extension on an assignment let me know BEFORE the deadline, and I will work with you.

Workshops:

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. That means that you have to submit your assignments on time so others students may read and critique them in class. It also means that you have to participate in session discussions of your classmates' work that entails enthusiastic participation and offering constructive criticism. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. If you are not willing to do this, you have to reconsider taking this course.

You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share his/her work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. 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.

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. They should be taking notes.
- 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 his or her gut. The writer’s name will be on the page when all is said and done.

Creative Subject Matter:

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. 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.

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 your professor. But know this: plagiarism will earn you an F in this course.

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.

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.

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: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

TTY: (773)325.7296

Alterations:

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.