DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 500/ 550 Thesis Development
Spring 2022
Thursday 5:45 – 9:00PM (14 E. Jackson #207)

Professor Scott Myers
smyers15@depaul.edu
312-362-1120

Office Hours: THU 1:00-4:00PM by appointment via Zoom
https://depaul.zoom.us/j/95494590020

Description
Students will develop a feature-length thesis screenplay or television pilot in preparation for writing the first draft of their project in SCWR 501 (Film) or SCWR 551 (TV). The development process will include assignments designed to aid students in choosing their thesis project, fostering a strong personal connection to that project, creating compelling three-dimensional characters, and designing a clear, effective narrative structure for the screenplay or pilot. This course will culminate with a completed scene-by-scene feature film outline or scene-by-scene outline for a TV pilot.

Objectives
- Evaluate and compare the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what they will write
- Define motivations and priorities in the stories student chooses to tell
- Supply a unique and repeatable process to story development
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain a creative environment within a professional writer's room
- Complete outstanding creative writing on a deadline

Outcomes
- Personal statement of purpose for the thesis project
- Logline and one-two page treatment
- Professional-quality pitch of up to ten minutes
- Detailed scene-by-scene outline for a feature screenplay or a TV pilot

Required Reading
Lectures, movie and TV scripts, Go Into The Story posts as linked on the D2L course site.

Course Management
This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. On a weekly basis:
- Announcements: Detailing that week's writing and reading assignments
- Content: Home to weekly lecture and reading content
- Submissions: Where you will upload your writing assignments
- Discussion: Where you will provide feedback on classmates' script pages

Students will be divided into three groups: Group A, B, and C. Workshopping will be comprised of break-out sessions for each group and entire class discussions.

In addition, students will meet with the professor one-on-one via Zoom. This will be an opportunity to learn more about each student's creative and professional aspirations, and discuss their thesis project.

A significant target date is Week 8 where each student will pitch to a committee of faculty advisers. We will work on <u>two practice pitches</u> in advance of the formal pitch to give students sufficient story development and rehearsal time.

All written assignments <u>must</u> be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name
Course Number
Date
Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs and with this file name (see example):

WA1 Chayefsky, WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due each **WEDNESDAY, 5PM.** Upload to the appropriate Submissions folder and Discussion forums on the D2L site.

<u>COURSE SCHEDULE</u>

<u>Week 1 – March 31</u>
Course intro, syllabus review, and brief in-class discussion of each student's story
    Lecture: Story Concepts
        Schedule GROUP A in-office meetings

<u>Reading Assignment (for Next Week)</u>
Lectures 1-6: Concept (D2L)

<u>Writing Assignment (WA1)</u>
Movie Writers: 5-10 story concepts
TV Writers: 3-5 series concepts
    Refer to examples (D2L)

<u>Week 2 – April 7</u>
Story concept discussion and group workshop
    Lecture: Protagonist Character Treatment
        Schedule GROUP B in-office meetings

<u>Reading Assignment (for Next Week)</u>
Lecture 7: Protagonist Character Treatment (D2L)

<u>Writing Assignment (WA2)</u>
Protagonist Character Treatment(s)
Project Statement of Purpose
      Refer to examples (D2L)

<u>Week 3 – April 14</u>
Protagonist Character Treatment discussion and break-out group workshop
      Lecture: Master Brainstorming List
            Schedule GROUP C in-office meetings

<u>Reading Assignment (for Next Week)</u>
Lecture 8: Master Brainstorming List

<u>Writing Assignment (WA3)</u>
Master Brainstorming List
      Refer to example (D2L)

<u>NO MEETING ON APRIL 21</u>

<u>Week 4 – April 28 (ZOOM MEETING)</u>
https://depaul.zoom.us/j/99151620087?pwd=S1VZeTFrOWJwY0gxVEFGdUlqeXhRUT09
Master Brainstorming List discussion and break-out group workshop
      Lecture: Character Archetypes and Story Structure

<u>Reading Assignment (for Next Week)</u>
Lectures 9-15: Character Development Keys

<u>Writing Assignment (WA4)</u>
Character Map
      Refer to example (D2L)

<u>Week 5 – May 5</u>
Character Map discussion and break-out group workshop
      Lecture: Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

<u>Reading Assignment (for Next Week)</u>
Lecture 16: Ten Major Plotline Points (Movie)
Mickey Fisher's "Extant" diary (TV)

<u>Writing Assignment (WA5)</u>
Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)
      Refer to examples (D2L)

Week 6 – May 12
Five Primary Plotline Points / Pilot Structure discussion and break-out workshop
    Lecture: On Pitching

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)
Lecture 17: Pitching a Movie
Lecture 18: Pitching a TV series

Writing Assignment (WA6)
Pitch Treatment
    Refer to example (D2L)

Week 7 – May 19
Pitch trial runs
    Lecture: Plotting and the Magical Power of Index Cards
        Schedule one-on-one in-office pitch rehearsals

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)
Lecture 19: Working With Index Cards

Writing Assignment (WA7)
Index Cards
    Refer to example (D2L)

Week 8 – May 26
Index card discussion and break-out group workshop
    Lecture: Beat Sheet

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)
Lecture 20: Beat Sheet

Writing Assignment (WA8)
Beat Sheet
    Refer to example (D2L)

Week 9 – June 2
Beat sheet discussion and break-out group workshop
    Lecture: Scene-By-Scene Outline

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)
Lecture 21: Scene-By-Scene Outline (Movies)
Lecture 22: Scene-By-Scene Outline (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA9)
Outline
    Refer to example (D2L)

Week 10 – June 9
Outline discussion and break-out group workshop
        Lecture: Revising Your Outline

Writing Assignment (WA10)
Revised Outline

Revised final scene-by-scene outline due in the appropriate D2L Submission Forum by Thursday, June 16, 5:00PM.

Grading
Each writing assignment is worth 10 points.

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	= 93	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

Participation
This class is a workshop. That means you are expected to focus on each writer's assignments, assess what works and what – in your opinion – needs work, express your thoughts, and come up with suggestions to improve the story.

Even when your story is not being reviewed in class, you <u>must</u> participate in workshop discussions. This is not only part of your grade, but also a way to develop your critical analytical skills.

For more, see separate post on the D2L site called Constructive Critique.

You are expected to provide feedback in three areas:
- Class discussion
- Break-out group sessions
- Group Discussion forums

Attendance
Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you <u>do</u> have a legitimate reason for missing class, you <u>must</u> email me in <u>advance</u> of the class for it to be considered an excused absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

<u>Office Hours and One On One Meetings</u>
THU 1:00PM-4:00PM. You can schedule via BlueStar for a Zoom meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, etc.

In addition, we will schedule a **one on one meeting** with each student during the quarter to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the script process, plus a **one on one pitch rehearsal meeting**. Both will be via Zoom.

<u>Workshop Ground Rules</u>
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.

<u>Creative Subject Matter</u>
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 story or script pages for personal reasons, email me if you would prefer not to provide feedback for that project.

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 on the Discussion forums, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

<u>Reflections on Constructive Critique</u>
In the D2l Content section, download and read this document as it provide guidelines how to create a positve evaluative class environment.

<u>Decorum and Civil Discourse</u>
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 and laptops 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.

Zoom Policies

The DePaul Code of Student Responsibility applies to online behavior as well as in-person or classroom behavior. The following are policies course meetings on Zoom:

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name, last name, and pronoun preferences (if you so choose). If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal, so try to locate an internet-enabled device to use for this course. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications.

- Video – Turn on your video whenever possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. You may elect to turn off your video if you have limited internet bandwidth, no webcam, or if you're unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions.

- Audio – Mute your microphone when you are not talking. Be in a quiet place when possible and turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.

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.

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.

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 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

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 during Week 9.

<u>Withdrawal</u>
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.

<u>Retroactive Withdrawal</u>
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

<u>Incomplete</u>
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.