

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 301 Story Development

Spring 2022

Tuesday 1:30 – 4:45PM

14 East Jackson, #207

Professor Scott Myers: smyers15@depaul.edu

312-362-1120

Office Hours: THU 1:00-4:00PM by appointment via Zoom

Description

This course is designed to help the emerging writer focus their creativity into a viable original project for a feature film. The lectures, workshops, and assignments are designed to enable the student to identify and develop material they have a strong personal connection to. Emphasis is placed on extensive research of the subject matter, creating memorable characters, and crafting a strong dramatic throughline. The course will culminate with a complete Scene-By-Scene Outline which students can use to write a first draft of their script in SCWR 302.

Objectives

- Generate and assess story concepts, comparing the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what each student will write
- Apply character development tools to the story-crafting process
- Write Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, and Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writer's material and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline

Outcomes

Multiple iterations of student's story in a progressive set of narrative forms culminating in a Scene-By-Scene Outline

Required Reading

Lectures, writing assignment examples, and Go Into The Story posts as linked on the D2L course site.

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. There students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion boards, and additional materials. All written assignments must 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 by **5PM, MONDAY**. Upload to that week's Submissions folder and Discussion forum on the D2L site.

NOTE: You are responsible for reading each of your group's weekly writing assignments before every class session. Come prepared with feedback:

- What you liked about the story / what worked for you
- What concerns you have in considering the story
- What suggestions you have to resolve those concerns and make the story better

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – March 29

Introductions

Overview: Aristotle and The Hero's Journey

Syllabus and course review

Story Summaries: From Logline to Scene-By-Scene Outline

Lecture: The Importance of Story Concepts

Writing Assignment (WA1)

5 feature film story concepts

Refer to examples (D2L): Story / Series Concepts

Week 2 – April 5

5 Questions: Assessing Story Concepts

Workshop: Story Concepts

Lecture: Logline

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Logline of preferred story or series concept

Refer to examples (D2L): Logline, Genre, Movie Associations, Movie Studios

Week 3 – April 12

Lecture: Brainstorming

Workshop: Loglines

Lecture: Character Development

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Master Brainstorming List

Refer to example (D2L): Master Brainstorming Lis (*Up*)

Week 4 – April 19

Workshop: Character Development

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Transformation**Writing Assignment (WA4)**

Character Map

Refer to example (D2L): Character Map (*Up*)**!!!NO CLASS ON APRIL 26!!!****Week 5 – May 3**

Group A: Character Maps discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Synopsis**Writing Assignment (WA5)**

Synopsis

Refer to example (D2L): Synopsis (*Up*)**Week 6 – May 10**

Group B: Synopsis discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Breakdown**Writing Assignment (WA6)**

Breakdown

Refer to example (D2L): Breakdown (*Up*)**Week 7 – May 17**

Group C: Breakdown discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Treatment**Writing Assignment (WA7)**

Treatment

Refer to example (D2L): Treatment (*Up*)**Week 8 – May 24**

Group A: Treatment discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Beat Sheet and Narrative Throughline**Writing Assignment (WA8)**

Beat Sheet

Refer to example (D2L): Beat Sheet (*Up*: Act One)

Week 9 – May 31

Group B: Beat Sheet discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Note Cards and Plotting

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline

Refer to example (D2L): Scene-By-Scene Outline (*Up*: Act Three)

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

Week 10 – June 7

Group C: Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline discussion

Small Group Workshop

Lecture: Seeing the Movie

Writing Assignment (WA10)

Final: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline

Revised final Scene-By-Scene Outline due in the appropriate D2L Submissions folder by 4:45PM, June 14.

Grading

Point totals for each week's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development (WA3), Character Map (WA4)

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Treatment (WA7), Beat Sheet (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9), Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10)

20 points: Participation

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

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

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 must 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**.

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: By Week 5, students will be divided into three groups (Groups A, B, C) to facilitate in-class small group workshop discussion.

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 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.

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.

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.