

**SCWR 500/ 550 Thesis Development** (Spring 2023)  
Thursday 5:45 – 9:00PM (14 E. Jackson #207)

Professor Scott Myers  
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312-362-1120

Office Hours: THU 12:00-3:00PM by appointment via Zoom  
<https://depaul.zoom.us/j/93410872327>

### **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**

*The Protagonist's Journey: An Introduction to Character-Driven Screenwriting and Storytelling*

### **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.

**A significant target date is Week 9 where each student will pitch to a committee of faculty advisers (three members including me). We will work on two practice pitches in advance of the formal pitch to give students sufficient story development and rehearsal time.**

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

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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### **Week 1 – March 30**

Cohort introduction and syllabus review

*Lecture:* The Importance of Story and Series Concepts

### **Reading Assignment (for Next Week)**

Lecture 1: High Concept

Lecture 2: Genres

Lecture 3: Similar But Different

Lecture 4: Brainstorming Recycling

Lecture 5: Genre and Genre Bending

Lecture 6: Testing Your Story Concept

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### **Writing Assignment (WA1)**

Movie Writers: 5-10 story concepts

TV Writers: 5-10 series concepts

Refer to examples (D2L)

### **Week 2 – April 6**

Story / series concept discussion and group workshop

*Lecture:* Protagonist Character Treatment

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 15: Protagonist Character Treatment

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Protagonist Character Treatment

Project Statement of Purpose

Refer to examples (D2L)

**Week 3 – NO CLASS**

Continue to work on your Protagonist Character Treatment and overall story or series

**Week 4 – April 20**

Protagonist Character Treatment discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture*: Master Brainstorming List

*Lecture*: Character Development Exercises

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 16: Master Brainstorming List

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Master Brainstorming List

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 5 – April 27**

Master Brainstorming List discussion and break-out group workshop

*Lecture*: Character Archetypes and Story Structure

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 8: Primary Character Archetypes

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 14: Character Map

Supplemental Reading

Lecture 10: Protagonist

Lecture 11: Nemesis

Lecture 12: Attractor

Lecture 13: Mentor

Lecture 14: Trickster

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 6 – May 4**

Character Map discussion and group workshop

*Lecture:* Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 19: Ten Major Plotline Points

Lecture 15: Character Connections and Subplots

Lecture 16: Story Structure and the Number 5

Supplemental Reading

Mickey Fisher's "Extant" diary (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA5)

Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

Refer to examples (D2L)

**Week 7 – May 11**

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

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Writing Assignment (WA6)

Pitch Treatment

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 8 – May 18**

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

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Writing Assignment (WA7)

Index Cards

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 9 – May 25**

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)

**PITCH SESSIONS WITH THESIS COMMITTEE FACULTY: FRIDAY, MAY 26,  
1:00-4:00PM**

**Week 10 – June 1**

Beat sheet discussion and group workshop

*Lecture:* Scene-By-Scene Outline

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

*The Protagonist's Journey*, Ch. 20: Scene-By-Scene Outline

Lecture 21: Scene-By-Scene Outline (Movies)

Lecture 22: Scene-By-Scene Outline (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Outline

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 11 – June 8**

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  
Monday, June 12, 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 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.

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 do have a legitimate reason for missing class, you must email me in advance 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.

### **Office Hours and One On One Meetings**

THU 12:00PM-3:00PM. 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 pitch rehearsal meeting** via Zoom.

### **Procedures**

Classes will include a workshop session followed by a lecture. Students will be divided into two groups to maximize attention on the greatest amount of material possible. **It is vitally important all students submit work on time, and that all students pre-read the material thoroughly before class to offer detailed notes.**

Work must be submitted to D2L by **Wednesday, 5PM.**

### **Office Hours**

WED 12:00-3:00PM via Zoom. By appointment only.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note 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](#).

### **DePaul University's Land Acknowledgement**

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

### **Students with Disabilities**

DePaul Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations: Loop Campus (312) 362-8002 , Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677  
Email: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Please [click here](#) for Services and Contact Information.

### **Academic Support Resources**

A complete listing of student support resources can be found under Content on the class D2L page.

### **Emergency Plan**

An emergency can occur at any time, suddenly and without warning. Proper planning is essential to minimize the impact of any emergency on the university community, operations, and facilities. [This link provides detailed information on Emergency Evacuation and Fire Alarm safety](#). The University will use the DPU Alert to announce school closing or other emergencies. In the event

of an emergency evacuation, the primary outdoor assembly area for CDM will be Grant Park (Southeast corner of Jackson and Michigan Ave).

### **COVID Policies**

Currently, masks are not required in indoor spaces on campus. However, DePaul will continue to be a mask-friendly campus and wearing a mask will be highly recommended for all indoor spaces.

If you are joining a meeting or gathering and a participant asks you to wear a mask, please do so. If you need one, masks are available at a limited number of first-floor desk areas near building entrances.

### **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 [here](#).

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found [here](#). The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

### **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.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Each unexcused absence 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.

### **Withdrawal**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the [Campus Connection system](#). 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.

### **Online Course Evaluations**

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are

in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't work can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of your instructor to teaching, and these evaluation results are one component used in performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard regarding the quality of teaching at DePaul.

### **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.

### **Copyright Statement**

The materials provided by the instructor in this course are for the use of the students enrolled in the course. Copyrighted course materials may not be further disseminated.