

SCWR 442-860 Studio Development

When: Mondays · 6:30pm – 9:45pm
Where: LA Campus (Medium Classroom)

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 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 & Attendance	10%
Weekly Assignments	15%
Development Notes	30%
Midterm: Remake 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 (*Required*)
ISBN-10: 0767900413

Additional reading material provided by Instructor.

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 8th

Lecture: Course Intro, Studio System State of Affairs, Film Studios Overview

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 1-5), *Scripts 1 + 2*

Assignments: *Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Development Notes 1, WA 1: Coverage*
(**Due by Monday, 1/22 by 6P via email + hard copies in class**)

Week 2 – January 15th

No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day).

Week 3 – January 22nd

Lecture: Studio Development Process, IP/Brand Development, Competitive Development

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 6-9), *Scripts 3 + 4*

Assignments: *Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Development Notes 2, WA 2: Competitive Development Titles* (**Due by Monday, 1/29 by 6P via email + hard copies in class**)

Week 4 – January 29th

Lecture: Producers + Production Companies + Slate/Financing Partners, Packaging (Producers), Packaging (Directors & Cast)

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 10-11), *Scripts 5 + 6*

Assignments: *Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Remake Brainstorm: Find 2-3 feature film remake ideas to pitch in class for group discussions to help you identify your topic for the midterm, Development Notes 3, WA 3: Talent List 1 (Directors), 2 (Cast) & 3 (Producers/Production Companies)* (**Due by Monday, 2/5 by 6P via email + hard copies in class**)

Week 5 – February 5th

Lecture: Adaptations, Source Material, Optioning Material

Presentation: Remake Brainstorm

Assignments: *Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Midterm Presentations + Creative Brief*
(**Hard copy of brief due in person at the end of class on 2/12**)

Week 6 – February 12th

Presentation: Midterm Remake Presentations

Lecture: Packaging (Below the Line)

Reading: The Studio (Chapters 12-14), *Scripts 7 + 8*

Assignments: *Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Development Notes 4, WA 4: Talent List 4 (BTL)* (**Due by Monday, 2/19 by 6P via email + hard copies in class**)

Week 7 – February 19th

Lecture: Evaluating a Script to Construct a Production Plan

Reading: *Hello, He Lied* (Chapters 1-4), Script 9

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Development Notes 5 (**Due by Monday, 2/26 by 6P via email + hard copy in class**)

Week 8 – February 26th

Lecture: Marketing & Distribution

Reading: *Hello, He Lied* (Chapters 5-7), Script 10

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Development Notes 6 (**Due by Monday, 3/4 by 6P via email + hard copy in class**)

Week 9 – March 4th

Lecture: Pitching 101 - Part 1

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

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, In-class Pitch: Choose 1 of the 10 scripts that we read this quarter and craft an original pitch to present in class (~10 min), WA 5: Choose 1 of the 2 books that we read in class and write a 3-4 page reflection paper on key takeaways from the book and significant changes in the studio system since the publication of the book (**Due by Monday, 3/11 by 6P via email + hard copy in class**)

Week 10 – March 11th

Lecture: Pitching 101 - Part 2

Presentation: Pitches

Assignments: Industry Roundup, Studio Tracking Report, Final Presentation + Report (**Hard copy of report due in person at the end of class on 3/18**)

Week 11 – March 18th

Presentation: Script Development Pitch + Report (Final Assignment)

Assignments

Participation/Industry Roundup/Studio Tracking Report (10% of final grade)

Each class we will start with a group discussion of the assigned scripts for coverage/development notes/talent lists, 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. At the start of the course, each student will also be assigned a studio/streaming company to track throughout the quarter. Students are expected to present their findings about their assigned companies on a weekly basis to the class. In addition, attendance for each lecture is mandatory. If you cannot attend class for any reason, you must email the instructor *before* the class begins for an excused absence. Any unexcused absences will result in 0 points for participation that week.

Weekly Assignments (15% of final grade)

There are five weekly assignments for this class, each worth 3 points. 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 the coverage assignments is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in a script and to analyze its viability as a studio project. The purpose of the talent list assignments is for the students to learn how to take a script and begin to package the material in order to bring the project to life. These guidelines will be discussed at length in class.

Development Notes (30% of final grade)

There are six development notes assignments for this class, each worth 5 points. 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: Remake 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. studio library titles, 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 feature film remake 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 their 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 a reimagined take on 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 unproduced 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, below the line) 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.

Generative AI Use Prohibited

Generative AI tools are trained on existing texts, algorithms, and models to generate content like writing, images, and videos based on prompts from users. ChatGPT, Midjourney, Google Bard, and DALL-E are examples of generative AI tools. Please refrain from using generative AI in this course for any purpose. We will be developing skills that are important to practice on your own and using generative AI may inhibit development, practice, or understanding of those skills. During class, we will discuss how and why generative AI may disrupt your learning.

If you're unsure if a specific tool makes use of AI, or if a specific tool is permitted for use on assignments in this course, please contact me. Attempting to pass off AI-generated work as your own will violate [DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions

The health and safety of everyone at DePaul depend on the cooperation of all who come to campus. By taking care of yourself, you protect the entire community. DePaul's COVID-19 response plans are based on the latest guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the university's medical advisor from AMITA Health.

Mandatory protocols must be followed by DePaul students, faculty and staff at all times <https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>.

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.