

SCWR100: Introduction to
Screenwriting
Winter 2024
W 6:00-9:15
SC 330

Instructor: Benjamin Kumming
bkumming@depaul.edu
312-362-6728
Office: SC 331
Office Hours: 5:00pm - 6:00pm

Syllabus

Course Resources

- No book required, readings will be posted on D2L.
- Screenplay-formatted writing software such as WriterSolo. That, and others, are available for free online.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to and overview of the elements of theme, plot, character, and dialogue in dramatic writing for cinema. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in terms of action and the reality of characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Development of synopsis and treatment for a short theatrical screenplay: theme, plot, character, mise-en-scene and utilization of cinematic elements

The following topics will be covered:

- The basic elements of a story (Conflict/emotion, protagonist/objectives/obstacles, characterization).
- The basic screenplay structure in three acts.
- Tools and methods (step outline, dialogue, visuals etc.).
- Critical analysis of films and screenplays.

Course Objectives

By the end of the term students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of effective storytelling.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the three-act screenplay structure.
- Write a complete short screenplay focusing on developing characters and creating tension.

Learning Domain Description

SCWR100 (Introduction to screenwriting) is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take courses in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
2. Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
3. Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.

4. Students will be able to contextualize a work of art. They will be able to do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre. They will also be able to contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

How Learning Outcomes Will Be Met

1. Students will analyze screenplays and compare them to the actual movies so they will be able to see how the written story concretely translates into the film form. In addition, these exercises illustrate how the screenplay follows (or not) the general principles of a story, principles that we study all along the quarter, with an emphasis on characters, structure, actions, visuals, and dialogue.
2. Students will watch and discuss film segments as well as short films (animation and live action) in class to understand how, more than anything else, actions, dialogue, and visuals (especially in animation) define the form of a screenplay and the way it is written.
3. Students will have to present to the class a brief analysis of the themes, characters, story structure, and esthetic of a classic film (mostly American but not only) that they will have watched by themselves at the beginning of the quarter.
4. Students will write a short screenplay (5 to 10 pages of a well formatted screenplay).

Writing Expectations

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 5 to 10 pages of writing for this course.

How Writing Expectations Will Be Met

The written assignments are all related to the final screenplay (5-10 pages) due at the end of the quarter. They follow the step-by-step process of writing for the screen.

1. Students will have to work on different ideas and themes for a short story.
2. Students will have to develop the main characters of the story they have chosen to write.
3. Students will write a step-outline for their screenplay as well as one fully developed scene with dialogue.
4. Students will develop and complete a short screenplay (5 to 10 pages in length).

Course Management System

We will use D2L extensively for both online and in-person sections of this course. Readings, assignments, discussion boards, and films will be posted via D2L.

Textbooks and Printed Resources

All films and reading material will be distributed via D2L. All assigned items must be read and/or watched prior to the following class session.

Attendance and Participation

In-person Students: Attendance to online class sessions is required. An absence includes arriving more than 10 minutes past the start of class or resumption of class after an announced break.

Repeated late arrival less than 10 minutes may also be counted as an absence.

To request an excused absence, please complete the Absence Notification Form via the [Dean of Students Office website](#).

Asynchronous Online Students: Participation in D2L discussion boards is required. Discussion topics will have due dates and late posts will not be accepted without extenuating circumstances that would constitute an excused absence for synchronous students.

To request an excused absence, please complete the Absence Notification Form via the [Dean of Students Office website](#).

Course Policies

Late work will be penalized by 10% per day past the original due date and time. Work later than 7 days will not be accepted and will be marked as 0.

Participation is expected and will be factored into your final grade. Your thoughts and opinions on the subjects we discuss and the films we watch are important, valid, and may be helpful to other students.

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent 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.

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.

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

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296

Grading

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90

B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82-80

C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70

D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, 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.

Final course grade is composed as follows:

Attendance and Participation 20%

Weekly Writing Assignments 40%

Final Screenplay 40%