

DePaul University
School of Cinema and Interactive Media

DC 343 901/910, DC 401 901/910: Writing the Short Film for Production

Spring 2015

W, 5:45-9:00 PM, CDM Center Room 200, and Online

Professor Brad Riddell: briddell@cim.depaul.edu, 312-362-5212

Office Hours: T 10-11:30 AM, W 2-3:30 PM and by appointment.

Course Description:

DC 343/401 focuses on the fundamentals of cinematic storytelling in the short format screenplay. Emphasis is placed on stories that rely on rising action and compelling characters. Students will explore the elements of classic three-act narratives as they pertain to this medium. Constructive analysis will be used in discussing existing films, weekly assignments, and workshops, to reveal the writer's unique voice and perspective.

Objectives:

By the end of this course students will:

- become proficient with standard screenplay format.
- improve their visual writing skills.
- explore their personal creative writing process.
- expand their abilities in scene craft, character development, and narrative structure.
- begin to establish a unique voice, style, and tone.
- deliver high-quality, original creative projects on deadline.
- learn to analyze three-act structure as applied to features and short films.
- understand the relationships between plot, character, and dialogue.

Outcomes:

Through a series of writing exercises and development stages, students will create two short film treatments, and then write one polished short screenplay as well as the first draft of another. The scripts created in this course will be written with student production in mind, addressing limitations to budget, cast, locations and special effects.

Required Textbooks

The Short Screenplay by Dan Gurskis

ISBN-10: 1598633384

The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler

ISBN-10: 193290736X

The Screenplay by Syd Field

ISBN-10: 0385339038

Screenwriting Software

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a serious career-focus on screenwriting, producing, and/or directing. You may purchase Final Draft at discount: <http://www.finaldraft.com/edu>.

You can also obtain a free download of the Celtx screenwriting program at: <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. It's not as reliable or complete, but is good enough.

All assignments are to be saved and submitted as PDF.

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There, you will find each week's recorded lecture, discussion, and workshop (available shortly after the in-class section meets), course content, checklists, a calendar, grades, and all of your assignments. Also posted on D2L will be discussion forums for general course conversation as well as responses to the required reading.

Any films or clips screened in class, as well as those which require individual viewing, will be available either on **ColTube** – an online DePaul video player available for Mac and PC – or YouTube. Links to YouTube films will be posted under Content on D2L.

ColTube: <http://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu/ColTube/Home/>

Schedule:

Week 1: Course introductions. Discussion of Format and Visual Writing Style. In-class reading/screening, and in-class writing.

Week 2: Discussion of Scene Craft and Scene Styles. In-class reading/screening. Workshop *Mood and Atmosphere* assignment.

Week 3: Discussion of Three-Act Narrative Structure and Character Development. In-class screening. Workshop *Seduction or Interrogation* assignment.

Week 4: Discussion of Story Ideation, and the Short Script vs. the Feature. In-class screening. Workshop *Three Loglines* assignment.

Week 5: Discussion of Writing the Produceable short script. In-class screening. Workshop *Two Development Documents* assignment.

Week 6: Discussion of Conflict, Urgency, and Stakes. Workshop *Group A Draft 1*.

Week 7: Discussion of dialogue. Workshop *Group B Draft 1*.

Week 8: Discussion of rewriting. Workshop *Group A Draft 2*. Group B Essay Due.

Week 9: Discussion of Creative Momentum and Project Management. Workshop *Group B Draft 2*. Group A Essay due.

Week 10: Workshop *Both Groups Polished Draft*.

Week 11: First draft of the second short script you developed in class is due on D2L by 9 PM on June 12th.

Assignments

For Week 2:

READ: chapters 1 & 2 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay), Pages 3-20 Vogler (The Writer's Journey), Chapters 1-5 Field (The Screenplay).

WRITE: the Mood & Atmosphere assignment. In-class students should print pages, bring them to class, and also post to D2L.

POST: Book Report/Discussion #1: List 3 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. These are due before class begins.

For Week 3:

READ: Chapter 3 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay), Pages 23-79 Vogler (The Writer's Journey), Chapters 7-9 Field (The Screenplay).

WRITE: either the Seduction or Interrogation assignment. In-class students should print pages, bring them to class, and also post them to D2L.

POST: Book Report/Discussion #2: List 3 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. These are due before class begins.

For Week 4:

READ: Chapters 4 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay), Pages 83-132 Vogler (The Writer's Journey), Chapters 12 Field (The Screenplay).

WRITE: the Three Loglines assignment. In-class students should print pages, bring them to class, and also post them to D2L.

POST: Book Report/Discussion #3: List 3 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. These are due before class begins.

For Week 5:

READ: Chapter 5 Gurskis (The Short Screenplay), Pages 135-173 Vogler (The Writer's Journey), Chapters 10 & 11 Field (The Screenplay).

WRITE: the Development Documents packet for TWO of your three loglines. In-class students should print pages, bring them to class, and also post them to D2L.

POST: Book Report/Discussion #4: List 3 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. These are due before class begins.

For Week 6:

READ: Pages 175-228 Vogler (The Writer's Journey)

WRITE: Group A delivers a first draft of their shorts by **MONDAY at 9:00 AM!**

POST: Book Report/Discussion #5: List 3 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. These are due before class begins.

For Week 7:

READ: Pages 231-291 Vogler (The Writer's Journey).

WRITE: Group B delivers a first draft of their shorts by **MONDAY at 9:00 AM!**

For Week 8:

WRITE: Group A delivers the second draft of their scripts by **MONDAY at 9:00 AM!** Group B delivers their Hero's Journey Essay on D2L before class begins.

For Week 9:

WRITE: Group B delivers the second draft of their scripts by **MONDAY at 9:00 AM!** Group A delivers their Hero's Journey Essay on D2L before class begins.

For Week 10:

WRITE: Both groups deliver revisions for discussion by **MONDAY at 9:00 AM!**

The Final

WRITE: Both groups deliver a first draft of *the other short script idea* they developed to D2L before Midnight June 12th.

Grading:

Participation (book reports, commenting on student work & posts): 100 points

Final Revised Script: 100 Points

First Draft of Second Script: 100 points

Six Weekly Writing Assignments: 60 points

Hero's Journey Essay: 40 points

Total: 400 Points

These grades are percentages: 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. Late work will rarely be accepted.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for the in-class section of this course. An absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction in your overall participation grade. Any assignments due on an absence day will be given a zero.

Laptops/Cell Phones:

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones must be silenced and stowed. I'm serious.

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. But know this: plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course. It has happened before, so please don't let it happen again.

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.