

DC 201 Syllabus - Fall 2015 - Brian Mellen

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Office hours: TuTh 10:30 to 11:15am - LPC Rm. 330 - By Appt. Only

Summary of Course:

Introduction to Screenwriting focuses on narrative storytelling and encourages students to find their unique voices. Emphasis is placed on telling the story in terms of action and characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Students will analyze feature films and animated shorts in depth and will provide a final short screenplay of their own which adheres to a traditional dramatic structure.

Prerequisites: None.

** Syllabus is subject to change*

Course Objectives:

By the end of the term students will:

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

Learning 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 course 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 complete their own screenplay by the end of the quarter.

Writing Expectations:

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

How Writing Expectations Will Be Met:

The written assignments are all related to the final screenplay (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 short with dialogue.
4. Students will develop and complete a short screenplay (10 pages).

Course Management System: D2L

Textbooks and printed resources:

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting, Newly Revised & Updated,
Field, Random House, 2005. ISBN: 978-0385339032

The Art of Dramatic Writing

Egri, Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1972. ISBN: 978-0671213329

Software for formatting a screenplay:

Celtx at www.celtx.com

FinalDraft at <https://www.finaldraft.com>

Drop Dates:

Tuesday, Sept. 15: Last day to add (or swap) classes

Tuesday, Sept. 22: Last day to drop classes with no penalty

Tuesday, Oct. 27: Last day to withdraw from classes

Grading:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Morning Pages/Journal	10%
First Draft of Screenplay	10%
Assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Screenplay	30%

Grading Scale:

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

Course Lectures/Reading Assignments:

Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The textbooks offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lecture presentations. The instructor will use both the classroom and the textbooks. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

Student responsibilities:

Each student is responsible for their time management and for meeting the expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines in class. In the event of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for an assignment sheet detailing any homework. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus you are still responsible for completing the assignment on time.

Deadlines:

Late assignments will not be accepted for grading and written feedback will be given at the instructors discretion. You will not be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

Attendance & Participation:

This course demands class participation - attendance is mandatory. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late, or leaving before class is dismissed will be considered absent. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences. After that, each successive absence will affect your Participation grade. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized.

Examinations:

Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam.

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

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism on assignments or cheating tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for class. There are no exceptions to the rule. If you are in doubt about the definitions of plagiarism, consult your student handbook.

Content Changes:

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

CLASS SCHEDULE

** Syllabus schedule is subject to change*

Week One 09/10 and 09/15

Introduction to Course and Requirements, Screenwriting vs. Traditional Writing, What is a movie? Conflict

Readings: Field - Ch. 1-3 Egri - Ch. I, Ch. II (32-43)

Assignment #1 (Due at 10/13): Buy a notebook and start writing your morning pages. Write at least two pages a day, five days a week, from now until the midterm. These pages can be about anything. They don't have to be profound or particularly insightful for that matter. They don't even have to make sense - just write. I won't read what you write in the notebook (unless you want me to).

Assignment #2 (Due 09/22): Write about three different moments in your life or someone else's that could make a good starting point for a movie. Write about why you think each of these moments could make an interesting basis for a story in

a movie. Devote at least a paragraph for each moment. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Two 09/17 and 09/22

What defines character?

Readings: Field - Ch. 4-6 Egri - Ch. II (86-124)

Assignment #3 (Due 09/29): Create a character. Write a character biography for the protagonist of your story. Be as specific as you can - the more details the better. Also, keep in mind, nothing is chiseled in stone. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Three 09/24 and 09/29

Story Structure, Plot Points, Aristotelian Curve

Readings: Field - Ch. 7-9

Assignment #4 (Due 10/06): Outline a feature film hitting all the major beats and plot points. Record the time into the movie that the major beats occur (the 10's). Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Four 10/01 and 10/06

Premise, Treatments

Readings: Field - Ch. 10-12, 13

Assignment #5 (Due 10/13): Write a step outline for your story. You will present your outline to the class next week. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Five 10/08 and 10/13

Presentations/Discussion of Step Outlines, Review for Midterm

Readings: Read assigned screenplay

Assignment #6 (Due 10/20): Write the opening scene or scenes to your movie. **Make sure it's a scene with dialogue.** It must be at least two pages and no more than

four. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Six 10/15 and 010/20

Midterm, Screenplay Format

Assignment #7 (Due 10/27): Begin writing your screenplay. The first three pages are due next week. Bring five copies to class next week. Bring a hard copy to class and upload to D2L as a .PDF. No Word documents. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Seven 10/22 and 10/27

Dialogue

FIRST THREE PAGES OF SCREENPLAY DUE 10/27

Bring five copies.

Assignment #8 (Due 11/03): Continue writing the first draft. First seven pages due next week. Must be uploaded to D2L as a .PDF. Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Eight 10/29 and 11/03

Scenes

FIRST SEVEN PAGES DUE 11/03

FIRST DRAFT (Due 11/10): Finish writing the first draft. Upload to D2L as .PDF only. Hard copy not necessary. Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

Week Nine 11/05 and 11/10

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Meet one on one to discuss final screenplay.

Class Ten 11/12 and 11/17

REVISING/REWRITING

Final scripts due in ONE WEEK.

Getting through writer's block.

Review of format.

FINAL DRAFT OF SCREENPLAYS ARE DUE Nov. 19, 2015 by 11:59pm.