

REWRITING THE FEATURE FILM
(Autumn 2015)

DC 303

DC 404

Mondays: 5:45 – 9:00 pm

Room: #207, 14 East Jackson Blvd.

Instructor: Christopher Parrish

Office Hours: Mondays 12:45 – 5:15 pm

Office: CDM #465

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Course Description: This class focuses on practical ways to approach the rewriting process for feature film screenplays. Through group workshops and assignments, students isolate issues with plot, character development, dialogue and pacing in their script and work on addressing them in a full draft rewrite. Students must possess a complete feature length script in order to enroll in the course. This course is repeatable.

303 Prerequisite: DC 302 Advanced Screenwriting II

404 Prerequisite: None

Type of Instruction: Lectures, discussions, workshops, readings, screenings, guest speaker (via Skype)

Content Changes: Depending on time factors, lectures, assignments and guest speaker projected for the term may require alteration or rescheduling.

Please bring your laptop to follow along with class workshop readings and assignments. Hard copies of assignments may be required to provide for designated reading groups.

All written assignments must be saved as a PDF and posted on D2L. Do not email me your assignments. Emailed assignments will not be graded.

Course Management System: D2L

Required Readings: PDFs will be posted on D2L.

Suggested Readings:

Making a Good Script Great by Linda Seger

Your Screenplay Sucks! By William A. Akers

Software: Final Draft is strongly recommended for this course.

Withdrawal Drop Dates: September 15, 2015 – Last day to drop classes with penalty. October 27, 2015 – Last day to withdraw from Autumn 2015 classes.

Learning Outcomes:

* Students will learn various rewriting techniques designed to enhance their feature-length screenplays in the areas of plot, structure, dialogue, character development, pacing and tone.

* Students will learn and execute skills pertaining to exchanging constructive criticism with writing peers.

* Student will complete a rewrite plan for his/her individual feature-length screenplay.

* Students will complete a rewrite of his/her feature-length screenplay.

Grading:

“Speed” Screenplay/Film Comparison: 10%

Peer Screenplay Synopsis & Pitch: 10%

Rewrite Plan: 15%

Class Participation / Verbal & Written
Peer Feedback: 15%

Completed Revised Draft of Feature-length
Screenplay: 50%

Schedule:

Week 1: September 14, 2015

Classroom Viewing: Clip from “Walk the Line”

Lecture:

Have you found your “sound” yet? (What do great comics, songwriters and writers all have in common? They have a voice, an agenda and an attitude. What’s yours?)

Classroom Discussion:

Introductions – Who are you? What’s your sound? Who are you in 30 words or less? What’s your logline – your movie in 30 words or less?

Syllabus Overview

Recap on screenplay structure (6 screen story paradigms)

Syd Field, Michael Hauge, Robert McKee, Linda Seger, John Truby, Christopher Vogler

Classroom Exercise: Viewing & Analysis: Act I of “Happy Gilmore”

Homework (DUE 09/21/2015 by 5:00pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

- 1.) Read screenplay “Speed” posted on D2L)
 - 2.) Watch the 1994 film “Speed” starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock
 - 3.) Write a (3 pg. minimum, double-spaced) synopsis of script and comparison analysis between the movie and the screenplay. What did you like and/or dislike between the two? What are the major differences? What surprised you?
 - 4.) Post the most current draft of your feature-length screenplay on D2L **IMMEDIATELY**
 - 5.) Prepare to speak in class from the POV of your own script’s Protagonist (bad impressions encouraged)
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Week 2: September 21, 2015

Classroom Discussion: The comparisons and contrasts between the screenplay and the film “Speed”

Lecture: Character (Methods of Analyzing and Adding Dimension to Your Cast. Film characters vs. Television characters.)

Classroom Exercise: Your Protagonist on the Hotseat

Homework (DUE 09/28/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

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- 1.) Read classmate's script randomly assigned to you.
 - 2.) Write a 2 page minimum, double-spaced synopsis of your classmate's screenplay. Be prepared to read synopsis aloud in next class.
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- 3.) Write a 2 page minimum, double-spaced critique in the areas of structure, characters, dialogue, tone, pacing, theme/message, etc.
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Week 3: September 28, 2015

Lecture: Dialogue (Tips and Common Mistakes)

Classroom Exercise #1: Read your synopsis of classmate's screenplay.

Classroom Exercise #2: Author takes Q & A and suggestions from classmates re. synopsis

Homework (DUE 10/05/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions):

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- 1.) **Rewrite Plan**- Based on feedback from Week #2's Character Hotseat and today's synopsis Q & A, as well as reactions to series arc and future storylines, write up your rewrite plan. MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW RUBRIC ON D2L.
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- 2.) **Here Comes Trouble** - Post on D2L and bring in (6) hard copies of the scene from your script you feel needs the most work.
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Week 4: October 5, 2015

Lecture: Bad Pacing, Inconsistent Tone and 10 Other Things Studio Readers Hate

Classroom Exercise #1: THIS SCENE SUCKS - Workshop a group rewrite of this truly terrible scene courtesy of your instructor

Classroom Exercise #2: BRING OUT YOUR DEAD - Workshop your own "problem" scene with your designated group

Homework (DUE 10/12/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise pages (1 - 15)

Week 5: October 12, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 1 - 15

Homework: (DUE 10/19/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise pages 16 - 30

Week 6: October 19, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 16 - 30

Homework: (DUE 10/26/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise pages 31 - 45

Week 7: October 26, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 31 - 45

Homework: (DUE 11/2/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise pages 46 - 60

Week 8: November 2, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 46 - 60

Homework: (DUE 11/9/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise Pages 61 - 75

Week 9: November 9, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 61 - 75

Homework: (DUE 11/16/2015 by 5:00 pm - See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Revise Pages 76 - 90

Week 10: November 16, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop pages 76 – 90

Classroom Activity: Guest Skype Speaker (TBD)

Homework: (DUE 11/23/2015 by 11:59 pm – See assignment rubric on D2L for instructions)

Completed Revised Screenplays (including Pages 91 – Last Page)

Proof for typos (seriously, don't just rely on spell check.)

Assignments:

Homework assignments must be completed by the date to which they are assigned in the syllabus. Reasonable deadlines are given for completion for each assignment. Consequently, late assignments will not be accepted. Incomplete work may receive partial credit on a case by case basis (Late assignment = F.)

Exceptions:

A.) Medical emergency. You must contact me within 24 hours of the assignment due date and submit support documents within 48 hours of the assignment due date.

B.) Personal emergency. If you miss an assignment deadline because of any other reason besides a medical one, you must submit compelling evidence supporting your excuse within 24 hours of the assignment due date.

Schedule: (Schedule may be subject to change. Instructor will announce any such changes in class and/or send email.)

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 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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

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

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

Class Discussion:

Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading

assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

Attitude:

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

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.

Cell Phones/On Call:

If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.