

REWRITING THE ORIGINAL TV PILOT

(Autumn 2015)

DC 330 / 432

Mondays: 5:45 – 9:00 pm

Room: #207, 14 East Jackson

Instructor: Christopher Parrish

Office Hours: Monday 12:45 – 5:15 pm

Office: CDM #465

Office Phone: (312)362-5815

Fax: (312)362-6116

Email: cparris6@cdm.depaul.edu

Course Description: This class focuses on practical ways to approach the process of rewriting a script; specifically this class will focus on students' original television pilots. Through group workshops, lectures, readings, and assignments, students identify and improve problems in various areas of their teleplay including, but not limited to: plot, character development, dialogue and pacing. By the end of the quarter, students will have completed a full rewrite of their complete pilot script; therefore, students must possess a complete television pilot in order to enroll in the course. This course is repeatable.

330 Prerequisite: DC 306 Writing the Sitcom -or- 307 Writing the Episodic Drama

432 Prerequisite: DC 406 -or- DC 407

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 Reading: Automatic Pilot by Bill Taub

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 television pilot scripts in the areas of plot, structure, dialogue, character development, pacing, tone, etc.
- Students will learn and execute skills pertaining to exchanging constructive criticism with writing peers.
- Students will complete a revised show “bible” for his/her individual television pilot script.
- Students will complete a rewrite of his/her television pilot script.

Grading:

“Friends” Pilot Script/Pilot Comparison:	5%
Peer Pilot Script Synopsis & Pitch:	10%
Class Participation / Verbal & Written Peer Feedback:	15%
Revised Show Bible (Character Bios, Setting, Series Arc, Future “A” Storylines):	15%
Revised Pilot Episode Outline:	10%
Completed Revised Draft of Pilot Script:	45%

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?)

Discussion:

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

Syllabus Overview

Recap on television script structure spreadsheet (multi-cam, single-cam, one-hour, animation)

Class Viewing & Analysis: Cold Open and Act I of “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt” (Pilot)

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

- 1.) Read “Friends – The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate (Pilot)” script posted on D2L
 - 2.) Watch “Friends – The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate (Pilot)” on Netflix
 - 3.) Write a (3 pg. minimum, double-spaced) synopsis of script and comparison analysis between the pilot and the script. 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 pilot script 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 script and pilot of “Friends”

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

Classroom Exercise: Protagonist on the Hotseat

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

- 1.) Read classmate's script randomly assigned to you.
 - 2.) Write a 2 pg. minimum, double-spaced synopsis of your classmate's pilot script. Be prepared to read synopsis aloud in next class
 - 3.) Write a 2 pg. minimum, double-spaced critique in the areas of structure, characters, dialogue, tone, pacing, theme/message, etc.
 - 4.) Prepare to discuss how you see your series progressing (series arc and future storylines)
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Week 3: September 28, 2015

Lecture: Dialogue (Tips and Common Mistakes)

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

Classroom Exercise #2: Author takes Q & A and suggestions from classmates re. synopsis. Author explains how he/she sees the show's series arc and future storylines.

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

- 1.) **Bible 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 revised Bible. MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW RUBRIC ON D2L.
 - 2.) **Here Comes Trouble** - Post on D2L and bring in (6) hard copies of the scene in your TV pilot 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 "problem" scene with your assigned group

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

Write your revised Outline

Week 5: October 12, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop Outline

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

Revise Cold Open and Act One

Week 6: October 19, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop Cold Open / Act One

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

Revise Act Two

Week 7: October 26, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop Act Two

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

Revise Act Three (& Tag is Sitcom)

Week 8: November 2, 2015

Classroom Activity: Workshop Act Three & Tag

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

Revise Act Four if Hour-long Drama (No Homework due if sitcom)

Week 9: November 9, 2015

Classroom Activity #1: Workshop Act Four (If Hour-long Drama)

Classroom Activity #2: Complete Revised Script Table Reads (If Sitcom)

Homework: TBD

Week 10: November 16, 2015

Classroom Activity: Continue Complete Revised Script Table Reads

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

Complete Revised Television Pilot Scripts

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.