

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 304/405 Topics in Screenwriting: Adaptation

Spring 2016

W 1:30PM-4:45 PM, 14 E. Jackson, 207, Loop Campus

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

Office Hours: 10 AM – 1PM in CDM 521 and by appointment (also during advising hours)

Course Description:

Through selected readings and practical writing assignments, this course will introduce students to the concepts and processes behind adapting existing works into screenplays for film and television.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze source material and their adapted screenplays in order to identify the techniques and choices implemented in the adaptation.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to navigate the public domain for access to adaptable material.
- Students will be able to interpret the specific challenges involved with a given piece of existing work, and then create a cinematic adaptation of that material.

Outcomes:

- Graduate students will complete a treatment for a long-form adaptation (feature screenplay, significant teleplay), as well as 30 pages of the script.
- Undergraduate students will complete a treatment for a long-form adaptation (feature screenplay, significant teleplay), as well as 15 pages of the script.

Required Textbooks and Printed Resources*:

The Martian by Andy Weir ISBN-10: 0553418025

The Price of Salt (or Carol) by Patricia Highsmith ISBN-10: 0486800296

The Big Short by Michael Lewis ISBN-10: 0393338827

**Screenplays and other readings are available under "Content" on D2L*

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and dropboxes can be found there, as well as video-recorded lectures and discussions.

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. The software is \$99 with a student discount at: <http://www.finaldraft.com/edu>.

You may also obtain a free download of the Celtx screenwriting program at:

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at:

<https://storywriter.amazon.com/>. Adobe Story can be found here:

<https://story.adobe.com/en-us/> **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Each unexcused absence beyond the first equates to a loss of ten points from the student's final score.

Assignments:

The class will break into groups to minimize the reading load for each student, and to make sure everyone receives an equal amount of feedback. Screenwriting assignments are to be submitted to D2L on Tuesdays by NOON. Students are expected to have read and annotated the work submitted by their classmates each week BEFORE class. Papers should be submitted to D2L by the start of class on the day in which they are due.

Late work will not be accepted without a valid excuse, and out of fairness to all, it cannot be workshopped in class.

<u>The Martian</u> reflection paper:	10 Points
<u>Carol</u> reflection paper:	10 Points
<u>The Big Short</u> reflection paper:	10 Points
Completed Development Docs:	20 Points
Completed Treatment:	25 Points
Completed Script pages:	<u>25 Points</u>
	100 Total

Grading:

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.

Reflection papers will be three-to-five pages, double spaced, and will present your take on how the adaptation succeeded or failed, specific challenges the writer faced and how he/she overcame them, and how you might have done the work differently. Papers must be well-organized, tightly written, reference both the screenplay (not the film) and the book, and must be grammatically correct.

Screenwriting assignments must demonstrate professionalism and investment in the material, showcase techniques and ideas discussed in class, offer a unique take on the original work with a clear voice, and present a proper grasp of grammar, format and style.

Course Schedule:

Each class may include a lecture, screening, or guest speaker in addition to the workshop. You are expected to keep up with the reading and writing on your own.

CLASS 1, March 31: Course introduction. Discussion of adaptation in general and an introduction to the public domain. Project selection conversation.

Due April 7: **Everyone** posts three loglines to Discussions for potential public domain adaptations. *Short works are recommended unless the writer is very familiar with a longer work.*

CLASS 2, April 7: Material challenges, Story Breaking, Pitching, and review everyone's loglines for project selection.

Due Tuesday, April 12: Project selected. One Sheet and Development Docs due for Group A in Discussions and Dropbox. Group A will make 5-minute pitches in class.

The Martian reflective essay is due in Dropbox on Thursday, April 14.

CLASS 3, April 14: Treatments vs. outlines. Referencing *Argo*, discuss story breaking, expansion, and contraction. Group A pitches, discuss One Sheet & Development Docs.

Due Tuesday, April 19: Project selected. One Sheet and Development Docs due for Group B in Discussions and Dropbox. Group B will make 5-minute pitches in class.

CLASS 4, April 21: Discuss *The Martian*. Group B pitches, discuss One Sheets and Development Doc.

Due Tuesday, April 26: Group A Treatment to midpoint in Discussions.

CLASS 5, April 28: Discuss tightening, eliminating, and combining. Also discuss "Key Scenes." Workshop Group A treatments.

Due Tuesday, May 3: Group B treatment to midpoint in Discussions.

Carol reflective essay is due on Thursday, May 5 in Dropbox.

CLASS 6, May 5: Discuss *Carol*. Workshop Group B treatments.

Due Tuesday, May 10: Group A finished treatment in Discussions and Dropbox.

CLASS 7, May 12: Discuss making the second original, and why you shouldn't be too faithful. Discuss acquiring copyrighted material. Workshop Group A treatments.

Due Tuesday, May 17: Group B finished treatment in Discussions and Dropbox.

CLASS 8, May 19: Guest Speaker. Workshop Group B treatments.

Due Tuesday, May 24: Group A submits first 15 pages to Discussions.

The Big Short reflective essay is due on Thursday, May 26 in Dropbox.

CLASS 9, May 26: Guest Speaker. Review Group A Pages.

Due Tuesday, May 31: Group B submits first 15 Pages to Discussions.

CLASS 10, June 2: Discuss *The Big Short*. Workshop Group B Pages.

FINAL DUE: Thurs. June 7, in Dropbox by 5:00 PM: Finished, revised pages (15 undergrad, 30 grad).

Laptops/Cell Phones:

Laptops may remain open during lectures and discussions. If the instructor suspects a student of using the laptop for applications not related to participating in class, he/she may lose laptop privileges. Cell Phone usage will be permitted during class breaks.

In-Class Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly small group workshop sessions. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Please refer to the course outline for specific workshop dates.

Decorum and 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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Obvious inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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 students will be notified via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments

about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter

Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM.

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

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:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677