

DC 101-601 Screenwriting for Majors

Spring 2017 | Tuesday 1:30pm – 4:45pm | 14EAST 209

Instructor: James Choi

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Office Hours: Tuesday 11am – 1:30pm / Wednesday 1:30am – 3:30pm / Thursday 3:30pm – 5:30pm in CDM Room 515 or by appointment

***This syllabus is subject to change*

Summary of Course

This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, story structure, character, and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. Students are expected to develop and write a short screenplay.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the term students will:

- Students will develop a solid understanding of the relationship between character and story structure.
- Students will be able to identify the various narrative tools available to filmmakers in the writing and producing process.
- Students will develop a cinematic vocabulary with which to discuss films critically.

Course Management

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, and as the semester progresses – your current grade.

Text

"Tools of Screenwriting" by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10:0312119089

(Required)

"The Hollywood Standard" by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637 (Required)

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

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Writer Duet is also free and available at:

<https://www.writerduet.com>. All assignments are to be saved in PDF.

[Writer Duet Screenwriting Program \(will be using in class for notes\)](#)

Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late, constitutes a reduction in your participation grade. I take attendance every class. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will not receive 15% for participation and attendance.**

Class Participation

Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions and critique other people's work. Also be advised that many of the assignments that you write for in this class, will be read aloud. This class is an openly creative environment where people should be comfortable sharing work and be open to constructive feedback from their peers.

Assignments and Exercises

Class work assignments must be handed in on time. All assignments will be turned in via D2L. **Late work will not be accepted.**

Critiques

Due to limited class time, not everyone's work will get a full review during class. If you'd like more feedback, arrange to discuss your work with me during my office hours.

Alterations

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

Grading

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|--|------------|
| Assignment #1: Mood and Atmosphere | 5% |
| Assignment #2: Roommates | 5% |
| Assignment #3: Preparation | 5% |
| Assignment #4: 3 Loglines | 5% |
| Assignment #5: Outline | 5% |
| Assignment #6: ACT I | 10% |
| Assignment #7: ACT II | 10% |
| Assignment #8: Rough Draft | 15% |
| Final: Final Draft (8-10 pages) | 25% |
| Attendance/Participation | 15% |

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

Short Script Draft I

You will submit a first draft of a short script that is to be no longer than 10 pages. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count - proofread your work, proofread it again, and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required.
- You must include a properly-formatted cover page.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - it may be a good idea to have a friend look over the script as well.
- Description should be lean - only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Develop a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Avoid exposition-heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually? Am I talking to the audience?"
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative - you won't be able to do it in one night and achieve the grade you want.

Final: Short Script Draft II

This is your final writing assignment. The final script is to be no longer than 10 pages.

Points to consider:

- The second draft of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort. Correcting typos and making small tweaks is not a rewrite.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops, and your own self evaluation to craft your revised draft. Get outside opinions if you can.
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count even more. Proofread again.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Week 1 – 3/28

Introduction to class, cinematic storytelling formatting

Assignment: Mood & Atmosphere

Reading: Tools of Screenwriting pages 3-40, 88-90 / Hollywood Standard pages Intro - 28

Week 2 – 4/4

Due: Mood & Atmosphere

Workshop Mood and Atmosphere

Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting pages 43-45, 63-65 / Hollywood Standard pages 29-80

Lecture: Structure, Character

Assignment: Roommates

Week 3 – 4/11

Due: Roommates

Workshop Roommates

Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting pages 46-49, 81-83, 91-94

Lecture: Conflict – Goals, Stakes & Urgency

Assignment: Preparation

Week 4 – 4/18

Due: Preparation

Workshop Preparation

Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting pages 60-62 / Hollywood Standard pages 103-113

Lecture: Conflict – Plot and Theme

Assignment: Loglines

Week 5 – 4/25

Due: Loglines

Workshop Loglines

Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting pages 68-70, 84-87 / Hollywood Standard pages 81-102

Lecture: Outline

Assignment: Outline

Week 6 – 5/2

Due: Outline

Workshop Outline

Reading: The Tools of Screenwriting pages 49-59, 76-80 / Hollywood Standard pages 131-139

Lecture: Layering and Details, Exposition

Assignment: ACT I

Week 7 – 5/9

Due: ACT I

Workshop ACT I

Assignment: ACT II

Week 8 – 5/16

Due: ACT II

Workshop ACT II

Assignment: Rough Draft

Week 9 – 5/23

Due: Rough Draft

Workshop Rough Draft

Assignment: Final Draft

Week 10 – 5/30

Re-writing

****FINAL – 6/6 2:30pm – 4:45pm****

Laptops/Cell Phones:

We won't generally need to have laptops open in this class. But if they are, 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.

Decorum and Civil Discourse:

We must respect each other, our collaboration and the work at hand. A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of nonacademic 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.

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.

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