

**DePaul University**  
**School of Cinematic Arts**

**DC 506 / 508: Writing for Film Thesis / Writing for TV Thesis**

Fall 2017

Tuesday 5:45 – 9:00PM, Daley 211 and Online

Professor Scott Myers: [smyers15@depaul.edu](mailto:smyers15@depaul.edu)

312-362-1120

Office Hours: (CDM 403) TUE 2:00-4:00PM and by appointment.

**Description**

In this course, students complete the first draft of their MFA thesis project feature length film screenplay or original TV pilot script which they began developing in DC 497 (TV) or DC 498 (Feature). The thesis project is to serve as the culminating piece in the student's MFA screenwriting portfolio and must be approved by a thesis committee in order for a student to graduate.

**Objectives**

- Set realistic goals and meet submission deadlines
- Engage in constructive critiques while workshoping each other's script pages
- Learn specific aspects of the screenwriting and TV writing craft
- Become familiar with contemporary screenplay and TV writing style
- Practice visual storytelling and imagematic writing

**Outcomes**

- A 90+ page feature length original screenplay
- Or an original TV pilot script, either half-hour or one-hour

**Prerequisites**

DC 497 or DC 498

**Course Management**

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There students will find announcements, assignments and additional reading materials.

The class will be divided into three groups (A, B, C). Every third week, each group's feature film writers will be responsible for presenting **2 sequences** (approximately

20-30 pages) for in-class workshopping. Writers working on TV pilot scripts will need to present 1-2 acts (15-25 pages) per workshop session.

Each student in that week's group will select other students as 'actors' for a table reading of the writer's pages.

**!!! HAVE YOUR CAST LIST PREPARED BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS !!!**

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to their D2L Submission and respective Discussion Folder. This must be done by class time when they are scheduled to read.

Instructor feedback will consist of comments in class. In the event we do not get to a student's pages in class or they miss a class with an excused absence, we will set a time for the student to come to the instructor's office: The student will read their pages aloud and the instructor will provide feedback at that time.

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name

Course Number

Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

**Format: PDF.**

Weekly writing assignments are due by **5PM Monday**. Upload to the appropriate Submissions forum on the D2L site.

Screenwriting software: Fade In, Final Draft, or Movie Magic Screenwriter. Free alternatives: Celtx (<http://celtx.com/>), Writers Duet.

**!!! MAKE SURE YOU PROOFREAD, SPELLCHECK, AND GRAMMAR-CHECK YOUR PAGES BEFORE UPLOADING TO THE SUBMISSIONS AND DISCUSSION FOLDERS!!!**

### **Course Outline**

#### Week 1 – September 12

Course overview and syllabus review

Discussion: Where are you with your story, plus the process moving forward

Group assignments: Group A (TV), Groups B and C (Film)

*Lecture: Format, Style, Scene-Writing, and Transitions*

Writing Assignment

Group A: Tease and Act 1 (due 9/18)

**NOTE: Feature writers upload Act 1 (Opening, Sequence 1, Sequence 2) to the appropriate Submission and Discussion folders by 9/18.**

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B: Sequences 3-4 (due 9/25)

Group C: Sequences 3-4 (due 10/2)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Arrival (Film)

Breaking Bad – pilot (TV)

Week 2 – September 19

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's Opening and Act 1**

Writing Assignment

Group B: Sequences 3-4 (due 9/25)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group C: Sequences 3-4 (due 10/2)

Group A: Acts 2 and 3 (due 10/9)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Deadpool (Film)

Friday Night Lights – pilot (TV)

Week 3 – September 26

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Sequences 3-4**

Writing Assignment

Group C: Sequences 3-4 (due 10/2)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A: Acts 2-3 (due 10/9)

Group B: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/16)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Fences (Film)

Game of Thrones – pilot (TV)

Week 4 – October 3

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's Sequences 3-4**

Writing Assignment

Group A: Acts 2-3 (due 10/9)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/16)

Group C: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/23)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Hell or High Water (Film)

Hannibal – pilot (TV)

Week 5 – October 10

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's Acts 2-3**

Writing Assignment

Group B: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/16)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group C: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/23)

Group A: Act 4 and Tag (due 10/30)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Hidden Figures (Film)

Homeland – pilot (TV)

Week 6 – October 17

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Sequences 5-6**

Writing Assignment

Group C: Sequences 5-6 (due 10/23)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A: Act 4 and Tag (due 10/30)

Group B: Sequences 7-8 (due 11/6)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

La La Land (Film)

Mad Men – pilot (TV)

Week 7 – October 24

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's Sequences 5-6**

Writing Assignment

Group A: Act 4 and Tag (due 10/30)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B: Sequences 7-8 (due 11/6)

Group C: Sequences 7-8 (due 11/13)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Moonlight (Film)

Orange is the New Black – pilot (TV)

Week 8 – October 31

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's Act 4 and Tag**

Writing Assignment

Group B: Sequences 7-8 (due 11/6)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group C: Sequences 7-8 (due 11/13)

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

The Invitation (Film)

The Good Wife – pilot (TV)

Week 9 – November 7

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Sequences 7-8**

Writing Assignment

Group C: Write Sequences 7-8 (due 11/13)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

Group B: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Zootopia (Film)

The Sopranos – pilot (TV)

**We will set aside 20 minutes for course evaluations in class this week. You may complete the evaluation on a laptop or mobile device (details later).**

Week 10 – November 14

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C's Sequences 7-8**

Writing Assignment

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

Group B: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

Group C: Revise Entire Script (due 11/22)

**Revised final script due in your D2L Submission by 8:15PM, November 22.**

**Note: This draft is also due to committee members by November 22.**

15%: Class participation and workshop feedback

15%: Act One (SQ3, SQ4), Act Two Part A (SQ5, SQ6) / Tease and Act One

15%: Act Two, Part B (SQ5, SQ6) / Act Two and Act Three

15%: Act Three (SQ7, SQ8) / Act Four and Tag

40%: Final Revised Script

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

### **Participation**

This class is a workshop. That means you are expected to focus on each writer's script pages, assess what works and what – in your opinion – needs work, express your thoughts, and come up with suggestions to improve the story.

**Even when your script pages are not being read in class, you must participate in workshop discussions. This is not only part of your grade, but also a way to develop your critical analytical skills.**

For more, see separate post on the D2L site called Constructive Critique.

### **Attendance**

Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you do have a legitimate reason for missing class, you must email me in advance of the class for it to be considered an excused absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

### **Office Hours and One On One Meetings**

TUE 2:00-4:00PM in CDM 403. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk

with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, etc.

In addition, we will schedule a **one on one meeting** with each student during the quarter to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the script process.

### **Workshop Guidelines**

Students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about some stories which include varied subject matter including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth.

During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's opinion. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated.

In general, we want to create a positive evaluative environment where we acknowledge what works in a story, issues and concerns, and brainstorm possible solutions and suggestions.

### **Laptops/Cell Phones**

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, 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 quarter. In addition, during the screening of video clips, laptops must be closed. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

### **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 the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

### **Alterations**

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.

### **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](http://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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420,  
25 East Jackson Blvd.  
Phone number: (312)362-8002  
TTY: (773)325.7296

### **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](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session.