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

**DC 300 401 Story Development**
Fall 2017
Wednesday 1:30 – 4:45PM, Daley 207 and Online

Professor Scott Myers: smyers15@depaul.edu
312-362-1120

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

## Description

Students will develop an original feature length movie or TV pilot story from concept to scene-by-scene outline. They will do this by progressing weekly through a set of story summaries – Logline, Character Map, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, Outline – as tools to develop their characters and narrative structure. Each class meeting will feature a brief lecture, class discussion, and extended group workshops in which students will provide feedback on each other's evolving story. The course will culminate with a complete Scene-By-Scene Outline which students can use to write a first draft of their script in either DC 301, DC 306, or DC 307.

## Objectives
- Generate and assess story concepts, comparing the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what each student will write
- Apply character development tools to the story-crafting process
- Write Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, and Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writer's material and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline

## Outcomes

Multiple iterations of student's story in a progressive set of narrative forms culminating in a Scene-By-Scene Outline

## Required Reading

Lectures, writing assignment examples, and Go Into The Story posts as linked on the D2L course site.

## 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, reading and writing assignments, discussion boards, and additional materials.

In Week 1, the class will be divided into three groups: Group A, Group B, and Group C. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's select group writing assignment and breaking off into smaller groups to workshop each student's story.

All written assignments <u>must</u> be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name
Course Number
Date
Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs and with this file name (see example):

WA1 Chayefsky
WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due by **MIDNIGHT, MONDAY.** Upload to that week's Submissions forum <u>and</u> your group's Discussion List forum on the D2L site.

**NOTE: You are responsible for reading each of your group's weekly writing assignments <u>before</u> every class session. Come prepared with feedback:**

- What you liked about the story / what worked for you
- What issues or problems you experienced in considering the story
- What suggestions you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

## COURSE SCHEDULE

## Week 1 – September 6
Introductions
    *Overview*: Aristotle and The Hero's Journey
Syllabus and course review
    *Story Summaries*: From Logline to Scene-By-Scene Outline
Group assignments
    *Lecture*: The Importance of Story Concepts

Writing Assignment (WA1)
Movie Writers: 5 story concepts
TV Writers: 5 series concepts

Refer to examples (D2L): Story / Series Concepts

**Week 2 – September 13**
Group A: Story concept discussion
    *5 Questions: Assessing Story Concepts*
Small group workshops
Class discussion
    *Lecture*: Logline

Writing Assignment (WA2)
Logline of preferred story or series concept

Refer to examples (D2L): Logline, Genre, Movie / TV Associations, Movie Studios / TV Networks

**Week 3 – September 20**
Group B: Logline discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
    *Lecture*: Character Development

Writing Assignment (WA3)
Protagonist Biography, Questionnaire, Interview, Monologue

Refer to example (D2L)

**NOTE: I will schedule one on one meetings in my office (CDM 403) with each student on THU, FRI, MON, and TUE this week and next.**

**Week 4 – September 27**
Group C: Character development discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
    *Lecture*: Character Archetypes and Transformation

Writing Assignment (WA4)
Character Map

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 5 – October 4**
Group A: Character map discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
    *Lecture*: Synopsis

Writing Assignment (WA5)
Synopsis

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 6 – October 11**
Group B: Synopsis discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
           *Lecture*: Breakdown

Writing Assignment (WA6)
Breakdown

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 7 – October 18**
Group C: Breakdown discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
           *Lecture*: Treatment and The Whammo Theory

Writing Assignment (WA7)
Treatment

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 8 – October 25**
Group A: Treatment discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
           *Lecture*: Beat Sheet and Narrative Throughline

Writing Assignment (WA8)
Beat Sheet

Refer to example (D2L)

**Week 9 – November 1**
Group B: Beat Sheet discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
           *Lecture*: Note Cards and Plotting

Writing Assignment (WA9)
Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

Refer to example (D2L)

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

**Week 10 – November 8**
Group C: Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) discussion
Small group workshops
Class discussion
        *Lecture*: Seeing the Movie

Writing Assignment (WA10)
Final: Revised Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

**Revised final Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) due in the appropriate D2L Submissions folder by 1:45PM, November 16.**

**Grading**

Point totals for each week's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development (WA3), Character Map (WA4)

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Treatment (WA7), Beat Sheet (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9)

20 points: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10)

10 points: Participation

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 |

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

## Participation

This class is a workshop. That means you are expected to focus on each writer's assignments, 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 story is not being reviewed in class, you <u>must</u> 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 <u>do</u> have a legitimate reason for missing class, you <u>must</u> email me in <u>advance</u> 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 to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the story development 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. Focus your comments on the story, not the writer.

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

Since we will be needing to access the D2L site in order to facilitate small group workshop

sessions, please bring your laptop to class.

That said, I will trust that on your honor as a DePaul University student and as a creative individual who aspires to learn the writing craft, during class – except during breaks – you will <u>not</u> stray into any form of social media.

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.

## **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
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.