

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 402 – WRITING THE FEATURE I

Winter 2017-2018

When: Wednesdays, 5:45 – 9:00PM

Where: 14 East Jackson, Room 207

Instructor: Professor Keely Wise
keelywise@yahoo.com

Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:00AM - 1:00PM and by appointment
14 E. Jackson, Office 200B
312.362.1306

Summary of Course

Students will develop an original feature length story from concept to scene-by-scene outline. This will be accomplished by progressing weekly through a set of story summaries – Logline, Character Map, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, Outline – as tools to develop characters and narrative structure. Each class meeting will feature a lecture, class discussion, and extended group workshops in which students will provide and receive feedback on their evolving stories. The course will culminate with a complete Scene-By-Scene Outline, which students can use as a blueprint to write a first draft of their script in DC 403 or DC 404.

Learning Objectives

- Learn basic tools of story development through lectures on a variety of topics related to the story development process
- Generate and assess story concepts, learn to compare the merits of multiple projects, and learn to identify and select strong, viable concepts for development
- Learn character development tools and apply said tools to the story-crafting process
- Produce a Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, and finally a Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writers' materials and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline, and in so doing learn and hone skills for writing on assignment

Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will possess multiple iterations of a strong story concept in a progressive set of narrative forms, including:

- Logline
- Character Development Materials
- Character Map

- Synopsis
- Breakdown
- Treatment
- Beat Sheet
- Scene-by-Scene Outline

Required Reading

Peer writing assignments, writing assignment examples, selected scripts and text excerpts, and *Go Into The Story* posts, as linked on the D2L course site and assigned in class.

Course Management

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

In Week 1, the class will be divided into three groups for workshop purposes: Group A, Group B, and Group C. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's assignment, after which we will break into Groups to workshop each student's story. For shorter assignments, including the Logline, Character Map and Synopsis, students are required to read all class members' work prior to class. For longer assignments, including the Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet and Outline, students are required to read only their Group Members' work prior to class. Written comments on Group Members' work shall be posted on D2L via discussion forums prior to class every week. Students should come to class prepared to constructively discuss their comments and ideas each week.

Assignments

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered, and shall include a title page as follows:

Student Name
Course Number
Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs, in the following file name format:

WA1 Chayefsky
WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due by **MIDNIGHT on the MONDAY prior to the class when said assignment is due**. To be considered timely submitted, you must upload your assignment to that week's Submissions forum **and** your group's Discussion List forum on the D2L site. This is to provide your instructor, classmates and Group Members sufficient time to read and assess your work prior to class. Late posts will result in reduced credit.

NOTE: You are responsible for reading the weekly writing assignments before every class session (see above for whether you are required to read all class submissions or only your Group's submissions). You are required to provide written comments on your Group Members' work every week via D2L, and to come to class prepared with constructive feedback, including:

- 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 – January 3, 2018

Introductions

Syllabus and course review

In Class Exercise

Group assignments

Lecture: An Overview of Aristotle and The Hero's Journey; How to Generate and Assess Story Concepts

Writing Assignment (WA1)

5 story concepts

[Refer to example on D2L: Story Concepts]

Watch *UP*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

Week 2 – January 10, 2018

Quiz 1 on *UP*

Story concept discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Loglines, Hope vs. Fear

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Logline for preferred story concept

[Refer to examples on D2L: Logline, Genre, Movie Studios]

Read *Silence of the Lambs* screenplay, available on D2L.

Week 3 – January 17, 2018

Logline discussion / pitches

Small group workshops

Lecture: Character Development, World Building

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Protagonist Biography, Questionnaire, Scene, Interview, Monologue, Sit-Down

[Refer to example on D2L]

Watch *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

NOTE: Schedule a one-on-one meeting in my office (14 E. Jackson, 200B) either this week or next to discuss your goals in and out of this class, and any issues you may be experiencing in generating and developing your story idea.

Week 4 – January 24, 2018

Quiz 2 on *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* assignments

Character development discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Transformation

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

[Refer to example on D2L]

Week 5 – January 31, 2018

Character map discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Synopsis

Writing Assignment (WA5)

Synopsis

[Refer to example on D2L]

Week 6 – February 7, 2018

Synopsis discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Breakdown, Sequence Structure

Writing Assignment (WA6)

Breakdown

[Refer to example on D2L]

Read *The Shawshank Redemption* screenplay, available on D2L.

NOTE: From this point forward in the class you are only required to read your Group's work prior to class. That said, you are encouraged to read as much of your classmates' work as possible, as this will enrich our class discussions and add to both your and your classmates' growth as writers.

Week 7 – February 14, 2018

Breakdown discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Treatment, Rules, Plotting, and The Whammo Theory

Writing Assignment (WA7)

Treatment

[Refer to example on D2L]

Watch: *THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

Week 8 – February 21, 2018

Quiz 3 on *THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION* assignments

Treatment discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Beat Sheet, Narrative Throughline

Writing Assignment (WA8)

Beat Sheet

[Refer to example on D2L]

Week 9 – February 28, 2018

Beat Sheet discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Subplots

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

[Refer to example on D2L]

NOTE: 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 – March 7, 2018

Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Notecards and Plotting, Clean Work, 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 FINAL EXAM START TIME, no exceptions.

Grading

Point totals for this course's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development (WA3), Character Map (WA4), Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Quiz 1, Quiz 2 and Quiz 3

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

15 points: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10 – FINAL)

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 prior to class.

Participation

This class is a workshop. This 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 ideas and suggestions to improve the story. Students will also be called upon to offer comments related to the reading and writing assignments. Students are expected to answer these questions to the best of their abilities and to meaningfully engage in related discussions.

Even if your story is not being reviewed 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 on this topic, please refer to the post on D2L called "Constructive Critique."

Attendance

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

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 while the instructor is speaking, mocking another's work or opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet for purposes other than those approved for class. If any issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students to navigate such student issues.

Workshop Guidelines

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally. Given the unique nature of our class, and its emphasis on creativity, personal storytelling and developing a strong, unique voice, students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about stories which may include potentially controversial subject matter, including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's work and opinions. 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 and respectful evaluative environment where we acknowledge what works in a story, address and analyze issues and concerns in a story, and collectively brainstorm possible solutions and suggestions.

Laptops/Cell Phones

Since we will need to access the D2L site in order to facilitate small group workshop sessions, please bring your laptop to class. That said, I trust that, on your honor as a DePaul University student and as a creative individual who aspires to learn the writing craft, you will not stray into any form of social media during class. Phones must be silenced and stowed at all times, except during breaks.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to DePaul University's academic integrity policy. 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 about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials, be sure to consult with the 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: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

Withdrawal

Students who timely withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connect 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. This form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>.

Students must submit supporting documentation alongside this 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 an 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 exceptional cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirements 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 csd@depaul.edu.

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

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.

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 a key component to providing 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.

Office Hours

My office hours will be held on Thursdays from 10:00AM-1:00PM at 14 E. Jackson, in Room 200B. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, or anything else that's on your mind.