

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 497/498 Thesis Development

Spring 2018

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

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

Office Hours: (CDM 403) TUE 10:30AM-1:30PM and by appointment.

Description

Students will develop a feature-length thesis screenplay or television pilot in preparation for writing the first draft of their project in DC 506 or 508. The development process will include assignments designed to aid students in choosing their thesis project, fostering a strong personal connection to that project, creating compelling three-dimensional characters, and designing a clear, effective narrative structure for the screenplay or pilot. This course will culminate with a completed feature scene-by-scene outline or scene-by-scene outline for a TV pilot.

Objectives

- Students will be able to evaluate and compare the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what they will write.
- Students will be able to define their motivations and priorities in the stories they choose to tell.
- Students will be able to apply a unique and repeatable process to story development.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to maintain the creative environment of a professional writer's room.
- Students will be able to complete outstanding creative writing on a deadline.

Outcomes

- A personal statement of purpose for the thesis project.
- A logline and one-two page treatment.
- A professional-quality pitch of up to ten minutes.
- A detailed scene-by-scene outline for a feature screenplay or scene-by-scene outline for a TV pilot.

Required Reading

Lectures, movie and TV scripts, 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, and additional materials.

Each week's recorded sessions (available shortly after 9PM each Thursday) will be available here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>.

After Week 3, the class will be divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. We will alternate in-class workshops for Weeks 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10, and one-on-one in-office meetings with the professor.

A significant target date is Week 8 where each student will pitch to a committee of faculty advisers. We will work on two practice pitches in advance of the formal pitch to give students sufficient story development and rehearsal time.

All written assignments must 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 each **WEDNESDAY by 5PM**. Upload to the appropriate Submission and Discussion forums on the D2L site.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – March 29

Course intro, syllabus review, and brief in-class discussion of each student's story

Lecture: Story Concepts

Schedule GROUP A in-office meetings

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lectures 1-6: Concept (D2L)

Writing Assignment (WA1)

Movie Writers: 5-10 story concepts

TV Writers: 3-5 series concepts

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

Week 2 – April 5

Story concept discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Protagonist Character Treatment

Schedule GROUP B in-office meetings

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 7: Protagonist Character Treatment (D2L)

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Protagonist Character Treatment(s)

Refer to examples (D2L)

Week 3 – April 12

Protagonist Character Treatment discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Master Brainstorming List

Schedule GROUP C in-office meetings

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 8: Master Brainstorming List

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Master Brainstorming List

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 4 – April 19

Master Brainstorming List discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Story Structure

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lectures 9-15: Character Development Keys

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 5 – April 26

Character Map discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 16: Ten Major Plotline Points (Movie)

Mickey Fisher's "Extant" diary (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA5)

Five Primary Plotline Points (Movie) / Pilot Structure (TV)

Refer to examples (D2L)

Week 6 – May 3

Five Primary Plotline Points / Pilot Structure discussion and workshop

Lecture: On Pitching

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 17: Pitching a Movie

Lecture 18: Pitching a TV series

Writing Assignment (WA6)

Pitch Treatment

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 7 – May 10

Pitch trial runs

Lecture: Plotting and the Magical Power of Index Cards

Schedule one-on-one in-office pitch rehearsals

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 19: Working With Index Cards

Writing Assignment (WA7)

Index Cards

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 8 – May 17

Index card discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Beat Sheet

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 20: Beat Sheet

Writing Assignment (WA8)

Beat Sheet

Week 9 – May 24

Beat sheet discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Scene-By-Scene Outline

Reading Assignment (for Next Week)

Lecture 21: Scene-By-Scene Outline (Movies)

Lecture 22: Scene-By-Scene Outline (TV)

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Outline

Week 10 – May 31

Outline discussion and group workshop

Lecture: Revising Your Outline

Writing Assignment (WA10)

Revise Outline

Revised final scene-by-scene outline due in the appropriate D2L Submission Forum by 8:15PM, June 7.

Each writing assignment is worth 10 points.

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	= 95	C+	= 78
A-	= 92	C	= 75
B+	= 88	C-	= 70
B	= 85	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

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 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 10:30AM-1:30PM 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, plus a **one on one pitch rehearsal meeting**. Both will be in my office: CDM 403

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 discussions and workshops of a student's story, everybody else's laptop 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.

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.