

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

**DC 301-602: Writing the Feature Screenplay**

Spring 2018

Thursday 1:30 – 4:45PM, Daley 507 and Online

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

312-362-1120

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

**Description**

This course focuses on completing the first draft of a feature length screenplay. Emphasis will be placed on a foundation of character, structure, plot, and theme to bring the writer's vetted concept to fruition. The lectures, in-class workshops, and aggressive page deadlines are designed to culminate in a spec screenplay that showcases voice and command of screenwriting conventions. This feature length screenplay should be revised and polished in DC 303. PREREQUISITE(S): DC 300

**Course Outcomes**

Students will complete the first draft of a feature-length screenplay.

Minimum: 90 pages.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- demonstrate the ability to write at a professional pace
- write visceral and visual scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice
- create three-dimensional characters with unique voices and clear motivations
- apply established narrative techniques to scenes, sequences, and acts
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

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

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>.

Amazon Story Writer is available at: <https://storywriter.amazon.com/>.

Adobe Story can be found here: <https://story.adobe.com/en-us/>

**All assignments are to be delivered as PDFs in screenplay format, spell and grammar checked.**

### **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 course news, assignments and additional reading materials.

Each week's recorded sessions (available shortly after 5PM each Thursday) will be available here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>.

Should you have problems accessing lectures, request assistance:  
<http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx>

The class will be divided into three groups (A, B, C). Every third week, each group's members will be responsible for presenting **2 sequences** (approximately 20-30 pages) for in-class workshopping.

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

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to that week's D2L Submission Forum. **This must be done by Wednesdays at 5PM. Format: PDF.**

Instructor feedback will consist of oral 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 for a one-on-one session: 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 and proper format. Writing assignments are due by **Wednesday 5PM**. Upload to the appropriate Discussion and Submissions forums.

## Schedule

### **Week 1 – March 29**

Course intro  
 Brief in-class discussion of each student's story  
 Lecture 1: Narrative Throughline

#### Reading Assignment (D2L)

Lecture 2: The Opening  
 Lecture 3: The Hook Sequence  
 Lecture 4: The Lock Sequence

#### Writing Assignment

Group A: Write Act One (Sequences 1-2)

### **Week 2 – April 5**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A -- Act One (Sequences 1-2)**  
 Overview: Lectures 2-4

#### Reading Assignment (D2L)

Screenplay: *Get Out*

#### Writing Assignment

Group B: Write Act One (Sequences 1-2)

### **Week 3 – April 12**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B -- Act One (Sequences 1-2)**

#### Reading Assignment (D2L)

Lecture 5: Deconstruction Test Sequence  
 Lecture 6: Transition Sequence

#### Writing Assignment

Group C: Write Act One (Sequences 1-2)

### **Week 4 – April 19**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C -- Act One (Sequences 1-2)**  
 Overview: Lectures 5-6

#### Reading Assignment (D2L)

Screenplay: *Lady Bird*

#### Writing Assignment

Group A: Write Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)

**Week 5 – April 26**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A -- Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)**

Reading Assignment

Lecture 7: Reconstruction Test

Lecture 8: All Is Lost

Writing Assignment

Group B: Write Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)

**Week 6 – May 3**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B -- Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)**

Overview: Lectures 7-8

Reading Assignment

Screenplay: *Coco*

Writing Assignment

Group C: Write Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)

**Week 7 – May 10**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C -- Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)**

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Lecture 9: On the Offensive

Lecture 10: Final Struggle

Writing Assignment

Group A: Write Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)

**Week 8 – May 17**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A -- Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)**

Overview: Lectures 9-10

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Screenplay: *Logan*

Writing Assignment

Group B: Write Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)

**Week 9 – May 24**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B -- Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)**

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Lecture 11: Denouement

Writing Assignment

Group C: Write Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)

**Week 10 – May 31**

In-class table read and workshop: **Group C -- Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)**

Overview: Lecture 11

Writing Assignment

Write Act Three and polish entire script

**FINAL DRAFT DUE: JUNE 7 BY 1:45PM, UPLOAD TO D2L SUBMISSIONS FOLDER**

20%: Class participation and workshop feedback

20%: Act One (Sequences 1-2)

20%: Act Two Part A (Sequences 3-4)

20%: Act Two Part B (Sequences 5-6)

20%: Act Three / Final 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	= 93-100	B-	= 80-83
A-	= 90-92	C+	= 77-79
B+	= 87-89	C	= 74-76
B	= 84-86	C-	= 70-73

C- is the minimum passing grade.

**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**

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 their story, their interest in writing and possible career choices.

### **In-Class Workshops**

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share their work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

### **Creative Subject Matter**

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. 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. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues.

If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused for the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class, or direct personal attacks on members of the class will not be tolerated in course material. If you feel you are being individually targeted by material written or discussed in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

### **Decorum and Civil Discourse**

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.

### **Laptops/Cell Phones**

I will 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 – except for classroom breaks.

Phones must be silenced and stowed unless needed for course work.

### **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.