

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

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

Fall 2018

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

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

Office Hours: (CDM 403) TUE 1:00-4:00PM 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 half-hour or one-hour TV pilot script
- TV writers will also create a series pitch deck

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 workshoping. Writers working on TV pilot scripts will need to present 1-2 acts (10-25 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 Sunday**. 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 / DISCUSSION FOLDERS!!!

Course Outline

Week 1 – September 11

Course overview and syllabus review

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

Group assignments: Group A (TV / 1-hour), Group B (TV / ½-hour) and C (Film + some TV writers)

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

Writing Assignment

Group A (1-Hour): Opening and Act 1 (due 9/18)

NOTE: Feature writers upload Act 1 (Act One) to the appropriate Submission and Discussion folders by 9/18.

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B (1/2-Hour): Tease and Act 1 (due 9/25)

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

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Arrival (Film)

Breaking Bad – pilot (TV)

Week 2 – September 18

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

Writing Assignment

Group B (1/2-Hour): Tease and Act 1 (due 9/25)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

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

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 2 and 3 (due 10/9)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Deadpool (Film)

30 Rock – pilot (TV)

Week 3 – September 25

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Tease and Act 1**

Writing Assignment

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

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 2-3 (due 10/9)

Group B (1/2-Hour): Acts 2-3, Tag (due 10/16)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Fences (Film)

Friday Night Lights – pilot (TV)

Week 4 – October 2

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

Writing Assignment

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 2-3 (due 10/9)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B (1/2-Hour): Acts 2-3, Tag (due 10/16)

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

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Hell or High Water (Film)

Community – pilot (TV)

Week 5 – October 9

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

Writing Assignment

Group B (1/2-Hour): Acts 2-3, Tag (due 10/16)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

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

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 4-5 (due 10/30)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Hidden Figures (Film)

This Is Us – pilot (TV)

Week 6 – October 16

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Acts 2-3, Tag**

Writing Assignment

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

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 4-5 (due 10/30)

Group B (1/2-Hour): Series Pitch Deck (due 11/6)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

La La Land (Film)

Modern Family – pilot (TV)

Week 7 – October 23

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

Writing Assignment

Group A (1-Hour): Acts 4-5 (due 10/30)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group B: Series Pitch Deck (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 30

In-class table read and workshop: **Group A's Acts 4-5**

Writing Assignment

Group B: Series Pitch Deck (due 11/6)

Upcoming Writing Assignments

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

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

The Invitation (Film)

New Girl – pilot (TV)

Week 9 – November 6

In-class table read and workshop: **Group B's Series Pitch Deck**

Lecture: Keys to Polishing a Script Draft

Writing Assignment

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

Upcoming Writing Assignments

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Group B: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Reading Assignment (D2L)

Zootopia (Film)

Stranger Things – 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 13

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

Writing Assignment

Group A: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Group B: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Group C: Revise Entire Script (due 11/20)

Revised final script due in your D2L Submission by 8:15PM, November 20.

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

15%: Class participation and workshop feedback

15%: Opening and Act One (1-Hour), Tease and Act One (1/2-Hour), Act One (Feature)

15%: Acts Two and Three (1-Hour), Acts Two, Three, Tag (1/2-Hour), Act Two (Feature)

15%: Acts Four and Five (1-Hour), Series Pitch Bible (1/2-Hour), Act Three (Feature)

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 |

Refer to MFA Screenwriting Rubric posted on the D2L site for further details on the program's grading standards.

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 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 1:00-4:00PM 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.

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.

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.