

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 101 – SCREENWRITING FOR MAJORS

Fall 2018

When: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Where: Lincoln Park Campus, LEVAN, 304

Instructor: Professor Keely Lewis Wise
keelywise@yahoo.com

Office Hrs.: Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
14 East Jackson, 200B
(312) 362-1306
Conferences may also be scheduled by appointment.

Summary of Course

This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, atmosphere, story structure, character and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. Students are expected to develop and write a short screenplay.

Prerequisites

None

Course Outcomes

In addition to completing several writing assignments, students are expected to develop, outline, pitch and write a short screenplay.

Learning Objectives

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

- Employ standard screenplay format
- Identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- Demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- Apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- Produce original writing projects on a deadline
- Pitch an original writing project

- Revise writing based on feedback from the professor and peers
- Evaluate the work of peers and formulate constructive feedback

Required Reading

→ *Tools of Screenwriting* by David Howard and Edward Mabley [ISBN-10: 0312119089]

→ *The Hollywood Standard* by Christopher Riley [ISBN-10: 1932907637]

→ Peer writing assignments, selected scripts and text excerpts, as made available on D2L.

Required Outside Screenings

Students are required to view two feature films (*Citizen Kane* and *Hell or High Water*) as well as a variety of short films outside of class for participation in lecture/discussion presentations throughout the quarter. Screenings must be completed on your own time by the date listed in the course schedule. These films will be made available to you on [ColTube](#).

DISCLAIMER: Some assigned films may include adult language, violence and sexual content. Please inform the instructor if you have religious, mental, psychological or physical obstacles to viewing this material prior to the screenings.

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 \$129.99 with a student discount at <http://store.finaldraft.com>. You may also obtain a free download of Celtx screenwriting program at <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at <https://storywriter.amazon.com>. Adobe Story is available at <https://story.adobe.com/en-us/>. Writer Duet is available at www.writerduet.com.

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L** exclusively. There, students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion forums, and additional class materials.

Assignments

All assignments must be typed in screenplay format with pages numbered, and shall include a title page. Choose screenwriting software that works for you and find tutorials online. You are responsible for learning how to use your software properly. All assignments must be submitted in PDF format via D2L.

Assignments have the following total points available:

Scene Writing: Mood & Atmosphere	5	Due September 12, 2018
Scene Writing: Preparation & Aftermath	5	Due September 19, 2018
Scene Writing: Interrogation	5	Due September 26, 2018
Scene Writing: Seduction	5	Due October 3, 2018
Concepts / Loglines	5	Due October 10, 2018
Midterm	15	Due October 10, 2018
Draft Step Outline	5	Due October 17, 2018
Revised Step Outline	10	Due October 24, 2018
Draft Pages for Short Screenplay	15	Due October 29, 2018
Final Revised Short Screenplay	20	Due November 14, 2018
Attendance/Participation	10	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

Scene Writing Exercises

Prior to drafting full screenplays, you will complete a total of four scene exercises based on the topics we cover in class. Specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided on D2L. You are expected to bring a printed copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding submissions folder. Each scene assignment is 5% of your final grade (20% in total). Please save files as a PDF, and use your last name and the name of the assignment: **YourNameInterrogationScene.pdf**

You will be graded on:

- Style and Format
 - Creative execution of the assignment within the given parameters
 - Use of dramatic techniques presented in class and the readings
- (1) For the first scene writing exercise, *Mood & Atmosphere*, you will write 3 sample scenes focusing on the visual and aural presentation of a single space in differing genres.
 - (2) For the second scene writing exercise, *Preparation & Aftermath*, you will write a pair of scenes showing a character preparing for an event and then returning from that

event. This assignment will force you to tell a story visually and to convey information about events without showing those events.

- (3) For the third writing exercise, *Interrogation*, you will write a scene in which a detective (not necessarily a professional cop or PI, but someone investigating something with high relative stakes) interrogates someone who has something to hide.
- (4) For the fourth writing exercise, *Seduction*, you will write a seduction scene in which one of the following occurs:
 - A. Someone attempts to seduce another person and the seducee is willing but the circumstances for the seduction are all wrong. OR -
 - B. Someone attempts to seduce another person and the circumstances are absolutely perfect—the mood, the time of day, the place are ideal—but the seducee is not willing.

Concepts/Loglines Exercise

You will expand in writing on at least three (3) original, narrative film concepts (*i.e.*, no experimental or non-narrative films) for a short 8-12 minute film. One of these you will develop into a short film screenplay throughout the rest of the quarter. For each proposed film concept, you will include:

- (1) A single sentence logline relating the core concept of the narrative (in present tense), and
- (2) A minimum of one written paragraph indicating the following information about the proposed film: (a) who the protagonist is, (b) the source/potential of conflict in the story, (c) the film's genre classification (comedy, horror, action, thriller, etc.), and (d) any other details necessary to clearly convey your concept.

Files must be uploaded to the corresponding D2L Submissions Folder in PDF format. You must also bring a hard copy to class for workshopping in groups.

The Midterm Exam

Your midterm is an in class exam covering the assigned readings and in class discussions through Week Five.

Step Outline

You will expand your film concept into a Step Outline written in your chosen screenwriting software. This step outline will elaborate on the content of every scene in your film and must include an ending, even if that ending is likely to change in the future.

Short Screenplay

The style and formatting of your script must adhere to the guidelines specified in *The Hollywood Standard* (*i.e.*, written in present tense, proper indentation for dialogue, etc.).

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Only write what can be seen or heard. Avoid writing about characters' thoughts or feelings in the direction.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count - proofread your work, proofread it again, and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required.
- Include a properly formatted cover page.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - it may be a good idea to have a friend look over the script as well.
- Action description should be lean - only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen – and should be limited to no more than 4 or 5 lines.
- Develop a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Avoid exposition-heavy dialogue. Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative. You won't be able to do it in one night and achieve the grade you want.

Draft screenplays must be uploaded to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder.

Your final, revised 8-12 page screenplay must be uploaded to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder in PDF format by **Wednesday, 11/14 at 11:30 AM**. The second draft of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort. Correcting typos and making small tweaks is not a rewrite. Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops, and your own self- evaluation to craft your revised draft. Get outside opinions if you can. Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced. Spelling, grammar and punctuation count even more. Proofread again. **The final draft should be 8-12 pages, error-free, ready to shoot, and have addressed all issues discussed in class. It should represent your very best effort.**

All assignments must be completed and uploaded to D2L in PDF format by the date and time specified in the Class Schedule. Late written work will receive a 20% grade deduction for each day it is submitted late. Midterms and Final Draft Screenplays, however, must be turned in by the assigned due date/time (the Final Draft deadline marks the official end of the course). **No extensions will be granted for the Midterm or the Final Draft**

Screenplay. Printed submissions or submissions by email will not be accepted. I also suggest backing up work with a Cloud file storage service, as computers crash.

Evaluation of Student Work

Assignment sheets and/or grading rubrics setting forth how assignments are assessed will be available on D2L under Content. In order to obtain the desired grade on any assignment, students must review and adhere to these guidelines. In general, written work will be evaluated according to the clarity of your writing, adherence to guidelines detailed in assigned reading materials, and basic mechanics (*e.g.*, spelling, grammar and punctuation). Please allow approximately 7-10 days for the return of graded materials.

You must thoroughly read ALL assigned material before class, and then formulate clear, supportive feedback, and thoughtful, engaging responses to all of the assigned reading. **Your job is to prove to me that you have read and considered the material carefully.** Failure to read material in advance or to provide thoughtful feedback in class will result in a diminished participation score for that day.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 78	D-	= 60
A-	= 90	C	= 73	F	= 0-59
B+	= 88	C-	= 70		
B	= 83	D+	= 68		
B-	= 80	D	= 63		

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion prior to class. Late work will only be accepted under extreme extenuating circumstances.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (9/5): What is a Screenplay + Visual Storytelling

- Introductions
- Lecture

Readings Due 9/12:

Tools of Screenwriting: About Screenwriting and Basic Storytelling (3-40), Characterization (63-65), Planting & Payoff / Elements of the Future (72-76), Visuals (88-90)

The Hollywood Standard: Quick Start Guide & Single-Camera Format (1-27), Shot Headings (29-62), Direction (63-80)

Assignment Due 9/12 by 10 AM:

Scene Writing: Mood & Atmosphere (bring a hard copy to class)

Week 2 (9/10 & 9/12): Character Development

NO CLASS ON MONDAY 9/10 – In lieu of class, watch *Citizen Kane* (COLTUBE)

- Discuss readings and *Citizen Kane*
- Lecture
- Workshop (Mood & Atmosphere)

Readings Due 9/17:

Tools of Screenwriting: Protagonist, Conflict, Obstacles (43-49), Premise, Main Tension, Theme, Unity (49-59); Activity and Action (81-83); Exposition (60- 62)

Script Frenzy, Mamet (on D2L)

Assignment Due 9/19 by 10 AM:

Scene Writing: Preparation & Aftermath (bring a hard copy to class)

Week 3 (9/17 & 9/19): Writing Scenes with Conflict, Goals, Stakes & Urgency

- Discuss reading
- Lecture
- Workshop (Preparation & Aftermath)

Readings Due 9/24:

Tools of Screenwriting: Dialogue (84-87)

The Hollywood Standard: Dialogue (81-102), Transitions, Punctuation (103-111), Special Pages (131-139)

Assignment Due 9/26 by 10 AM:

Scene Writing: Interrogation (bring a hard copy to class)

Week 4 (9/24 & 9/26): Dialogue

- Discuss readings
- Lecture

- Workshop (Interrogation)

Readings Due 10/1:

Tools of Screenwriting: Dramatic Irony (68-70); Dramatic Scene (91-94)

Assignment Due 10/3 by 10 AM:

Scene Writing: Seduction (bring a hard copy to class)

Week 5 (10/1 & 10/3): Beats, Scenes & Sequences / 3 Act Structure

- Discuss readings
- Lecture
- Workshop (Seduction)

Readings Due 10/8:

Hell or High Water screenplay, Pages 1-50 (D2L)

Assignment Due 10/10 by 10 AM:

3 Concepts & Loglines

MIDTERM EXAM IS MONDAY, OCTOBER 8th

Week 6 (10/8 & 10/10): Writing the Short Script I

- MIDTERM EXAM (In Class 10/8)
- Lecture
- Pitch Concepts & Loglines

Readings Due 10/15:

Tools of Screenwriting: Development of the Story (66-68), The Outline and Step Outline/ Plausibility (76-81)

The Hollywood Standard: Special Pages (131-139)

Complete *Hell or High Water* script

Assignment Due 10/17 by 10 AM:

Draft Step Outline for Short Screenplay (bring copies for your group)

Week 7 (10/15 & 10/17): Writing the Short Script II

- Discuss readings
- Lecture
- Workshop (Draft Outline)

Outside Viewing Due 10/22:

Watch *Hell or High Water* film (COLTUBE)

Assignment Due 10/24 by 10 AM:

Revised Step Outline & One Full Scene

Week 8 (10/22 & 10/24): The First Draft

- *Hell or High Water* script to screen analysis
- Lecture
- Workshop (Revised Outline & Scene)

Assignment for 10/29 by 10 AM:

Draft pages for Short Screenplay (bring hard copy to class)

Week 9 (10/29 & 10/31): Workshop Draft Pages

Week 10 (11/5 & 11/7): Viewing & Re-writing

- Watch assigned short films
- Implement instructor, workshop and self-evaluation feedback into revised pages for your Short Screenplay.

Readings Due 11/12:

Tools of Screenwriting: Rewriting (95-97)

The Hollywood Standard: Revisit Proofreading (160-163)

The War of Art (D2L)

Assignment Due 11/14:

Final, revised short screenplay.

Week 11 (11/12): Rewriting

- Discuss readings and films
- Lecture

FINAL DRAFT SCREENPLAY DUE by 11:30 AM on November 14th.

Participation

This class involves workshopping. 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 "Reflections on Constructive Critique."

Attendance

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Absent students forfeit their participation grade for each class they miss. We begin class right on time. Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence.

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, Creative Subject Matter & Civil Discourse

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 but not limited to sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. Students have a right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues in others' writing so long as the work or commentary does not glorify or promote hate of any kind.

During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's work and opinions. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that portion of the class without penalty. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Comments should focus on the story, not on the writer. Inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material. 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 any such issues should they arise.

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

Laptops/tablets may be used during lectures/discussions ONLY to take notes. 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, email, text, or other non-class related sites during class, as it is distracting to your fellow students as well as the instructor. No technology use of any kind will be allowed during film or clip screenings. Use of technology during screenings may result in you being asked to leave and being marked as absent.

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 that 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.

Sexual Harassment

The policy as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this class.

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 when extenuating circumstances prevent 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 are listed above and on Blue Star. 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.