

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

### **DC 300 - STORY DEVELOPMENT**

Autumn Quarter

When: 5:45–9:00PM

Where: 14 East Jackson, Room 209

Instructor: Professor Lee Madsen

[lmadsen3@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:lmadsen3@cdm.depaul.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays, 1PM - 5:30PM and by appointment

CDM Building Room 434

#### **DC 300: Story Development**

This course is designed to help the emerging writer focus their creativity into a viable original project for a feature film. The lectures, workshops, and assignments are designed to enable the student to identify and develop material they have a strong personal connection to. Emphasis is placed on extensive research of the subject matter, creating memorable characters, and crafting a strong dramatic throughline. Students will write a vetted step outline for a feature length film that should be completed in DC 301.

Prerequisites: DC 101 or DC 201 Required Textbooks: None

Course Outcomes: Feature step outline or series bible and pilot step outline

Learning Objectives:

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

- apply established narrative techniques toward the development of a feature story with thoroughly developed characters and plot
- utilize storytelling conventions to craft a unique voice for your feature
- create a complete, professional-quality step outline for a feature screenplay
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Students will possess multiple iteration 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

## 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 SUNDAY 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 – Sept. 11th, 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]

**Week 2 – Sept. 18th, 2018**

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]

**Week 3 – Sept. 25th, 2018**

Logline discussion

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 (CDM Building Rm 434) 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 – Oct. 2nd, 2018**

Character development discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Transformation

***Writing Assignment (WA4)***

Character Map

[Refer to example on D2L]

**Week 5 – Oct. 9th, 2018**

Character map discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Synopsis

***Writing Assignment (WA5)***

Synopsis

[Refer to example on D2L]

**Week 6 – Oct. 16th, 2018**

Synopsis discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Breakdown, Sequences

***Writing Assignment (WA6)***

Breakdown

[Refer to example 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 – Oct. 23rd, 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 COLTUBE on D2L.

**Week 8 – Oct. 30, 2018**

Treatment discussion

Small group workshops

Lecture: Beat Sheet, Narrative Throughline

***Writing Assignment (WA8)***

Beat Sheet

[Refer to example on D2L]

**Week 9 – Nov. 6th, 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 – Nov. 13th, 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: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development. (WA3), Character Map (WA4),

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Treatment (WA7), Beat Sheet (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9)

20 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."

### Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

### 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.

### 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 your 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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

### 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

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

**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 when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

**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.

**Cell Phones/On Call:** If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.