

# DC 401: Writing the Short Motion Picture

**Winter Quarter 2018 - 2019 | Monday 5:45 to 9PM | 14 E. Jackson RM211**

**Instructor: Lee Madsen**

**Office: CDM 434 Office hours: Monday 2:30PM to 5PM**

**Email: [lmadsen3@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:lmadsen3@cdm.depaul.edu) (best way to reach me)**

In this screenwriting course students will study the essential elements and conventions of writing the short film, including character, structure, and conflict. They will examine the fundamental differences between feature and short films. Story development emphasis will be placed on compelling character-driven stories that can be produced on a modest budget. Students will be required to complete two short screenplays.

Prerequisites: None

Course Outcomes: Students will complete two short screenplays.

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

- express the differences in form between short films and feature films
- analyze the style, structure, genre, theme, and character development of selected short films
- create a unique and well-structured short cinematic story with accessible three-dimensional characters that can be produced on a modest budget
- revise their screenplays based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Required Textbook and Materials:

- Writing the Short Film by Patricia Cooper and Ken Dancyger, ISBN13:

9780240805887

- A blank journal to write in.

Software (you need screenwriting software):

**Final Draft** – If you're going to take other screenwriting courses or pursue screenwriting beyond this class, it may be worth it to invest in professional screenwriting software now. \*They usually have student discounts.

**Celtx** - It's cheaper than Final Draft software, but Final Draft is an industry standard.

Standards for Achievement:

Grade A:

Student performs in an outstanding way. Student exhibits achievement and craftsmanship in all work. Creative criteria is exceeded and student challenges him/herself in project development. Student exhibits commitment to expanding ideas, vocabulary and performance.

Grade B:

Student performs beyond the requirement of the project. Student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship. A creative criterion is exceeded. Student exhibits above average interest in expanding idea, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade C:

Criteria of assignment is met, and all requirements are fulfilled. Student shows average quality work and minimum time and effort on projects. Student shows moderate interest.

Grade D:

Student performance is uneven and below average. Requirements for projects are only partially fulfilled. Minimal interest is shown and attendance, participation and involvement are inadequate.

Grade F

Student fails to meet minimum course requirements and shows little interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance/presence is inadequate.

A = 100-93 A- = 92-90 B+ = 89-88 B = 87-83 B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-78 C = 77-73  
C- = 72-70 D+ = 69-68 D = 67-63  
D- = 62-60 F = 59-0

Attendance - 10%

Book Reports, Discussion Posts - 15%  
Assignments 1-7 - 25%  
3-2-1 Short Script First Draft - 10%  
3-2-1 Short Script Second Draft - 10%  
Final Script First Draft - 10%  
Final Script Second Draft - 10%  
Final Script Polished Draft - 10%

## **WINTER QUARTER CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Class 1 Monday 1/7**

Introduction to the course & syllabus  
Story development  
Script guidelines  
Loglines

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Assignment #1 (3%):** Write 5 loglines for potential final short scripts for this class. First script is 3 pages. Second and final script is 8 to 12 pages.

**DUE:** Monday 1/14 be prepared to pitch them to the class.

**FORMAT:** PRINTED and brought to class, also uploaded to D2L by class start into Submission Folder.

**WATCH:** Star Wars (Episode IV-The Original) if you haven't seen it. Re-watch it if it has been a while. It is available via COLTUBE and from one of your friends, I promise.

**READ: Writing the Short Film** by Patricia Cooper and Ken Dancyger.

- PART ONE *Fundamentals: Breaking Ground*. | Chapter 1 *Storytelling In General* | Chapter 2 *Telling a Story in Images*

**Book Report/Discussion #1 (3%):** List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. Please don't wait till the last minute to do these posts as other people need to read your thoughts in order to comment.

**DUE:** Monday 1/14

**FORMAT:** uploaded to D2L by class start

### **Class 2 Monday 1/14**

**DUE: Assignment #1: Loglines, Book Report #1 on D2L discussion forum, comments on discussion forum**

Read loglines and choose which 2 stories you will develop and write this quarter:  
The 3 page Short Film Script & The 8-12 page Short Film Script.

What is a Screenplay?

Three act structure (features and shorts)

Plot points

Character intro example

Screenplay Format

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Assignment #2** (3%): Finalize the logline for your 3 page Short Film Script.

DUE: Monday 1/21

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

**Assignment #3** (3%): Write a Scene. See D2L for assignment details

DUE: Monday 1/21

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

**READ:** Writing the Short Film. Chapter 3 *Using Sound to Tell a Story* & Chapter 4 *Discovering and Exploring a Main Character* & Chapters 5 *Telling the Dramatic Story*

**Book Report/Discussion #2** (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit.

DUE: Monday 1/21

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

**Class 3 Monday 1/21 - NO CLASS MLK HOLIDAY**

**DUE: Assignment #3 Write a Scene, Book Report #2 plus comments**

Step Outlines

Treatments

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Assignment #4** (3%): 3-2-1 Short Film Main character intro, write a distinctive character intro for your main characters.

**Assignment #5** (4%): 3-2-1 Short Film Step Outline

**READ:** Chapter 6 Writing an Original Short Script | Chapter 7 On Revision:

## Substance and Style | Part II Moving Forward: Writing Strategies

**Book Report/Discussion #3** (3%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. Please don't wait till the last minute to do these posts as other people need to read your thoughts in order to comment.

DUE: Monday 1/28

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

### **Class 4 Monday 1/28**

**Due: Assignment #4: 3-2-1 Short Film Main Character intro, Assignment #5: 3-2-1 Step Outline, Book Report #3 on D2L discussion forum, plus comments**

Character Arcs

Treatments

The Screenplay format

Screenwriting software

Scenes & Sequences

Production focused ideas

ASSIGNMENTS:

**3-2-1 Short Film Script - Write a 3 page script, 2 characters, 1 scene. (10%)**

**READ:** Chapter 8 The Need for Storytelling | Chapter 9 Visualization Strategies | Chapter 10 Dramatic Strategies

**Book Report/Discussion #4** (2%): List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. Please don't wait till the last minute to do these posts as other people need to read your thoughts in order to comment.

DUE: Monday 2/4

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

### **Class 5 Monday 2/4**

**DUE: 3-2-1 Short Film Script, Book Report #4 plus comments**

IN CLASS:

Character Bio

Step Outline

Treatments

3-2-1 Short Film Script Workshop

ASSIGNMENTS:

**Rewrite 3-2-1 Short Film Script (10%), Assignment #6 (4%):** Character Bio for your Final Short Film Script

DUE: Monday 2/11

FORMAT: PDF document, Uploaded to D2L

**READ:** Chapter 11 Characterization Strategies | Chapter 12 More On Dialogue Strategies | Part 3 Genres Forming a Story

**Book Report/Discussion #5 (2%):** List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. Please don't wait till the last minute to do these posts as other people need to read your thoughts in order to comment.

DUE: Monday 2/11

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

**Class 6 Monday 2/11**

**DUE: Rewrite of 3-2-1 Film script. Assignment #6 Character Bio Final Film Script, Book report #5 plus comments**

Dialogue

Exposition

Critique of 3 page Short Film Scripts

ASSIGNMENTS:

**Assignment #7 (5%):** Step outline for your Final Short Film Script.

DUE: Monday 2/4

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L

**READ:** Chapter 13 The Melodrama | Chapter 14 The Docudrama Chapter | Chapter 15 The Hyperdrama | Chapter 16 The Experimental Narrative

**Book Report/Discussion #6 (2%):** List 5 items from the reading that will be germane to your work in this course or provoked thought about writing or

storytelling. One-word responses are not acceptable. These are meant to be public and you will post them on D2L in the discussion forum. You must also comment on at least two posts for full credit. Please don't wait till the last minute to do these posts as other people need to read your thoughts in order to comment.

DUE: Monday 2/18

FORMAT: uploaded to D2L by class start

### **Class 7 Monday 2/18**

**Due: Assignment #7 Step Outline for Final Script. Book report #6 plus comments**

Critique Step Outlines

ASSIGNMENTS:

**FINAL SHORT FILM SCRIPT - Write First Half of your Final Short Film Script**

### **Class 8 Monday 2/25**

**Due: Assignment Write First Half (approximately 5-8 pages) of your Final Short Film Script**

Workshop First 5 pages

Watch Short Films

ASSIGNMENTS;

**FINAL SHORT FILM SCRIPT - Complete first draft of your Final Short Film Script (10%)**

### **Class 9 Monday 3/4**

**Due: FIRST DRAFT - Final Short Film Script.**

Workshop First Draft of your Script.

ASSIGNMENTS:

**REWRITE your FINAL SHORT FILM SCRIPT (10%)**

### **Class 10 Monday 3/11**

**Due: REWRITE OF FINAL SHORT FILM SCRIPT**

Workshop the Rewrite of your Final Short Film Script

### **Class 11 Monday 3/18 - FINAL CLASS**

**POLISHED FINAL DRAFT DUE (20%)**

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

Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office



**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.

**Class Discussion:** Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

**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.