

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 301-502: Writing the Feature Screenplay

Winter, 2019

Wednesday 1:30 – 4:45PM, Daley (14 East Jackson) room 211

Professor Rocco Pucillo: rpucill2@depaul.edu
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00PM-1:30PM in Daley room 211, 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**. There students will find course news, reading materials, submit assignments and engage in discussion boards.

Each week's recorded sessions are ready to view about an hour after class ends (around 5:45PM each Wednesday). They 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. This should be done prior to class.

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to that week's D2L Submission Forum. **This must be done by Tuesdays 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 **Tuesday 5PM**. Upload to the appropriate Discussion and Submissions forums.

Schedule

Week One – January 9

Welcome and course introduction

Brief in-class discussion of each student's story

Split class into three groups: A, B, C. **These will be your groups for the rest of the quarter.**

Lecture 1: Essential Beats of Act One

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Lecture 2: Scene Writing -- Golden Rules

Writing Assignment

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

Week Two – January 16

Overview: Lecture 2

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

Reading Assignment

Read the screenplay of an existing film that's comparable to your project (aka a "comp")

Writing Assignment

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

Week Three – January 23

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

Brief discussion of "comp" scripts

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Lecture 3: Essential Beats of Act Two

Writing Assignment

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

Week Four – January 30

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

Overview: Lecture 3

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Screenplay: *TBD*

Writing Assignment

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

Week Five – February 6

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

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Screenplay: *TBD*

Writing Assignment

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

Week Six – February 13

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

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Lecture 4: *TBD*

Writing Assignment

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

Week Seven – February 20

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

Overview: Lecture 4

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Screenplay: *TBD*

Writing Assignment

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

Week 8 – February 27

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

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Lecture 5: *TBD*

Writing Assignment

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

Week 9 – March 6

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

Overview: Lecture 5

Reading Assignment (posted on D2L)

Lecture 6: Essential Beats of Act Three

Writing Assignment

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

Week 10 – March 13

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

Overview: Lecture 6

Writing Assignment

All Groups: Write Act Three and polish entire script

FINAL DRAFT DUE: MARCH 20 BY 1:45PM, UPLOAD TO D2L SUBMISSIONS FOLDER

Grading

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 on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

Office Hours

Wednesdays 12:00PM-1:30PM in Daley 211. Drop by or schedule a meeting.

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. You will learn the “art” of giving notes.

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.

Changes to Syllabus

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. 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](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional info.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at: <https://offices.depaul.edu/aaa/faculty-resources/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

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>

Incomplete Grades

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. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.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. DePaul University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational and extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) offers reasonable academic accommodations and services to support our students. We also serve as a resource to the many university departments that have a responsibility to accommodate students.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.