

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 101-601: Screenwriting for Majors

Spring, 2019

Tuesday 1:30pm - 4:45pm, Daley (14 East Jackson) 802

Professor Rocco Pucillo: rpucill2@depaul.edu, 310-433-9928

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00pm-1:30pm in Daley 802, and by appointment.

Description

This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, story structure, character, and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. PREREQUISITE(S): None.

Course Outcomes

In addition to completing several writing assignments, students are expected to develop, outline, 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
- Prepare original writing projects on a deadline
- Analyze and assess their own work and that of their peers

Textbooks and Printed Resources

"Tools of Screenwriting" by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089
(Required)

"The Hollywood Standard" by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637 (Required)

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://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, 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 Tuesday) and will be available here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>. Should you have problems accessing lectures, please request assistance here: <http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx>

Course Schedule

Week 1 (April 2): Intro, What is a Screenplay, Visual Storytelling, Formatting

- Lecture
- Reading Assignment:
 - *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)
- Writing Assignment: Mood & Atmosphere - *DUE BY SUNDAY, 04/07 at 11:59pm*

Week 2 (April 9): Character, Writer Objective vs. Character Objective

- Lecture
- Workshop: Mood & Atmosphere Scenes
- Reading Assignment:
 - *Tools of Screenwriting*: Protagonist, Conflict, Obstacles (43-49), Premise, Main Tension, Theme, Unity (49-59); Activity and Action (81-83); Exposition (60-62)
- Writing Assignment: Preparation for an Event - *DUE BY SUNDAY, 04/14 at 11:59pm*

Week 3 (April 16): Writing Scenes with Conflict, Goals, Stakes & Urgency

- Lecture
- Workshop: Preparation for an Event Scenes
- Reading Assignment:
 - *Tools of Screenwriting*: Dialogue (84-87)
 - *The Hollywood Standard*: Dialogue (81-102), Transitions, Punctuation (103-111), Special Pages (131-139)
- Writing Assignment: Interrogation - *DUE BY SUNDAY, 04/21 at 11:59pm*

Week 4 (April 23): Dialogue, Specificity

- Lecture
- Workshop: Interrogation Scenes
- Reading Assignment:
 - *Tools of Screenwriting*: Dramatic Irony (68-70); Dramatic Scene (91-94)
- Writing Assignment: Seduction - *DUE BY SUNDAY*, 04/28 at 11:59pm

Week 5 (April 30): Beats, Scenes, Sequences, 3 Act Structure – 7 Essential Beats

- Lecture
- Workshop: Seduction Scenes
- Reading Assignment:
 - Screenplay: *TBD (D2L)*
- Writing Assignment: Three Pitches and Loglines for Short Scripts - *DUE BY SUNDAY*, 05/05 at 11:59pm

Week 6 (May 7): Writing the Short Script Part I

- Lecture
- Workshop: Short Script Pitches and Loglines
- Reading Assignment:
 - *Tools of Screenwriting*: Development of the Story (66-68), The Outline and Step Outline/ Plausibility (76-81)
 - *The Hollywood Standard*: Special Pages (131-139)
- Writing Assignment: Write Step Outline for Short Script - *DUE BY SUNDAY*, 05/12 at 11:59pm

Week 7 (May 14): Writing the Short Script Part II

- Lecture
- Workshop: Step Outline for Short Script
- Viewing Assignment (posted on D2L)
 - Watch Movie: *TBD*
- Writing Assignment: Revise Step Outline for Short Script - *DUE BY SUNDAY*, 05/19 at 11:59pm

Week 8 (May 21): The First Draft

- Lecture
- Workshop: Revised Step Outlines for Short Script
- Reading Assignment:
 - Screenplay Posted on D2L
- Writing Assignment: Write First Draft of Short Screenplay - *DUE BY SUNDAY, 05/26 at 11:59pm*

Week 9 (May 28): Rewrite Plan, How to Take Notes

- Lecture
- Workshop: First Draft of Short Screenplay
- Reading Assignment
 - *Tools of Screenwriting*: Rewriting (95-97)
 - *The Hollywood Standard*: Revisit Proofreading (160-163)
- Writing Assignment: Write Second Draft of Short Screenplay - *DUE BY SUNDAY, 06/02 at 11:59pm*

Week 10 (June 4): Working as a Writer

- Lecture
- Workshop: Second Draft of Short Script
- Final Writing Assignment: Write Final Draft of Short Screenplay - *DUE BY TUESDAY, 06/11 at 11:59pm*

Week 11 - FINAL

Final Draft of Short Screenplay due – TUESDAY, JUNE 11 @ 11:59pm
UPLOAD TO D2L SUBMISSIONS FOLDER

ASSIGNMENTS:

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to that week's D2L Submissions and Discussions forums. All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered and proper format.

Writing assignments are due by: **Sunday @ 11:59pm**. **Format: PDF.**

You are expected to bring a printed copy of each assignment to class for workshop. For workshop, all students will be responsible to have the pages in front of them during class. They could be viewed electronically, either on a laptop or tablet, or printed out pages. **Reading from your phone is not allowed.**

Scene Assignments (20% of Final Grade)

You will write a total of four scene exercises throughout the quarter 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 discussion board. 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

Three Pitches & Loglines (10% of Final Grade)

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.

Step Outline (10% of Final Grade)

You will expand your film concept into a Step Outline written in your chosen screenwriting software. A step outline should feature every scene in your short screenplay. Each scene will contain a slug line for the location and time of day, followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene.

Example:

Scene 1: INT. DON CORELONE'S OFFICE - DAY

AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men. Don Corleone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corleone's daughter, is very matter-of-fact/business-like.

General Guidelines:

- Use 12 pt. Courier New Font
- Make sure your scene descriptions are in present tense
- Use all CAPS when introducing a new character.

Short Screenplay First Draft (10% of Final Grade)

You will submit drafts of a short script that is to be **no longer than 12 pages**. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- 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.
- You must 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. Avoid writing about characters' thoughts or feelings in the direction.
- 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.

Short Screenplay Second Draft (20% of Final Grade)

The final script is to be no longer than 12 pages. Points to consider:

- 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.

Short Screenplay Final Draft (20% of Final Grade)

This draft should be 12 pages or less, error-free, ready to shoot, and have addressed all issues discussed in class. It should represent your very best effort.

Grading

Class Attendance & Participation	10%
Scene Assignments	20%
Short Script Loglines	10%
Step Outline	10%
Short Screenplay First Draft	10%
Short Screenplay Second Draft	20%
Short Screenplay Final Draft	20%

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.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory, F is substantially unsatisfactory. Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

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. Three absences will constitute course failure. We begin class on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

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. 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 class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues so long as the work does not glorify hate and violence of any kind. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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

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 resources.depaul.edu/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: offices.depaul.edu/oaafaculty-resources/teaching/academic-integrity. If you have any questions be sure to consult with the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

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: [cdm.depaul.edu/Current Students/Grading-Policies.aspx](https://cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/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 offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs for Services and Contact Information.

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at policies.depaul.edu/policy.