DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 301-602: Writing the Feature Screenplay
Spring 2019
Thursday 1:30 – 4:45PM, Daley 507 and Online

Professor Scott Myers: smyers15@cdm.depaul.edu
312-362-1120

Office Hours: (CDM 403) MON 1:00-4:00PM 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.

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There students will find course news, assignments and additional reading materials.

Each week's recorded sessions (available shortly after 5PM each Thursday) 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 <u>third</u> 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.

NOTE: PREPARE YOUR CAST LIST <u>BEFORE</u> YOU COME TO CLASS.

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to their D2L Dropbox. This <u>must</u> be done by class time when they are scheduled to read. **Format: PDF.**

Instructor feedback will consist of written and 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 <u>must</u> be typed with pages numbered and proper format. Writing assignments are due by **Wednesday 5PM**. Upload to the appropriate Discussion and Submissions forum.

I will schedule one-on-one meetings in my office with each student during Week 3 (Group A), Week 4 (Group B), and Week 5 (Group C).

<u>Schedule</u>

<u>Week 1 – April 4</u>
Course intro
Brief in-class discussion of each student's story
Lecture 1: Narrative Throughline

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Lecture 2: The Opening
Lecture 3: The Hook Sequence
Lecture 4: The Lock Sequence

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group A: Act 1 / Sequences 1-2

<u>Week 2 – April 11</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group A**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Screenplay: *BlacKkKlansman*

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group B: Act 1 / Sequences 1-2

Set Group A one-on-one meetings during Week 3.

<u>Week 3 – April 18</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group B**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Lecture 5: Deconstruction Test Sequence
Lecture 6: Transition Sequence

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group C: Act 1 / Sequences 1-2

Set Group B one-on-one meetings during Week 4.

<u>Week 4 – April 25</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group C**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Screenplay: *A Quiet Place*

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group A: Act 2A / Sequences 3-4

Set Group C one-on-one meetings during Week 5.

<u>Week 5 – May 2</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group A**

<u>Reading Assignment</u>
Lecture 7: Reconstruction Test
Lecture 8: All Is Lost

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group B: Act 2A / Sequences 3-4

<u>Week 6 – May 9</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group B**

<u>Reading Assignment</u>
Screenplay: *Eighth Grade*

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group C: Act 2A / Sequences 3-4

<u>Week 7 – May 16</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group C**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Lecture 9: On the Offensive
Lecture 10: Final Struggle

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group A: Act 2B / Sequences 5-6

<u>Week 8 – May 23</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group A**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Screenplay: *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

<u>Writing Assignment</u>
Group B: Act 2B / Sequences 5-6

<u>Week 9 – May 30</u>
In-class table read and workshop: **Group B**

<u>Reading Assignment (D2L)</u>
Lecture 11: Denouement

Writing Assignment
Group C: Act 2B / Sequences 5-6

Week 10 – June 6
In-class table read and workshop: **Group C**

Writing Assignment
Act 3 / Sequences 7-8 and polish entire script

**FINAL DRAFT DUE: THURSDAY, JUNE 13 AT 1:45PM, UPLOAD TO D2L
SUBMISSIONS FOLDER**

20%: Class participation and workshop feedback
20%: Weeks 2-4 Writing Assignments
20%: Weeks 5-7 Writing Assignments
20%: Weeks 8-10 Writing Assignments
20%: Final Revised / Polished 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.

On the D2L site in the Content section, you can download the official SCA Screenwriting Grading Rubric which we use in assessing scripted material.

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

Office Hours

MON 1:00-4:00PM in CDM 403. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, etc.

In addition, we will schedule a **one on one meeting** with each student during the the quarter to discuss their story.

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.

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.

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 the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

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.

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.

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

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.