DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 201-201 / 210: Introduction to Screenwriting
Summer Session I 2019
Monday, Wednesday 5:45 – 9:00PM, E. Jackson 206 and Online

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

Office Hours: (CDM 403) MON 2:00PM-5:00PM and by appointment.

Course Summary

This course is an introduction to and overview of the elements of theme, plot, character, and dialogue in dramatic writing for cinema. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in terms of action and the reality of characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Development of a short theatrical screenplay: theme, plot, character, mise-en-scene and utilization of cinematic elements.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

Course Outcomes

Outline for a short screenplay.
Short screenplay (5-10 pages).

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

- Generate and assess story concepts
- Understand the basics of screenplay format, style, and structure
- Write visual scene description and subtextual dialogue
- Create three-dimensional characters with unique voices and clear motivations
- Evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Course Management

Onsite students will use D2L extensively in this course. Online students will use it exclusively. To log on, go to: https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, and as the session progresses – your current grade.

Each class's recorded sessions (available shortly after 9PM each Monday and Wednesday) will be available here: https://col.cdm.depaul.edu.

Should you have problems accessing lectures, request assistance: http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx

Students are responsible for uploading writing assignments to that session's D2L Submission Forum. **This <u>must</u> be done by Sundays and Tuesdays by 5PM**. **Format: PDF.**

For **onsite students**, 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 to review their assignments.

For **online students**, instructor feedback will consist of written feedback embedded as notes in their writing assignment PDFs.

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.

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.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Class 1 – 6/10
Introduction to class and syllabus
Lecture: History of the Screenplay

Class 2 – 6/12
Lecture: Screenplay Elements
Writing Assignment: Scene Format Exercise

Class 3 – 6/17
Workshop: Scene Format Exercise
Lecture: The Lowdown on High Concept
Writing Assignment: Three Short Film Story Concepts

Class 4 – 6/19
Workshop: Three Short Film Story Concepts
Lecture: Character Development
Writing Assignment: Character Development Exercise

Class 5 – 6/24
Workshop: Character Development Exercise
Lecture: Three-Act Structure
Writing Assignment: Four Plotline Points

Class 6 – 6/26
Workshop: Four Plotline Points
Lecture: Scene-Writing
Writing Assignment: Scene-Writing Exercise

Class 7 – 7/1
Workshop: Scenes
Lecture: Scene-By-Scene Outline
Writing Assignment: Outline

Class 8 – 7/3
Workshop: Outline
Lecture: First Draft
Writing Assignment: First Draft Short Film Script

Class 9 – 7/8
Workshop: First Draft Short Film Script – Group A
Lecture: Rewriting
Final Writing Assignment: Revised Draft Short Film Script

Class 10 – 7/10
Workshop: First Draft Short Film Script – Group B
Lecture: Polish and Edit
Final Writing Assignment: Revised Draft Short Film Script

FINAL: Revised Draft Short Film Script due Wednesday, July 17 at 5PM.

Each writing assignment is worth 10% except the final assignment which is worth 20%.
Class participation, workshop feedback, online discussion is worth 10%

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 <u>do</u> have a legitimate reason for missing class, you <u>must</u> email me in <u>advance</u> 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

Mondays 2-5PM in CDM 403. Drop by or schedule a meeting via BlueStar. 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.

For **online students,** I will be available for Zoom sessions during office hours. You may also contact me via email.

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.

NOTE: Online students will be divided into two groups (Group A and Group B), and will be expected to provide feedback on their fellow group members' writing assignments in the D2L Discussion forums.

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 Class 8 session.