

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

SCWR 101-403: Screenwriting for Majors

Fall 2019

Monday/Wednesday 11:50AM – 1:20PM

14 E. Jackson, Room 209 (Loop campus)

Instructor: Fatou Samba

Office: CDM 462

Office Hours: Monday 3:00-4:30pm, Wednesday 3:30-5:00pm or by appointment

If students can't come to my office, I can make myself available via the phone or video conference.

Phone: 312-362-1466

Email: fsamba@depaul.edu

Course 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.

Prerequisites: 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
- produce original writing projects on a deadline
- revise their writing based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Required Software

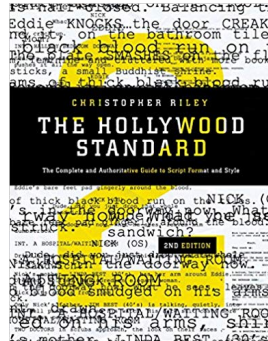
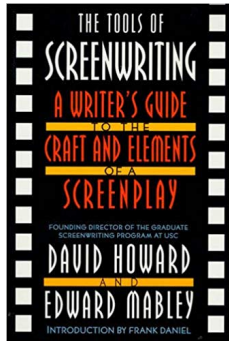
Final Draft or comparable screenwriting software such as Celtx, Highland (only for Mac), and Fade In.

All assignments are to be saved in PDF!

Required Textbooks:

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089

The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637



Additional essays will be provided by the instructor.

Short films will be screened in class, but students may be required to view additional films outside of class.

Previous Course Number: DC 101

Course Management

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. 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, etc.

Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late, constitutes a reduction in your participation grade. Any assignments due on an absence day will be given a zero unless submitted before the start of class.

Grading Policy

Class attendance and participation: 15 points

Scene Assignments: 25 points

Loglines: 5 Points

Treatments/Outlines: 10 points

Short Script Draft: 15 points
Short Script Draft 2: 15 points
Final Draft Short Script: 15 points

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.

Course Outline

(Mon= Monday, Wed = Wednesday)

Week 1 - Wed 9/11

Lecture: Course introduction, what is a story? What is a screenplay? Introduction to visual storytelling.

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: About Screenwriting and Basic Storytelling (3-40), Visuals (88-90)

The Hollywood Standard: Foreword, Introduction, and Quick Start Guide (through page 27), Shot Headings (29-62), Direction (63-80)

Assignment 1: *Mood and Atmosphere*

Week 2 - Mon 9/16

Workshop: Mood and Atmosphere

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Protagonist, Conflict, Obstacles (43-49), Activity and Action (81-83), The Dramatic Scene (91-94)

Mamet (on D2L)

Week 2 - Wed 9/18

Lecture: The Scene: Conflict & Goals, Stakes and Urgency

Assignment 2: *Preparation for a Date*

Week 3 – Mon 9/23

Workshop: Preparation for a Date

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Characterization (63-65), Planting and Payoff, Elements of the Future (pages 72-76),

The Hollywood Standard: Dialogue (81-102), Transitions, Punctuation (103-111)

Week 3 – Wed 9/25

Lecture: Character

Assignment 3: *Interrogation*

Week 4 - Mon 9/30

Workshop: Interrogation

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Exposition (60-62),

The War of Art, Script Frenzy (on D2L)

Week 4 – Wed 10/2

Lecture: Exposition

Assignment 4: *Seduction*

Week 5 – Mon 10/7

Workshop: Seduction

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Dramatic Irony (68-70), Dialogue (84-87)

The Hollywood Standard: Special Pages (131-139)

Week 5 – Wed 10/9

Lecture: Dialogue and Dramatic Irony

Assignment 5: *Wrongest Person*

Week 6 – Mon 10/14

Workshop: Wrongest Person

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Premise, Main Tension, Theme, Unity (49-59), Outlining, Plausibility (76-80)

Week 6 – Wed 10/16

Lecture: Writing the short script Part I

Assignment: *Three loglines for short scripts*

Week 7 – Mon 10/21

Workshop: Pitch Three Loglines for Short Scripts

Week 7 – Wed 10/23

Lecture: Writing the Short Script Part II

Assignment: *Treatment or Step Outline*

Week 8 – Mon 10/28

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ME

Week 8 – Wed 10/30

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ME

Assignment: *First Draft of Short Script*

Week 9 – Mon 11/4

Workshop: First Draft of Short Scripts GROUP A

Week 9 – Wed 11/6

Workshop: First Draft of Short Scripts GROUP B

Week 10 – Mon 11/11

Workshop: First Draft of Short Scripts GROUP C

Week 10 – Wed 11/13

Lecture: Common Missteps & Rewriting: The Rewrite Plan

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting*: Rewriting (95-97)

Assignment: *Short Script Draft II*

Week 11 – Mon 11/18

Workshop: Short Script Draft II GROUP A

Week 11 – Wed 11/20

Workshop: Short Script Draft II GROUP B

Week 12 – Mon 11/25

Workshop Short Script Draft II GROUP C

Week 12 – Wed 11/27

All FINAL scripts due Wednesday 11/27

Assignments

Scene Assignments:

You will write a total of five scene exercises throughout the quarter based on the topics we cover in class – specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided on D2L. These exercises will typically be assigned on Wednesday and will be critiqued in class the following Monday. You are expected to bring a printed copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L AND to the proper discussion board. Each scene

assignment is 5% of your final grade (25% in total). Please save files to your group Dropbox 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

Loglines, Treatments, and Step Outlines

You will come in with three story ideas that can be conveyed in a short film, and you will pitch them to the class. After a brief discussion, you will choose one to write for your 10- page script. Then you will develop a treatment or step outline for the short film, which will also be workshopped prior to the writing of short scripts.

Short Script Draft I

You will submit a first draft of a short script that is to be no longer than 10 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.
- 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 Script Draft II

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.

You will be workshopping these scripts in class with your peers, not with me. I will not give you notes on your second drafts, only your first and third.

Short Script Draft III

This is your final writing assignment. The final script is to be no longer than 10 pages. Again, it should be a marked improvement over your second draft.

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 his/her 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 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:

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

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

F: (312) 362-6544

<https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx>

Emergency Plan

An emergency can occur at any time, suddenly and without warning. Proper planning is essential to minimize the impact of any emergency on the university community, operations and facilities. The following link provides detailed information on Emergency Evacuation and Fire Alarm safety: <https://resources.depaul.edu/emergency-plan/emergency-evacuation/Pages/Evacuation.aspx>. The University will use the DPU Alert to announce school closing or other emergencies. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the primary outdoor assembly area for CDM will be Grant Park (Southeast corner of Jackson and Michigan Ave).

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 <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system at <http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>. Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval. College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

- Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
- Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
- Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
- Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the

sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

Incomplete

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. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process on my.cdm.depaul.edu/.

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

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](#).