**DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts**

## SCWR 301 - STORY DEVELOPMENT

[Previously DC 300]

Fall 2019-2020

**When**: Tuesdays, 5:45 – 9:00PM

**Where**: CDM, Room 212

**Instructor**: Professor Keely Lewis Wise
keelywise@yahoo.com

**Office Hours**: Thursdays, 2:00PM - 5:00PM and by appointment
14 E. Jackson, Office 200B
312.362.1306

### Summary of Course

This course is designed to help the emerging writer focus their creativity into a viable original project for a feature film. The lectures, workshops and assignments are designed to enable the student to identify and develop material they have a strong personal connection to. Emphasis is placed on extensive research of the subject matter, creating memorable characters, and crafting a strong dramatic throughline. Students will write a vetted step outline for a feature length film that should be completed in SCWR 302.

### Prerequisites

SCWR 100 or SCWR 101

### Learning Objectives

- Learn basic tools of story development through lectures on a variety of topics related to the story development process
- Generate and assess story concepts, learn to compare the merits of multiple projects, and learn to identify and select strong, viable concepts for development
- Learn character development tools and apply said tools to the story-crafting process
- Apply established narrative techniques toward the development of a feature story with thoroughly developed characters and plot
- Utilize storytelling conventions to craft a unique voice for your feature
- Produce a Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Beat Sheet, Treatment and finally a professional-quality Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writers' materials and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline, and in so doing learn and hone skills for writing on assignment

## Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will possess multiple iterations of a strong story concept in a progressive set of narrative forms, including:

- Logline
- Character Development Materials
- Synopsis
- Breakdown
- Beat Sheet
- Treatment
- Scene-by-Scene Outline

## Required Reading

There is no required textbook for this class. Peer writing assignments, writing assignment examples, selected scripts and text excerpts will be assigned week-to-week and linked on the D2L course site. Review the Course Schedule carefully.

## Required Viewing

Required viewing is set forth in the Course Schedule below. Students should come to class having viewed the required films and prepared to discuss. Pop quizzes may be given on assigned viewing, which will constitute a portion of the student's participation grade.

## Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L** exclusively. There, students will find announcements, reading, writing and viewing assignments, discussion forums, and additional class materials.

In Week 1, the class will be divided into four groups for workshop purposes: Group A, Group B, Group C and Group D. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's assignment, after which we will break into Groups to workshop each student's story. For shorter assignments, including the Logline, Character Development Materials and Synopsis, students are required to read all class members' work prior to class. For longer assignments, including the Breakdown, Beat Sheet, Treatment and Outline, students are required to read only their Group Members' work prior to class. Written comments on Group Members' work shall be posted on D2L via discussion forums prior to class every week. Students should come to class prepared to constructively discuss their comments and ideas each week.

## Assignments

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered, and shall include a title page as follows:

Student Name
Course Number
Date
Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs, in the following file name format:

WA1 Peel
WA2 Ephron

Writing assignments are due by **MIDNIGHT on the SUNDAY prior to the class when said assignment is due.** To be considered timely submitted, you must upload your assignment to that week's Submissions forum **and** your group's Discussion List forum on the D2L site. This is to provide your instructor, classmates and Group Members sufficient time to read and assess your work prior to class. Late posts will result in reduced credit.

**NOTE:** You are responsible for reading the weekly writing assignments before every class session (see above for whether you are required to read all class submissions or only your Group's submissions). You are required to provide written comments on your Group Members' work every week via D2L, and to come to class prepared with constructive feedback, including:

- What you liked about the story / what worked for you
- What issues or problems you experienced in considering the story
- What suggestions you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

## Course Schedule

**Week 1 – September 17, 2019**
Introductions
Syllabus and course review
In Class Exercise
Group assignments
*Lecture*: An Overview of Aristotle and The Hero's Journey; How to Generate and Assess Story Concepts

**Writing Assignment (WA1)**
5 story concepts
[Refer to WA1 example on D2L: Story Concepts]

**Watch** *UP*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

**Week 2 – September 24, 2019 (LAST DAY TO DROP)**
Story concept discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Loglines, Hope vs. Fear

**Writing Assignment (WA2)**
Logline for preferred story concept

[Refer to WA2 example on D2L: Loglines]

**Week 3 – October 1, 2019**
Logline discussion
Logline pitches
*Lecture*: Character Development, World Building

**Writing Assignment (WA3)**
Character Development Materials: Biography, Questionnaire, Scene, Interview, Monologue, Sit-Down + Master Brainstorming List
[Refer to WA3 example on D2L: Master Brainstorming List]

**Watch** *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

**NOTE:** Schedule a one-on-one meeting in my office (14 E. Jackson, 200B) either this week or next to discuss your goals in and out of this class, and any issues you may be experiencing in generating and developing your story idea.

**Week 4 – October 8, 2019**
Character development discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Character Archetypes and Transformation

**Writing Assignment (WA4)**
Character Roster, Archetypes & Map
[Refer to WA4 example on D2L: Character Archetypes & Map]

**Week 5 – October 15, 2019**
Character development discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Synopsis

**Writing Assignment (WA5)**
Synopsis
[Refer to WA5 example on D2L: Synopsis]

**Week 6 – October 22, 2019**
Synopsis discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Breakdown, Sequences

**Writing Assignment (WA6)**
Breakdown
[Refer to WA6 example on D2L: Breakdown]

**NOTE**: From this point forward in the class you are only required to read your Group's work prior to class. That said, you are encouraged to read as much of your classmates' work as possible, as this will enrich our class discussions and add to both your and your classmates' growth as writers.

**Week 7 – October 29, 2019**
Breakdown discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Beat Sheet, Plotting, and The Whammo Theory

**Writing Assignment (WA7)**
Beat Sheet
[Refer to WA7 example on D2L: Beat Sheet]

**Week 8 – November 5, 2019**
Beat Sheet discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Treatment, Narrative Throughline

**Writing Assignment (WA8)**
Treatment
[Refer to WA8 example on D2L: Treatment]

**Watch**: *THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*, available via COL TUBE on D2L.

**Week 9 – November 12, 2019**
Treatment discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Subplots

**Writing Assignment (WA9)**
Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline
[Refer to WA9 example on D2L: Preliminary Scene-by-Scene Outline]

**NOTE:** We will set aside 20 minutes for course evaluations in class this week. You may complete the evaluation on a laptop or mobile device.

**Week 10 – November 19, 2019**
Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline discussion
Group workshops
*Lecture*: Notecards and Plotting, Clean Work, Seeing the Movie

**Writing Assignment (WA10)**
Final: Substantially Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline

**Your *substantially* Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline is due in the appropriate D2L Submissions folder by FINAL EXAM START TIME, no exceptions.**

## Grading

Point totals for this course's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Master Brainstorming List + Character Development Materials (WA3), Character Roster, Archetypes & Map (WA4)

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Beat Sheet (WA7), Treatment (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9)

15 points: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10 – FINAL)

15 points: Participation

These values are minimums for each grade:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | = 93 | C+ | = 77 | D- | = 60 |
| A- | = 90 | C | = 73 | | |
| B+ | = 87 | C- | = 70 | | |
| B | = 83 | D+ | = 67 | | |
| B- | = 80 | D | = 63 | | |

## Late Work

Late work will not be given full credit without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion. A legitimate excuse is one documented by a physician or other health care provider or a request from an academic dean or advisor. No exceptions. Late work will receive a half letter-grade deduction for every 24 hours (or portion thereof) an assignment is late.

## Participation

This class is a workshop. This means you are expected to focus on each writer's assignments, assess what works and what, in your opinion, needs work, express your thoughts, and come up with ideas and suggestions to improve the story. Students will also be called upon to offer comments related to the reading and writing assignments. Students are expected to answer these questions to the best of their abilities and to meaningfully engage in related discussions.

**Even if your story is not being reviewed in class, you must participate in workshop discussions.** This is not only part of your grade, but also a way to develop your critical analytical skills. For more on this topic, please refer to the post on D2L called "Constructive Critique."

**Pop quizzes on assigned viewing and reading materials should be expected**. Your performance on these quizzes will factor into your participation grade.

## Attendance

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Missing more than one (1) class without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

## Attitude

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include, but are not limited to: talking to others while the instructor is speaking, mocking another's work or opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet for purposes other than those approved for class. If any issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students to navigate such student issues.

## Workshop Guidelines

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally. Given the unique nature of our class, and its emphasis on creativity, personal storytelling and developing a strong, unique voice, students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about stories which may include potentially controversial subject matter, including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. During class discussions, you are expected to be respectful of everyone's work and opinions. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Focus your comments on the story, not the writer.

In general, we want to create a positive and respectful evaluative environment where we acknowledge what works in a story, address and analyze issues and concerns in a story, and collectively brainstorm possible solutions and suggestions.

## Sexual and Relationship Violence

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response. Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu). Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at

http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

## Laptops/Cell Phones

Since we will need to access the D2L site in order to facilitate small group workshop sessions, please bring your laptop to class. That said, I 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. Phones must be silenced and stowed at all times, except during breaks.

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to DePaul University's academic integrity policy. DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University (http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/) for further details.

If you have any questions about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials, be sure to consult with the professor.

## 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.

## Withdrawal

Students who timely withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connect system: 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. This form can be accessed at http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html.

Students must submit supporting documentation alongside this 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 an 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 in MyCDM.

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptional cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirements 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.

## Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:

Loop Campus – Lewis Center #1420 – (312) 362-8002
Lincoln Park Campus – Student Center #370 – (773) 325-1677

Students who are registered with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact me privately to discuss how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

## 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.

## Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable. As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted.

Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Please note that 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. For your convenience, students will be provided an opportunity to complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session.

## Student Success

Your success is our number one priority at DePaul University. University resources to help you succeed include computer labs, free or discounted software, tutoring centers, health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. Visit go.depaul.edu/success to learn more

## Office Hours

My office hours will be held on Tuesdays from 2:00PM-5:00PM at 14 E. Jackson, in Room 200B. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, or anything else that's on your mind.