

SCWR 400 FOUNDATIONS OF SCREENWRITING

Fall 2019 | W 5:45-9:00 | 14 E Jackson Rm 507 (Loop)

Instructor: Wendy Roderweiss Office: CDM 513

Email: wroderwe@depaul.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response)

Course Management system: D2L

Type of Instruction: Lecture/discussion/workshop

Drop dates and deadlines: <https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx>

This syllabus is subject to change (Document date 9/1/19)

Office Hours: W 5:00-5:30, 9:00-10:00pm

Course Description:

Students begin their screenwriting journey with a strong foundation in the basic building blocks of solid, engaging storytelling. Students will mine their own lives in order to create memorable stories, characters, and settings. Additionally, students will learn basic screenwriting skills such as character development, constructing atmosphere, and the fundamental components of a scene.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

Course Outcomes:

In addition to completing several writing assignments, students are expected to develop, outline, and write a short screenplay.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- 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
- assess their own work and that of their peers

Texts and Films:

Required:

- Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 031211908
- The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637

Additional essays may be provided by the instructor.

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

Required Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software throughout the course. A word processing program is not acceptable.

Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a focus on screenwriting, producing and/or directing – The software is \$99 with this code EDUWRK2019 at:

<https://store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-11-edu.html>

An alternative (and cheaper) option is Fade In which is \$50 for students:

<https://www.fadeinpro.com/page.pl?content=students>

You can also obtain a free version of Celtx screenwriting program at:

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>

D2L:

We will be using D2L for this course. To log on, go to <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home>
Enter your campus connect login and password. Once you are logged in, click on the course link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, submission folders, discussion forums and weekly assignments.

Grading

- 20% Attendance and Participation (participation includes discussions, workshops, Morning Pages/Spark Journals)
- 15% First Three Creative Assignments
- 5% Loglines
- 15% Outline of Short
- 15% First Draft
- 15% Second Draft
- 15% Final Draft and Refined Pitch and Logline

Grading Scale

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

F=62-0

A indicates excellence

B indicates good work

C indicates minimum satisfactory work

D work is unsatisfactory in some respect

F is substantially unsatisfactory work

Assignments and Exercises – Class Work Assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. Do not use class time to finalize your projects.

Special Accommodations: If you have any special considerations please see me.

Critiques: Due to limited class time, not everyone's work will get a full review during class. If you'd like more feedback, arrange to discuss your work with me during my office hours.

Electronic devices—Use of cell phones/laptops/tablets in the class is prohibited. Please turn your phone off before entering class. Absolutely no texting in class. Unless you have a university verified need for a computer in class, please keep them in your bags.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

Class Outline:

Class 1 Wednesday 9/11

Please bring The Hollywood Standard to Class

Before class Read: Tools of Screenwriting, from page ix through page 27

IN CLASS: Workshopping Standards Boot Camp
Introduction to the course and syllabus
Storytelling Basics
Intro to Visual Storytelling
Screenplay Formatting

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 28 and 29; 43 through 54; 63 through 76; 78 through 83
Watch: Next Floor (Short)
The Crush (Short), If we didn't get to it in class
Write: Creative Assignment I: (Storytelling)
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages

Class 2 Wednesday 9/18

Please bring The Hollywood Standard to Class

IN CLASS: Conflict and Characters
First Workshop: Storytelling

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 30 through 39; 60 through 62; 84 through 90
Watch: New Boy (Short)
Star Wars Episode 4- A New Hope (Feature)
Write: Creative Assignment II: (Conflict and Characters)
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages

Class 3 Wednesday 9/25

IN CLASS: More Visual Storytelling and Dialogue
Three act structure (features and shorts)
Plot points
Second Workshop: Conflict and Character

ASSIGNMENTS:

Write: Creative Assignment III: (Visual Storytelling and Dialogue)
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages

Class 4 Wednesday 10/2 IN CLASS:

IN CLASS: Endings and Beginnings
Two Incidents

Loglines
Step Outlines
Third Workshop: Visual Storytelling/Dialogue

ASSIGNMENTS:

Watch: Pick a film from the back of the Tools of Screenwriting book and watch it
Read: Read the analysis of the film in the back of the book
Tools of Screenwriting, pages 91 through 94
Write: THREE LOGLINES for potential short films
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages

Class 5 Wednesday 10/9

IN CLASS: Step Outlines/Treatments
Climax
Open Endings
Fourth Workshop: Pitch Loglines

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 76 through 78; 55 through 59
Write: STEP OUTLINES for short films
Discussion Forum Posts
Spark Journal Pages
Start working on your 30-60 pitch paragraph

Class 6 Wednesday 10/16

IN CLASS: Scenes
Fifth Workshop: STEP OUTLINES for short films

ASSIGNMENTS:

Write: First Draft/Revision of Outline/Character Development- will be decided by professor
Spark Journal Pages

Class 7 Wednesday 10/23

IN CLASS: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ME

ASSIGNMENTS:

FIRST SET of Scripts (Half of the Class)

Class 8 Wednesday 10/30

IN CLASS: Sixth Workshop: FIRST SET of Scripts (Half of Class)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read: Tools of Screenwriting, pages 95 through 97. Short Scripts.
Write: SECOND SET of Scripts Due (Other Half of Class)

Class 9 Wednesday 11/6

IN CLASS: Seventh Workshop: SECOND SET of Scripts (Other Half of Class)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Write: ALL SECOND DRAFTS DUE

Class 10 Wednesday 11/13

IN CLASS: Eighth Workshop: ALL SECOND DRAFTS

ASSIGNMENTS:

Write: Final Drafts of Short Films and Refined Pitches Due by Wednesday, November 20th
at 5:45pm

Assignments:

Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and may result in a reduction in the student's grade.

Three Creative Assignments (15% of final grade)

These exercises will be based on the screenwriting conventions we cover in class. Specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided after the lectures and will be critiqued in class the following week. You are expected to bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L. Each assignment is 5% of your final grade (15% in total).

Loglines for Short Script (5% of final grade)

Develop three premise ideas for your short film. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a short screenplay. Each premise should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Be mindful of the aim and limitations of the short film medium. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Outline of Short Script (15%)

Taking your chosen idea, please develop a scene-by-scene outline for your short film. Use your plot points! Be ready to pitch the document in class. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Short Script Draft I (15% of final grade)

A few things to keep in mind as you write your scripts:

- 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.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to texts for the course, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Action description should be lean - Only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Your script must be at least 6 pages (not including title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.
- Ask questions if you need help.
- 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.

Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Rewrite(s) of Short Script (15% of final grade each, the final draft includes a Pitch)

A few things to keep in mind as you REWRITE your scripts:

- The rewrite of your script be a marked improvement over your first draft.
- You must include a cover page.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops and self-evaluation in order to craft your revised draft.
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced.
- 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. Refer to the textbook for this class, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Your script must be at least 6 pages (not including the title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.

Workshops, Attendance, and Participation (20% of your final grade):

Attendance

Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15-minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically fail.** However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don't want your evil germs. Please email me at wroder@cdm.depaul.edu *before class* if you are going to miss.

Participation

You may be called upon to discuss various topics on screenwriting and storytelling during class and discussions may develop throughout the course online, with which you are required to participate. Please be prepared having read the texts and screened the assigned films. Also, spark journals and morning pages will be discussed in class.

Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly small group workshop sessions that will enable you to showcase your assignments and the first draft of your short screenplay. Please be sure to adhere to the following workshop guidelines.

Workshop Guidelines

- First and foremost, a workshop is about the piece of writing, not the writer. Both the writer and those critiquing the piece need to keep in mind that the goal is to make the writing the best it possibly can be.
- Workshops are never destructive. They are constructive. Writing is never “bad.” The writing is addressed so that it can get stronger.
- We will always start with something that is working in the piece.
- Then we will go to the aspects that are not yet fully developed or that are not quite working yet.
- The writer must stay quiet during the workshopping of her or his piece.
- If the majority of the readers agree on a particular element of the piece that is working or not working, listen. If the readers are completely divided, it simply may just be a matter of opinion.
- The writer should always listen, but ultimately must trust her or his gut. The writer’s name will be on the page when all is said and done.

Additional Policies and Information:

Attitude and Civil Discourse

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 when the instructor is speaking, mocking another’s opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. 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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

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 <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

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>

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their 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 register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gergory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.