

SCWR 401 Writing the Feature I

When: Wednesday · 5:45pm – 9:00pm
Where: Daley Building / RM 207 / Loop Campus

Instructor: Matt Quinn · mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu · 312-362-5807 · CDM 509
Office hours: Monday & Thursday · 11:30am – 1:15pm / Wednesday · 4:00pm – 5:30pm

Summary of Course

This course focuses on creating a vetted concept and step outline for a feature length screenplay. Emphasis is put on idea origination and world building, forming engaging characters, and structuring an affecting plot with cause and effect storytelling. Through script readings, weekly assignments, and in-class workshops, students will hone their unique voice to craft the dramatic template for a cinematically viable story.

Course Objectives

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

- apply established narrative techniques toward the development of a feature story with a well-structured plot and thoroughly developed characters
- utilize the sequence approach to create consistent tension and effective story organization
- create a complete, professional-quality step outline for a feature screenplay
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Prerequisites

None

Grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Writer's Statement	5%
Five Loglines	5%
Story Package	10%
Hook	10%
Treatment	10%
Step Outline	20%
Step Outline Rewrite	30%

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 in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

Textbooks

Required: Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach by Paul Gulino, ISBN 13: 9780826415684

Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction in your overall grade.

D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:

<https://login.depaul.edu/ldap/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fd2l.depaul.edu%2fd2l%2fcustom%2fcas> and enter using your campus connect logon and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

Group Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, every student will be assigned to one of six groups. A segment of each class will focus on a discussion of that week's group writing assignment and then breaking off into your assigned group to workshop each student's submission for the week.

- Group 1 – January 29th, March 11th
- Group 2 – January 29th, March 11th
- Group 3 – February 5th, March 4th
- Group 4 – February 5th, March 4th

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 8th

Lecture: Course Intro, The Auteur Screenwriter
Assignment: *Writer's Statement*

Week 2 – January 15th

Lecture: The Cinematic Concept
Workshop: Writer's Statement
Assignment: *Loglines*

Week 3 – January 22nd

Lecture: Pitching, Story Packages
Workshop: Loglines
Assignment: *Story Package*

Week 4 – January 29th

Lecture: Character

Workshop: Story Package – Groups 1 & 2

Assignment: Treatment

Week 5 – February 5th

Lecture: Cause and Effect Storytelling, Treatments

Workshop: Story Package – Groups 3 & 4

Assignments: Treatment

Week 6 – February 12th

Lecture: Fulfilling the Promise of Genre & Concept, Step Outlines

Workshop: Treatment

Assignments: Step Outline Draft I

Week 7 – February 19th

Lecture: Layering / Relationships

Workshop: Treatment

Assignments: Step Outline Draft I

Week 8 – February 26th

Lecture: Crafting the Hook

Workshop: Step Outline

Assignments: Step Outline Draft II, Hook

Week 9 – March 4th

Workshop: Hook – Groups 3 & 4

Assignments: Step Outline Draft II

Week 10 – March 11th

Lecture: Moving to Draft

Workshop: Hook – Groups 1 & 2

Assignments: Step Outline Draft II

Assignments**Writer's Statement (5% of final grade)**

The aim of the Writer's Statement is to articulate the purpose, philosophy and inspiration of your creative work. Questions to consider when crafting your statement:

- What genres and styles of projects inspire you?
- How do you wish to be seen as a content creator by industry professionals?
- What recurring storylines and themes are exhibited in your work?
- Who is your audience and why does your work appeal to that audience?

The Writer's Statement should be one page single-spaced. It is worth a total of 5 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Monday, January 13th.

Five Loglines (5% of final grade)

Develop five loglines to pitch in class on Wednesday, January 22nd. One of these loglines should be based on IP (intellectual property) in the public domain. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a feature length screenplay that you will be working on for the duration of the course. Each logline should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a PDF file with the loglines to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 5:45pm on Wednesday, January 22nd.

Story Package (10% of final grade)

The Story Package is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch - You will present a teaser pitch in-class on Wednesday, January 29th (Groups 1 & 2) or Wednesday, February 5th (Groups 3 & 4) that focuses on a personal connection, characters, plot overview, etc. There are no rules or expected format for the pitch other than making a strong attempt to "sell" your assigned script within the allotted time frame.
- One Sheet – This document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 5:45pm on Wednesday, January 29th.

Treatment (10% of final grade)

The Treatment is worth a total of 10 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Monday, February 10th.

The feature film treatment provides a thorough overview of the plot in present tense prose. This assignment must be a minimum of 4 pages. While there is no fixed template for a treatment, it should include the following:

- Title
- Logline
- First act in roughly three paragraphs (page 1) – Introduce central characters and dramatize the setup for main conflict
- Second act in roughly six paragraphs (pages 2 & 3) - Dramatize how the conflict in act one leads to tangible subplots, the midpoint, and the second act turning point
- Third act in roughly three paragraphs (page 4) - Dramatize the climax and resolution

Step Outline (20% of final grade)

The Step Outline is worth a total of 20 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Monday, February 24th.

A feature length outline should have anywhere from 75 - 100 scenes. The length is largely dependent on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character-driven story/more scenes for plot driven material).

It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the intended length of your narrative – Ex: Coming up with 40 scenes or less for a feature is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Please make a point to speak with me if you're planning to write an unconventional narrative that will require an unorthodox outline.

Each scene of your step outline will contain a slug line for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene.

Example:

Scene 1: INT. DON CORELONE'S OFFICE - DAY

AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men. Don Corelone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corelone's daughter, is very matter-of-fact/business-like.

General Guidelines

- Use 12 pt. Courier New Font
- Make sure your scene descriptions are in present tense
- Use all CAPS when introducing a new character.
- Must be submitted as a PDF file

Hook (5% of final grade)

The Hook is worth a total of 5 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 5:45pm on Wednesday, March 4th. Craft the hook (opening scene/sequence) for your feature length script. There is no required page length for this assignment, but the hook must clearly establish the genre, world of the story, and your voice as a writer. A couple of things to keep in mind:

- Document must be saved as a PDF file
- 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
- Ask questions if you need help

Step Outline Rewrite (30% of final grade)

The Step Outline Rewrite is worth a total of 30 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L submission link by 5:45pm on Wednesday, March 18th to the corresponding D2L submission link. Use notes you received from the instructor, group workshops, and self-evaluation to craft the revision.

As a reminder, a feature length outline should have anywhere from 75 - 100 scenes. The length is largely dependent on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character-driven story/more scenes for plot driven material).

It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the intended length of your narrative. For example, coming up with 40 scenes or less for a feature is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Please make a point to speak with me if you're planning to write an unconventional narrative that will require an unorthodox outline.

Each scene of your step outline will contain a slug line for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene.

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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 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.

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.

Changes to the 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

Instructor and 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 academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

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>

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>

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>

Students with Disabilities

DePaul 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.

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