

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 402 – WRITING THE FEATURE II

Spring 2021

When: Tuesdays, 5:45 – 9:00PM

Where: Online

Instructor: Professor Keely Lewis Wise
keelywise@yahoo.com

Office Hrs.: Via Zoom, Wednesdays, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM. Zoom and telephone conferences may also be scheduled by appointment.

Summary of Course

This course focuses on completing the first draft of an original feature length screenplay developed in SCWR 401. Emphasis will be placed on a foundation of character, structure, plot, and theme to bring the writer's vetted concept to fruition. The lectures, workshops, assigned reading and aggressive page deadlines are designed to culminate in a spec screenplay that showcases voice and command of screenwriting conventions. This feature length screenplay should be revised and polished in SCWR 403. Prerequisite: SCWR 401.

Learning Objectives

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

- Write at a professional pace and deliver pages on deadline.
- Write visual and visceral scenes that demonstrate a clear and unique voice.
- Create three-dimensional characters with unique voices, clear motivations, and compelling character arcs.
- Apply established narrative techniques to scenes, sequences and acts.
- Create a fully developed narrative throughline.
- Evaluate the work of peers and formulate constructive feedback.
- Receive and implement notes and feedback from peers.

Outcomes

Students will complete the first draft of an original feature length screenplay. Minimum: 90 pages.

Required Reading

Peer writing assignments, selected scripts and text excerpts, as made available on D2L.

Screenwriting Software

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft is the industry standard and is strongly recommended for those with a serious career focus on screenwriting, producing and/or directing. Student discounts are available at <http://store.finaldraft.com>. You may

also download the Celtx screenwriting program at www.celtx.com or the Writer Duet screenwriting program at www.writerduet.com, both available for a nominal monthly fee. **All assignments must be delivered in .pdf format.**

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L** exclusively. There, students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion forums, grades, notes and additional class materials. All classes will be held via www.zoom.us.

In Week 1, the class will be divided into four groups for workshop purposes: Groups A, B, C and D. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's assignment, review and analysis of a demonstrative script, a short lecture, and group workshops. Students are required to read their group's assigned pages prior to class each week. Students should come to class prepared to constructively discuss their comments and ideas each week. Class participation in these discussions is mandatory and one third of your grade.

Assignments

All assignments must be typed in screenplay format with pages numbered, and shall include a title page. All assignments must be submitted in .pdf format.

Your writing assignment is due by 5 PM on the SUNDAY before class. To be considered timely submitted, you must upload your assignment to that week's Submissions forum **and** your group's Discussion forum on the D2L site. This is to provide your instructor and your classmates sufficient time to read and assess your work prior to class. Late posts will result in forfeited workshop time and reduced credit.

You are responsible for reading your group's weekly writing assignments BEFORE every class session. You are required 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/ideas you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

Course Schedule

Week 1 – March 30, 2021

- Syllabus and course review
- Lecture: Sequence Review, Sequence 1, Good Beginnings
- Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 1, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 1 | 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 1 by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 1 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class workshop

Week 2 – April 6, 2021

Sequence 1 Due

Workshop Sequence 1

Lecture: Sequence 2, Setting up the Main Tension

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 2, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 2 (Complete Act I) | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 2 (through the end of Act I) by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 2 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 3 – April 13, 2021

Sequence 2 Due

Workshop Sequence 2

Lecture: Sequence 3, Fun & Games

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 3, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 3 | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 3 by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 3 pages before Class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 4 – April 20, 2021

Sequence 3 Due

Workshop Sequence 3

Lecture: Sequence 4, Hitting the Midpoint

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 4, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 4 | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 4 (through the Midpoint) by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 4 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

NOTE: Schedule a one-on-one meeting either this week or next to discuss your goals in and out of this class, and any issues you may be experiencing in writing your first draft.

Week 5 – April 27, 2021

Sequence 4 Due

Workshop Sequence 4

Lecture: Sequence 5, Using Subplots & Avoiding the Act II Sag

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 5, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 5 | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 5 by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 5 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 6 – May 4, 2021

Sequence 5 Due

Workshop Sequence 5

Lecture: Sequence 6, Rising Action & All is Won/Lost

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 6, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 6 (Complete Act II) | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 6 (through the end of Act II) by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 6 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 7 – May 11, 2021

Sequence 6 Due

Workshop Sequence 6

Lecture: Sequence 7, The New Main Tension & Climax

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 7, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 7 | additional 12-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 7 (through the Climax) by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 7 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 8 – May 18, 2021

Sequence 7 Due

Workshop Sequence 7

Lecture: Sequence 8, Resolution & Completing Your Character Arc

Read *Whiplash*, Sequence 8, and Discuss

Writing Assignment

Sequence 8 (Complete Act III) | final 1-15 pages

Prep

Submit Sequence 8 (through Fade Out) by Sunday at 5 PM

Read your group's Sequence 8 pages before class

Be prepared to discuss your group's pages in class

Week 9 – May 25, 2021

Sequence 8 Due

Workshop Sequence 8

Lecture: Revising a First Draft & The Path to Success

Writing Assignment

Prepare a Revision Plan (for 5 points extra credit) OR begin substantive revisions of your first draft.

Prep

Submit Revision Plan for extra credit by class

Sign up for a one-on-one meeting to discuss final story revisions

NOTE: Please submit your course evaluations this week.

Week 10 – June 1, 2021

One-on-One meetings to discuss final story revisions

Writing Assignment

Complete substantive revisions of your first draft.

FINAL EXAM

FINAL, SUBSTANTIALLY REVISED SCRIPT DUE **June 8, 2021 AT 5:45 PM** IN SUBMISSIONS ON D2L. **NO EXCEPTIONS OR EXTENSIONS.**

Grading

Each of the eight weekly writing assignments is worth a maximum of twelve and a half (12.5) points, totaling 100 possible points, and comprising one third of your grade. These assignments will be evaluated on effort, creativity, originality, structure, character development, format and style, and the application of course materials and lectures to your writing.

You will receive a maximum of ten (10) points per week for active and thoughtful participation, totaling one hundred (100) points, or a third of your overall grade. You are expected to actively participate in the conversation and group workshop every week. This means you should thoroughly read ALL assigned material before class, and then formulate clear, supportive feedback, and thoughtful, engaging responses to all of the assigned reading. **Your job is to prove to me that you have read and considered the material carefully.** Failure to read material in advance or to provide thoughtful feedback in class will result in a diminished participation score for that day.

The final, revised screenplay is worth one hundred (100) points, and comprises the final one third of your overall grade. It should represent the very best writing you can put forth in the time we've had together. It must be free of typographical errors, submitted in proper screenplay format, include a title page, and be at least ninety (90) pages and no longer than one hundred and twenty (120) pages in length.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 77	D-	= 60
A-	= 90	C	= 73	F	= 0-59
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. Unexcused 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 and in-class feedback on this material 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. This attendance policy applies to all online classes for this course. **For Zoom workshops, your video must be turned on, and the same level of participation and professionalism that you would exhibit in class is expected on screen.**

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

We will be working on devices in order to facilitate our lectures and small group workshop sessions this term. Accordingly, 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, email, internet searches or other non-class related material during our class time. Please afford your classmates and instructor the same courtesy and respect that you desire when you and your work are being featured.

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. You may complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#) 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

I will hold office hours via Zoom every Wednesday from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM. Please let me know if you would like to schedule a Zoom or telephone conference meeting at another time, and I will work with you to accommodate that request. 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.