DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 407-801: Screen Adaptation
Winter 2022
Tuesday 5:45PM – 9:00PM
Location: Zoom [Weeks 1 & 2] / 14 E. Jackson, Room 211 [Weeks 3-10]

Instructor Information
Jef Burnham
Pronouns: he/him
Email: jburnha1@depaul.edu*
Remote Office Hours: Wednesday 8:45AM-2:45PM
(schedule a Zoom meeting through BlueStar)

*If you do not receive a response from me within 24 hours, assume I did not get your email.

Course Description:
This advanced course focuses on identifying and developing source material for the screen. Emphasis is placed on learning to negotiate the public domain when searching for material to adapt, as well as practical ways to acquire copyrighted material. Students will choose material from the public domain to adapt, and then create a logline, short pitch, treatment, and first act of a feature screenplay (or two acts of a teleplay).

Objectives:
At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:
- relate the history and relevance of adaptation in film and television.
- analyze a piece of source material and its adapted screenplay to identify the unique techniques and choices implemented in the adaptation.
- utilize the public domain for access to material.
- create a unique, well-structured, character-driven cinematic adaptation of existing source material.
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback.

Outcomes:
- Students will complete one short script, plus a treatment or series bible for a long-form adaptation, as well as 30 pages of the long-form adaptation script.
- One short essay will demonstrate understanding of the adaptation process.

Textbooks and Printed Resources:
- Ted Chiang, *Stories of your Life and Others*
- Screenplays and other readings are available under "Content" on D2L

Course Management:
This course is housed and managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and submissions can be found there, as well as the assignment calendar and updates.

Screenwriting Software
You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft, Fade In, and Highland are among the best available. **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Attendance:
Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Each unexcused absence beyond the first equates to a loss of ten points from the student's final score.

Excused Absences
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.

Grading:
Syllabus Quiz	5 Points
Lovecraft Country Discussion Post	5 Points
Arrival Interview Discussion Post	5 Points
Weekly Participation	10 points
Arrival Reflection Paper	10 Points
Adaptation Plan	10 Points
Completed Script Pages	15 Points
Flash Fiction Adaptation	20 Points
Completed Treatment / Bible	20 Points
	100 Total

Grading Scale:
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

Assignments:

Syllabus Quiz
There is a five-point quiz on this syllabus located on D2L. It must be completed by the start of class Week 2.

Discussion Posts
You will be required to make one discussion post analyzing the adaptation of the *Lovecraft Country* pilot, and a reflection post on an interview with *Arrival* screenwriter Eric Heisserer about the process of adapting that film. Discussion posts must be submitted to D2L by the start of class on the day they are due.

***Arrival* Reflection Paper**
You will be assigned a five-to-seven page (double-spaced) reflection paper to present your take on how the *Arrival* adaptation succeeded or failed, specific challenges the screenwriter faced, how they overcame those challenges, and how you might have done the work differently if the project was yours. The papers must be well-organized, tightly written, reference both the screenplay (<u>not the film</u>) and the short story, express a unique take, and must be grammatically correct throughout. The assignment must be submitted to D2L before class on the day that it's due.

Screenwriting Assignments
A grading rubric for the Flash Fiction Adaptation, Adaptation Plan, Completed Treatment / Bible, and Flash Fiction Adaptation assignments will be provided to you on D2L. Screenwriting assignments must demonstrate professionalism and investment in the material, showcase techniques and ideas discussed in class, offer a unique take on the original work with a clear voice, and demonstrate proper grammar, format, and style. These writing assignments are to be submitted to D2L on <u>Sunday by 11:59PM</u> on dates listed in the course schedule unless otherwise noted.

Participation
Students are expected to have read and annotated the work submitted by their groupmates each week **<u>BEFORE</u>** class begins. Your participation grade is determined by your demonstrated preparation and informed involvement in discussions.

Notes on the Evaluation of Student Work
Rubrics according to which written assignments are assessed will be available on D2L under Content & Submissions. In order to obtain a desired grade on any assignment, students must review and adhere to these guidelines, which include not only the aforementioned expectations, but also mechanics (i.e. spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Please allow up to 7-10 days for the return of graded materials.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Work Policy

Late work will not be accepted for full points without a valid excuse, and out of fairness to all, it cannot be workshopped in class. Keep in mind that your groupmates need time to read each of your submissions, so treat all deadlines as hard deadlines. Any work that is submitted late without a valid excuse will receive a 50%-point deduction if submitted in the 24 hours following the deadline; after that the submission will receive a grade of zero, although students will still receive feedback from the instructor to facilitate the cumulative development of these assignments.

In-Class Workshops

Feedback is essential to the writing process. As such, you will participate in weekly workshop sessions. Students will be divided into groups, and you must read and prepare written notes on your group's pages before class. Show your classmates the courtesy of reading their material as they should yours. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems, not just point them out.

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.

Zoom Policies:

The DePaul Code of Student Responsibility applies to online behavior as well as in-person or classroom behavior. The following are policies for the course meetings with Zoom:

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name, last name, and pronoun preferences (if you so choose). If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal, so try to locate an internet-enabled device to use for this course. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications.

- Video – Turn on your video whenever possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. You may elect to turn off your video if you have limited internet bandwidth, no webcam, or if you're unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions.

- Audio – Mute your microphone when you are not talking. Be in a quiet place when possible and turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you are uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Please follow up with the instructor immediately if such a situation arises. Stories developed in class may involve issues such as hate and violence, but writing with a point of view that glorifies hate and violence will not be tolerated. Inclusion of individuals from the class in submitted creative materials will also not be tolerated.

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 students will be notified via email.

Academic Support Resources

https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx

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. (Note: Turnitin is used to check the originality of submissions on D2L.) Actions taken by the instructor in this regard do not preclude the university from taking further action, including dismissal from the university. 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.

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection 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.

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 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 policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332

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

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 (believable). 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!

COURSE SCHEDULE

[Classes may include lectures (*film screenings & any pre-recorded lecture viewings* (TBD) *due before class*), and discussions, as well as a workshop every week after the first.]

Week 1 (1/4) – Meet on Zoom (*link on D2L under Content*): Discuss the history and relevance of adaptation in the industry. Read and watch "Ada Blackjack Rising" (2020) for discussion in class.

    Due Tuesday, 1/11 before class:
- Complete the Syllabus Quiz on D2L
- Logline and one-page synopsis for your Flash Fiction adaptation choice.
- Read the source material and script for *Lovecraft Country* and post your analysis of the project in Discussions on D2L.

Week 2 (1/11) – Meet on Zoom (*link on D2L under Content*): Discuss material adaptation challenges [and Film/Sequence Structure as needed]. Workshop and discuss Flash Fiction selections.

    Due Sunday, 1/16 by 11:59PM:
- First draft of Flash Fiction Adaptation (8-10 pages).

Week 3 (1/18): Discuss the Public Domain, and Authorial Agency in Adaptation. Workshop and discuss Flash Fiction first drafts.

    Due Tuesday, 1/25 before class:
- revision of Flash Fiction Adaptation
- three loglines for potential long-form public domain adaptations.

Week 4 (1/25): Discuss Project Selection and Portfolio Building + Treatment + Bible introduction. Workshop potential long-form adaptations.

    <u>Due Sunday, 1/30 by 11:59PM:</u>
- Adaptation Development Plan

    <u>Due Tuesday, 2/1 before class:</u>
- *Arrival* Reflection Paper

Week 5 (2/1): Discuss *Arrival* adaptation [and Television Structure as needed]. Workshop Development Plans.

    <u>Due Sunday, 2/6 by 11:59PM:</u>
- Feature Treatment to the end of Act 1, ***or***
- Series Bible: Your Inspiration/Personal Connection + Relevance/Market/Audience + Your overall approach.

    <u>Due Tuesday, 2/8 before class:</u>
- *Arrival* Discussion Board Post on D2L

Week 6 (2/8): Discuss Key Scenes and Obligatory Moments in Adaptation. Workshop adaptation materials.

    <u>Due Sunday, 2/13 by 11:59PM:</u>
- Feature Treatment to the Midpoint, ***or***
- Series Bible: Character descriptions + World + Theme

Week 7 (2/15): Discuss How Marvel Handles Adaptation. Workshop adaptation materials.

    <u>Due Sunday, 2/20 by 11:59PM:</u>
- Feature Treatment to the End of Act 2, ***or***
- Series Bible: Pilot Treatment

CLASS 8 (2/22): Guest Speaker on acquiring copyrighted material. Workshop adaptation materials.

    <u>Due Sunday, 2/27 by 11:59PM:</u>
- Feature Treatment to the end of Act 3, **or**
- Series Bible: Future episodes and Season Arcs

Week 9 (3/1): Approaching Content Creators. Workshop adaptation materials.

> <u>Due Sunday, 3/6 by 11:59PM:</u>
> - Revised Treatments and Bibles

Week 10 (3/8): Workshop adaptation materials.

FINAL PAGES DUE
Tuesday, March 15 submitted to D2L by 11:59 PM