**DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts**

**Spring 2023**

**SCWR 309/409: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

SCWR 100 or SCWR 101 is a prerequisite for this class.

Thursday: 1:30pm – 4:45pm

Room: 207

14 E. Jackson

Professor Olivia Lilley

Email: [olilley@depaul.edu](mailto:olilley@depaul.edu) or [olivialilley@propthtr.org](mailto:olivialilley@propthtr.org)

Office Hours: Zoom, please email me to schedule.

Hours will be Wednesdays 9am – 12pm, and Fridays 9am – 12pm.

**Course Description**

This course will explore creative methodologies geared at getting deeply into the minds and points of view of dramatic characters. Throughout the course, students will concentrate on one set of characters to refine an existing web series, feature film, or television pilot.

**Course Outcomes**

In addition to weekly exercises geared toward deepening our understanding of character and the tools at our disposal, students will create a live pitch and vision to rewrite a TV series, web series, or feature film and then mock present it “to a network executive for the chance to get the job to execute the rewrite”. The presentation will be 10 minutes in length. Students will receive feedback, revise the presentation, and execute it again for their final.

**Trigger Warnings**

Trigger warnings offer a humane way for students to prioritize their mental and emotional well- being when confronting distressing and/or harmful course content by preparing students to engage or, potentially, disengage with sensitive or traumatic classroom material. *In this class, if the content you create has triggering material and themes, please provide an appropriate content warning so that your classmates can prioritize their own mental and emotional well-being.*

**Course Management**

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to: https://d2l.depaul.edu/ d2l/home and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

**Grading Policy**

 Reflections and Character Freewrites – 50%

Final Project – 20%

Class Participation & Professionalism- 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, F is substantially unsatisfactory.

Class #1

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

What IS character?

What makes a character memorable?

**Watch after Class #1: Breaking Bad, Pilot**

Class #2

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:  
What do you know about your characters, story, and their world?

**Due: Reflection Paper on Observing Character in Every Day Life, 500 words**

**Watch after Class #2: Abbott Elementary, Pilot**

Class #3

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

**What DON’T you know yet? Or Research: Ethics, Copyright, and Toolkits**

**Due: Reflection Paper on Observing A Specific Universe in Every Day Life, 500 words**

**Watch after Class #3: Icarus, Documentary**

Class #4

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

Selecting the world(s) for your story.

**Due: In 500 words, propose some ideas for research on your REWRITING proposal. Come up with at least 3 different areas of knowledge gaps and a plan for how to self-educate based on what we learned in Class #3.**

**Watch after Class #4: Industry, Pilot**

Class #5

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

Themes and Character: How does theme sharpen your focus?

**Due: Reflection Paper on Observing overlapping worlds that interest you in the city of Chicago, 500 words**

**Watch: A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night, Feature**

Class #6

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

Urgency/Stakes in Characterization & Supporting Characters as Characters with super objectives of their own: All Characters are people too.

**Due:** **Reflection Paper on the “Theme” of the media you’re planning on rewriting (TV show, feature, or webseries): What is the theme, and how does it currently play out? How do you intend to go deeper with it, or go in a different direction than the original? 1,000 words.**

**Watch: Nashville, Feature Film**

Class #7

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

Who’s the right main character for this story? Who is the right main character for me to write?

**Due: 1,000 word freewrite fleshing out the super objective and stakes for each of the characters in the media you’re planning on rewriting. Write what you’d like it to be not what it currently is.**

**Watch: Maggie, Pilot**

Class #8

Lecture, Freewrites, Discussions, and Group Work

Topic:

Character IS Plot

**Due: 1,000 word freewrite fleshing out the arc of your chosen protagonist for your rewrite: What’s their shard of glass? How do they reason, process, and make decisions at the start of your story? How has that changed by the end? How did they get through their dark night of the soul?**

**Watch: The Knick, Pilot**

Class #9

Class Presentations:

Introduce us to your Protagonist as you envision them for your rewrite. Must be 10 minutes in length (I will time you.) and include a new logline, take us through their character’s journey from start to finish (pilot, webseries episode, or feature), and three creative writing moments that give us a sense of how this character shows up on the page. Complete the pitch with why this network exec should select you as the screenwriter to do this rewrite.

**Due: Materials for Class Presentation**

Week #10

Individual Meetings/Next Steps: Rewrites

Week #11

Class Presentations:

Turn in & Present Revised Materials

**In-Class Discussions/Workshops**

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share his/her work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

**Creative Subject Matter**

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused for the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class, or direct personal attacks on members of the class will not be tolerated in course material. If you feel you are being individually targeted by material written or discussed in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

**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.

**Laptops/Cell Phones**

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

**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.

**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

**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 https:// offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence- notification.aspx 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.

**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.

**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. Gregory Moorehead, 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.