DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 303/403: Rewriting the Feature

Fall, 2023
Thursday, 5:45-9:00 PM, 14 East Jackson, Room 207
Professor Brad Riddell(he/him): brad.riddell@depaul.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 2– 5:00PM | Thursday 10:00AM – 1:00PM | **Zoom Only**

Course Description:

This class focuses on rewriting the feature film screenplay. Through workshops and course discussions, students will learn how to identify missteps in their writing and develop a practical means to efficiently address these issues moving forward. Students must have a complete feature length script to rewrite to enroll in the course.

Prerequisites: None

Course Outcomes: Students will complete a rewrite plan and a full rewrite of an existing original feature screenplay.

Learning Objectives:

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

- organize and assess script feedback from their peers and the professor
- devise a detailed plan for a comprehensive rewrite
- revise their screenplay at a professional pace
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Textbooks and Printed Resources:

Screenwriting is Rewriting: The Art and Craft of Professional Revision by Jack Epps, Jr., ISBN13: 9781628927405 (Recommended)

Screenwriting Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software. FINAL DRAFT, FADE IN, HIGHLAND, WRITER'S DUET, and CELTX are options. WRITER'S DUET and HIGHLAND provide versions that are free for students. Screenwriting majors may be able to get a free copy of Final Draft from the school.

Course Management:

This course is managed on D2L. The course links, calendar, news updates, content, and submission and discussion forums can be found there. I will be available on Zoom for office hours at the times listed above, and by special arrangement if needed. You can make an appointment by logging into Bluestar using the QuickLinks tab here. If my standard office hours do not work for you, please send an email to make other arrangements. I will try to respond to emails related to this course within 24 hours, but I am slower on nights and weekends.

Course Schedule:

WEEK 1, September 7: Course/Projects Introduction + *Giving Notes Lecture*
Due for next week before class: statement of purpose + notes on Group 1 screenplays

WEEK 2, September 14: *Receiving Notes Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week before class: notes on Group 2 screenplays + Project Statement

WEEK 3, September 21: *The Rewrite Plan* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Rewrite Plan

WEEK 4, September 28: *Beginning the Rewrite Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 1, Act 1

WEEK 5, October 5: *Focus on Scenes Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 2, Act 1 + Midterm Reflection

WEEK 6, October 12: *Act 2A Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 1, Act 2A

WEEK 7, October 19: *Presentation & Transitions Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 2, Act 2A

WEEK 8, October 26: *Act 2B Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 1, Act 2B

WEEK 9, November 2: *Act 3 Lecture* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Group 2, Act 2B

WEEK 10, November 9: *Passes & Next Steps* + Workshop
Due for next week (Wednesday 9AM): Both Groups, Act 3

November 16 by 5:00 PM: Final Revised Draft + Student Evaluation + Grads
Students Give Group Notes on Act 3

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.

Assignments:
Assignments should be submitted as PDF files to the appropriate submissions and discussions folders. Delivery times change, so please check the schedule above or the calendar on D2L for details. Files should be saved as Name.AssignmentName.PDF.
Late work may not be workshopped in class.

Grading:

This course utilizes an approach known as "ungrading." I will award up to 50% of the total course points available for delivering completed assignments on deadline. Assignments will be deemed complete at my discretion based on the stated parameters and expectations. The remaining 50% of the score will be determined by the individual students themselves.

At the midpoint and the end of the quarter students will be asked to reflect upon their performance and assign themselves a grade that represents the level to which they demonstrated professionalism and investment in the course, showcased techniques and ideas discussed in class, offered a unique take with a clear voice in their writing, challenged themselves to create a story that will be useful to them in their portfolio and matters to them personally, and responded to feedback.

The instructor grade and student grade will be combined to yield a final score. I reserve the right to raise a student-assigned grade, but I will not lower a student-assigned grade once it has been delivered to me.

Weekly Participation:	10 points
Notes 1 & 2 :	10 points (5 each)
Rewrite Plan:	5 points
Act 1:	5 points
Act 2A:	5 points
Act 2B:	5 Points
Third Act:	5 Points
Final Revised Draft:	5 points
	50 student-evaluated points
	100 points

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. Late work will be penalized by half unless we have made special arrangements.

Screenwriting Policy on the Use of AI

The screenwriting program is committed to fostering the unique voices and perspectives of up-and-coming screenwriters as evidenced by our motto: "learn your craft, find your voice, make your mark." Writers should be aware that AI (generative artificial intelligence) is a tool. It does not create; it aggregates and repurposes existing content created by humans. AI may facilitate the story development process but cannot replace what each individual writer brings to a story: their distinctive point of view and voice. We understand that students may wish to use AI tools to aid in the development and early drafts of screenplays and screenwriting assignments. To do so with academic integrity students must understand and adhere to the following:

• Developing ideas, creative problem-solving, honing one's voice, and engaging in rewriting are at the core of the writing process, and the use of AI is not a replacement for enhancing these fundamental skills.

• Acknowledge your use of AI. For any assignment that you complete using AI, you must include a paragraph that explains 1) what AI tool you used, 2) what prompts you used, and 3) a clear explanation of how it helped you engage in the writing process.

• AI-assisted work may be accepted as part of the development of any project (including story ideation, character development, world-building, basic outlining,etc.), but the entirety of your screenplay/writing assignment must be authored by you.

• AI makes mistakes. You are responsible for any errors or omissions made by the AI tool.

• Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be considered a violation of DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy.

Content Warnings

The films, shows, clips, readings, lectures, student work, and class discussions in this course may engage deeply with potentially sensitive or traumatizing material such as: violence, sexual assault/r*pe, sexism, racism, police brutality, transphobia, homophobia, abuse, suicide, blood, and body-shaming among others.

I will note especially graphic/intense content that I intend to present and will do my best to foster a classroom environment in which we can relate safely, courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week.

In that spirit, I ask that you label potential triggers in your written work submitted on D2L, and then again before we read aloud or discuss that work in class.

If you would like to make me aware of other triggers (especially ones not named above), let me know and I will do my best to flag them for you.

If you believe any piece of course content may be potentially triggering to you, I will happily search for replacement material that you may view or read instead.

Students with Disabilities:

DePaul 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 (312) 362-8002 , Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677 Email: csd@depaul.edu

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory 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 click here for Services and Contact Information.

Respecting Diversity and Inclusion:

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions, and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include diverse creators, perspectives, and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and I will strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives. If at any time the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

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 a request to address you by a specific 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 note that students may make name and pronouns revisions within university systems. 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.

Creative Subject Matter and Civil Discourse:

DePaul is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students both intellectually and personally to be socially responsible leaders. Controversial or sensitive subject matter may find its way into our conversations. Students have every right to express themselves and address challenging issues in their work so long as that work does not seek to glorify or advocate for hate, violence, or discrimination, or involve the professor or a member of the class without their permission.

It is the right of class members to express how a student's statements or creative work make them feel, but to do so respectfully and constructively. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for any reason, you may be excused from further reading or commenting on that work. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course will be civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility will jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students to assist in managing such issues.

DePaul University's Land Acknowledgement

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

Emergency Plan

An emergency can occur at any time, suddenly and without warning. Proper planning is essential to minimize the impact of any emergency on the university community, operations, and facilities. This link provides detailed information on Emergency Evacuation and Fire Alarm safety. The University will use the DPU Alert to announce school closing or other emergencies. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the primary outdoor assembly area for CDM will be Grant Park (Southeast corner of Jackson and Michigan Ave).

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 here.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found here. 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. 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.

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.

Copyright Statement:
The materials provided by the instructor in this course are for the use of the students enrolled in the course. Copyrighted course materials may not be further disseminated.

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 work 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 your instructor to teaching, and these evaluation results are one component used in performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard regarding the quality of teaching at DePaul.

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

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 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 exceptions cases will receive such approval. If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement 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.