

Character Development

SCWR 309-401

Fall 2023

Tuesdays 1:30pm-4:45pm
14 East Jackson, Room 209

Instructor: Allie Solomon DiUbaldo

Office Hours: Tuesdays before class from 12:00 - 1:00 @ CDM 472.

Email me to schedule a meeting.

Email: asolom17@depaul.edu

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.

Prerequisites: SCWR100 or SCWR101

Textbooks: None

Software: None

Course Outcomes:

- Creating deeper, more defined characters
- Written character bios
- Fleshed out character bible
- Pitch to rewrite a TV series or film

Learning Objectives:

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

- Define strong character elements across television and film in both drama and comedy
- Analyze how characters are developed in longer works such as feature films and episodic/serialized storytelling
- Apply character and story generation tools in their own creative character work
- Design an execution plan in how to use these characters as the basis for a work for television or film
- Evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Course Schedule:

WEEK 1 - September 12th

Welcome! Today we will go over our schedule for the next ten weeks, get to know each other and divide into groups to be used as mini-rooms for the quarter.

Lecture: Unforgeable characters

Discussion: How to write a character bio

Screen: Abbott Elementary Pilot

Mini-room: Write a character bio for Janine

Homework:

- Watch: Re-watch your favorite character-driven pilot or film
- Write: Write a character bio for the protagonist

WEEK 2 - September 19th

Lecture: What makes characters great?

Discussion: Choosing your crew of characters.

Mini-room: Share your character bio from your favorite pilot or film.

Screen: Beef Pilot (Content Warning: language, violence)

Mini-room: Write a character bio for Danny Cho or Amy Lau

Homework:

- Write: everything you know about your characters (no more than 5 total) that you're considering focusing on, an informal character bio (~500 words per character).

WEEK 3 - September 26th

Lecture: Giving our characters purpose; wants, needs and goals.

Discussion: How do a characters' goals carry a story?

Mini-room: Share your informal bios with your group to help choose your crew/get to know each other's cast.

Homework:

- Write: Choose your characters and write their wants, needs and goals.

WEEK 4 - October 3rd

Lecture: Dramatizing our characters.

Screen: Samuel L. Jackson on Creating Characters

Discussion: Replacing words with action, prose to drama exercise.

Mini-room: Brainstorm potential world's for your characters. What do they **do** that informs who they are?

Homework:

- Write: Expand on your character's world and write a paragraph explaining it.

WEEK 5 - October 10th

Lecture: Giving you and your character a voice all your own.

Discussion: Re-writing, what do you and your characters bring to a project?

Mini-room: Tell your group a funny story you've told many times.

Homework:

- Re-write your funny story and take creative liberties to make maximum drama/comedy.

WEEK 6 - October 17th

Lecture: How does who our characters are affect how they interact with each other?

Discussion: Setting ourselves (and our characters) up for maximum drama using opposition.

Mini-room: Share your re-written funny story. What stood out to each other? How did it improve and why?

Homework:

- Write a proposal for your re-write(~500 words per).

WEEK 7 - October 24th

Lecture: Creating drama/comedy that stems from character.

Discussion: How does specificity create more relatability?

Mini room: Share your proposal and brainstorm how you can strengthen the narrative.

Screen: Judd Apatow on Developing Life Into Story

Homework:

- Re-work your re-write proposal based on your peer's notes.
- Schedule a time to meet with me over zoom next week to go over your re-write.

WEEK 8 - October 31st

NO CLASS

Individual zoom meetings to go over you re-write proposal.

Homework:

- Begin working on your final projects.

WEEK 9 - November 7th

Lecture: Pitching a re-write

Discussion: How to sell a story and win a job.

Mini-room: Pitching practice

Homework:

- First draft of re-write pitch
- Prepare to practice on your peers

WEEK 10 - November 14th

Lecture: The Industry

Discussion: Why characters and our POV are so important.

Mini-room: Practice your re-write pitch with your group

Homework:

- Finish your final

FINAL DUE - November 21st

NO CLASS

Due: Final Character Bible & Final Re-write Pitch

Attendance and Participation:

Participation is a crucial part of the creative process. Our class will be collaborative so if you are not there, you cannot participate. Please do your best to be present and ready for our weekly meetings. If you do have to miss a class or a deadline, please let me know in advance. 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.

Assignments:

All assignments for this course must be typed, free of grammatical errors, and saved as a PDF before being submitted to the D2L database.

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion. If you do not communicate with me it will be automatic zero.

Grading

Class Attendance	10%
Participation	10%

Favorite Character Bio	5%
Informal Character Bio	5%
Character Want/Need/Goal	5%
Character's World	5%
Re-write Proposal	10%
First Draft of Re-write Pitch	10%
Final Character Bible	20%
Final Re-Write Pitch	20%

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.

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.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions:

The health and safety of everyone at DePaul depend on the cooperation of all who come to campus. By taking care of yourself, you protect the entire community. DePaul's COVID-19 response plans are based on the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the university's medical advisor from AMITA Health.

Mandatory protocols must be followed by DePaul students, faculty and staff at all times on both campuses <https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/guidance/health-safety-practices/Pages/default.aspx>.

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values:

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human 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 authors, 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.

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.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

AI Usage:

While the professor acknowledges AI may be a powerful tool for writers in the future at this time and for this course it is strictly prohibited. Students are expected to execute completely original work.

Content Warning:

This course recognizes that to engage with media is to engage with historic and ongoing problematic representation, as well as the ways that harmful representation impacts students in different ways. Therefore, any course content displaying racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and otherwise violent or socially violent material will be made known in writing prior to the viewings to the best of the professor's ability, so that students may make informed decisions about their mental and emotional health and well-being. Students may inform the professor of any material that they cannot engage with to find a suitable alternative.