



CP340 –
Fundamentals of
Pre-Production
for Feature Films

Cassie Llanas
Adjunct Professor

DePaul University | CDM | School of Cinematic Arts
CP340/440 | Winter 2024 | Mondays 5:45P–9:00P
14 E Jackson Blvd, Room 209, Loop Campus
In-Person

**This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during this Quarter if changes occur, it will be addressed in class & announced/posted on D2L

It is your responsibility to read this syllabus in its entirety, to regularly check the D2L course page and know what is expected of you in this course

“Don’t wait for someone to enable you to make something” – Desiree Akhavan

“It’s kinda crazy to say, but the way Jay [Duplass] and I stay afloat, because we don’t make particularly commercial fare that makes a lot of money, is that we make things cheaply and we make things small.” – Mark Duplass

INTRODUCTION

This course introduces students to the process of producing a feature film from development through production including topics like working with unions, script breakdown to schedules, production paperwork, navigating politics of productions and sets, set safety, and SO MUCH MORE!

Throughout the quarter, students will produce a feature film from a script of their choice. Student groups will fill the role of a production office and utilize the skills necessary to take a feature script, break it down, and prepare for a multi-month film production with plans for post-production. Producing a feature film is time consuming and meticulous work, please be mindful that this is an intensive course that will require you to put in a lot of group work outside of class.

LEARNING GOALS: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Read and understand and properly execute production paperwork including (but not limited to):
 - One Liners, Day Out of Days, Exhibit G's, Shooting Schedules, Production Reports, Call Sheets, Deal Memos, etc.
- Develop a thorough pitch packet
- Complete breaking down a feature script into a comprehensive schedule
- Apply a work-flow process that professional filmmakers use in producing a feature film
- Deduce how long a scene will approx. take to film and calculate how long a feature film will take to shoot
- Recognize any and all safety issues in a script that will need to be addressed in pre-production and what goes into planning a safe production
- Map out a production plan for a feature film

CLASS SESSIONS: Mondays 5:45P-9:00P, 14 E Jackson, Room 209 - Loop Campus

FINAL SESSION: Monday 03/18 @ TBD

OFFICE HOURS: By Appointment. Mondays & Wednesdays (10A-1:00P) ON ZOOM or 14 E Jackson, 200B Schedule through Calendly:
<https://calendly.com/cillianas/30min>

D2L: This course is managed on D2L. You will find the required reading materials, assignments, and links to screenings there.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS: The Complete Film Production Handbook 4th Edition (Honohaner) Producer to Producer 2nd Edition (Ryan)

SUPPLIES: An internet enabled device like a laptop, tablet, or smartphone

- Throughout the quarter there will be class time allocated to working on group projects that will necessitate access to the internet

GRADING SCALE

A=90%-100% plus/minus = top/bottom 3% of grade range; B=80%-89%, C=70%-79%, D=60%-69%, F=59% and below

FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN (APPROX. & SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Attendance & Participation - 15%

Script Preference - 10%

Group Project: Film Pitch - 20%

Group Project: Production Meeting - 30%

Discussion Posts & Responses - 25%

GRADE PROFILES

A Work demonstrates consistently clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while showing independent, sophisticated thought. Work consistently improves.

- B** Demonstrates mostly clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while showing mostly independent thought. Improves with some lapses.
- C** Demonstrates sometimes clear, detailed, relevant & accurate understanding of key concepts while work remains dependent on teacher/notes/texts. Inconsistent improvement.
- D** Frequently demonstrates unclear, imprecise & inaccurate understanding of key concepts. Does not demonstrate improvement.
- F** Demonstrates undisciplined or non-evident thinking with little to no comprehension of key concepts

ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES

Details for all assignments and readings will be discussed in class and posted on D2L. **Unless otherwise noted**, the due date is the start of class on the day an assignment is due and anything after the start of class is late. This is true even if you are absent. Graded assignments will lose one full letter grade for each week (or partial week) they are late. I can be flexible about this as long as you **COMMUNICATE** with me about how and when you will fulfill the requirements for any late assignments

Screening Assignments:

Students are expected to fully complete assigned screenings on time so they are prepared for class discussions. As a producer/filmmaker, being able to focus and examine a film critically is important. This is not something that should be done with your phone or laptop out. Students who manage their time to give a film their full attention will more successfully learn and participate in this course.

- Make note of at least one aspect of the film or it's behind-the-scenes content that stands to you, resonates with you, or that represents ideas you would like to discuss or might relate to your own final project

Writing Assignments:

Students are expected to complete a discussion post regarding the films each week. Two responses engaging with classmates are also expected. Everyone has their own perspectives and ideas and as a collaborative medium, filmmakers learn from each other.

ATTENDANCE

If you are well, I hope you will come to class on time and stay for the duration. If you are unwell, or suspect you may have been exposed to COVID, please stay home and take care of yourself. If you know you will be absent or late, let me know and we'll work something out. Otherwise students are expected to attend each class, arrive on time, and remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any unexcused absence.

Three unexcused absences may constitute failure for the course, unless approved by the insutrcotr.

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the ongoing pandemic. According to DePaul's Health and Safety Practices Guidelines, while masking indoors is no longer required, DePaul remains a mask-friendly campus, therefore, if you join a meeting or gatherin and a

participant asks you to wear a mask, you are expected to do so. Further, you are expected to monitor yourself for symptoms each time you plan to come to campus. stay home if you are sick, avoid close contact with people who are sick. 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.

For the latest news and resources, please visit [DePaul's response to COVID-19 page](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE

TEXT PRECEDED BY READ OR WATCH ARE DUE THE FOLLOWING WEEK UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

CONTENT WARNING: We will be watching a wide variety of films covering a myriad of topics, some that may be difficult to watch for some viewers. Content warnings for particularly difficult texts will be marked, but a general content warning for all course content is warranted here.

WEEK 1 | COURSE INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS FILM PRODUCTION? (01/08)

Syllabus Review & Introductions. Production 101. Who does what? A brief intro to Creative Development.

- WATCH: ☐ VICE (2018) - NETFLIX
- The Script, One Liner & Day Out of Days & Shooting Schedule are available on D2L - look them over after watching
- READ: ☐ The Five Scripts on D2L (you can skim)
- Dollars by Gabe Llanas
 - Mothers in Mourning by Vanessa Benton
 - Her Garden by Will Cruitt
 - Someplace Warm by Jewells Santos, Delia Van Praag, Linh Tran
 - Dejected Trollop by Cassie Llanas
- SUBMIT: ☐ Your script preferences (1-5, 1 being your #1 choice, #5 being your last choice)
- DUE: Monday 01/15 @ 11:59P on D2L
- ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: VICE (300 words)
- DUE: SUNDAY 01/21 @ 11:59P on D2L
- ☐ 2 Response Posts RE: VICE (250 words/post)
- DUE: MONDAY 01/22 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 2 | MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY - NO CLASS (01/15)

WEEK 3 | FROM DEVELOPMENT TO PRODUCTION (01/22)

From Script to Schedule. How to break down a script and figure out your schedule. Introducing the group project & assigning groups.

- WATCH: ☐ Clerks (1994) | D2L
- SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: Clerks (300 words)
- DUE: SUNDAY 01/28 @ 11:59P on D2L
- ☐ 2 Response Posts RE: VICE (250 words/post)
- DUE: MONDAY 01/29 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 4 | FILMMAKING ON A BUDGET & PREPRODUCTION (01/29)

The magical mysteries of budgeting. What your film needs (insurance, cast, crew, etc) and how to make it happen. Once you get the money, what now?

IN-CLASS GROUP WORK

WATCH: ☐ The Blair Witch Project - D2L

☐ The Curse of the Blair Witch - D2L

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: The Blair Witch Project (300 words)
◦ DUE: SUNDAY 02/04 @ 11:59P on D2L

☐ 2 Response Posts RE: The Blair Witch Project (250 words/post)
◦ DUE: MONDAY 02/05 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 5 | SAG, CASTING, AND ALL THAT PAPERWORK (02/05)

Finding the right talent, working with SAG, working with agents & managers, Deal Memos & Contracts, Cast Scheduling and Exhibit G's

IN-CLASS GROUP WORK (time permitting)

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Group Pitch Packet

◦ DUE: MONDAY 02/12 @ 5:30P on D2L

WEEK 6 | GROUP PRESENTATIONS & MOVING FROM PRE-PRODUCTION TO PRODUCTION (02/12)

Group Pitch Packet Presentations (15 minutes each per group) and we're starting promptly at 5:45P - ARRIVE EARLY

Moving from Pre-Production to Production. The first day of filming and how to read all the paperwork that comes with it: Call Sheets, Production Reports, Day Files, Exhibit G's

WATCH: ☐ X (2022) | D2L

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: X (300 words)
◦ DUE: SUNDAY 02/18 @ 11:59P on D2L

☐ 2 Response Posts RE: X (250 words/post)
◦ DUE: MONDAY 02/19 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 7 | SAFETY ON SET (02/19)

Accidents happen on set all the time, even if the production did everything they could to prepare. How do productions prep for stunt work? Why does it matter?

IN-CLASS GROUP WORK (time permitting)

WATCH: ☐ Y Tu Mamá También (2001) | D2L

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: Y Tu Mamá También (300 words)
◦ DUE: SUNDAY 02/25 @ 11:59P on D2L

☐ 2 Response Posts RE: Y Tu Mamá También (250 words/post)
◦ DUE: MONDAY 02/26 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 8 | LOCATIONS & UNIONS (02/26)

Scouting for the perfect spot and location agreements. Working with vendors and navigating unions.

GUEST SPEAKER: Gabriel Llanas, Co-Executive Producer (National Treasure, Supergirl, Party of Five, Grey's Anatomy, Private Practice)

IN-CLASS SCREENING: ☐ Avatar the Last Airbender | Season 1 Episode 1 (Netflix)

☐ Clips from SuperGirl | Various (Netflix)

WATCH: ☐ Real Women Have Curves(2002) | D2L

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Discussion Post RE: Real Women Have Curves (300 words)

◦ DUE: SUNDAY 03/03 @ 11:59P on D2L

☐ 2 Response Posts RE: Real Women Have Curves (250 words/post)

◦ DUE: MONDAY 03/04 @ 5:45P on D2L

WEEK 9 | WRAP, POST PRODUCTION & LEGAL (03/04)

Now that a feature is filmed, there's still at least a few months worth of work before anyone will see it on screen. Scheduling for post production, finding the right sound, and navigating the complex copyright/licensing world.

IN-CLASS GROUP WORK (time permitting)

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Group Pitch Packet

◦ DUE: MONDAY 02/12 @ 5:30P on D2L

WEEK 10 | GROUP MEETINGS W/ ME (03/11)

Group Check-ins with me on ZOOM

SUBMIT: ☐ 1 Final Group Production Binder/Presentation

◦ DUE: MONDAY 03/18 @ TBD on D2L

WEEK 11 | FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS (03/18)

TIME: TBD

LOCATION: Daley, 209

DUE: At start of final

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 this course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

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>

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

This class is rooted in an anti-racist, queer, and intersectional feminist ethos. It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the multitude of lived experiences that students bring to class be viewed as a resource, strength, and source of joy. In all of my courses, I strive to include texts by/for/about marginalized creators and theorists. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. Sometimes the topics that we cover in class are challenging, not just intellectually but emotionally. While I expect there to be rigorous discussion and even disagreement in our class discussions, I ask that you engage in discussion with care and honor for the other members in the classroom. I am open to having difficult conversations, and I strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives and protects those of us with marginalized identities from harm. Please note: There is a big difference between difficult conversations, which involve exploration, questioning, listening, curiosity, and growth, and social violence, which involves the routine presentation or defense of hateful sentiments, resulting in pain, shame, or fear. If you are prone to making socially violent statements, this is not the course for you. Socially violent behavior will be dealt with via discussions with the professor or dean, or possibly, failure of the course. If, at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via e-mail or during office hours.

TRIGGER WARNINGS

Learning is uncomfortable. Because this class focuses on rectifying historic harms in media representation, many of our course texts (screenings) will deal with the legacy of sexism, racism, and other forms of social violence. Content warnings for particularly difficult texts will be marked, and I will do my best to foster a classroom in which we can relate courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week. This is a chance for growth. Film can be transformative and cathartic. However, it can also bring up past trauma. We will discuss these topics courageously, respectfully, and honestly as equals. If you ever need to step out, due to something that happens externally or internally at class, go ahead, but you will be expected to take responsibility for missed work and schedule a time to propose an alternative way to engage with the course material.

YOUR NAME & 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 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: <https://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid332>

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY'S LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred difference tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nation, 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, Pop 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 US 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.

WITHDRAWAL

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<https://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.

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. The form can be accessed at: <https://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.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

The DePaul University Library (<https://library.depaul.edu>) provides access to authoritative information sources, such as scholarly articles, journals, and books, primary sources, and research databases. Research help is available daily in-person and via chat, email, phone, or text. You may also make an appointment (in-person, phone, or Zoom) with a librarian to discuss your research projects.

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.

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>

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.

CENTER FOR 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 can also email the office at csd@depaul.edu.

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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <https://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. 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.

POLICY ON THE USE OF AI- GENERATIVE AI USE PROHIBITED

Generative AI tools are trained on existing texts, algorithms, and models to generate content like writing, images, and videos based on prompts from users. ChatGPT, Midjourney, Google Bard, and DALL-E are examples of generative AI tools. Please refrain from using generative AI in this course for any purpose. We will be developing skills that are important to practice on your own and using generative AI may inhibit development, practice, or understanding of those skills. If you're unsure if a specific tool makes use of AI, or if a specific tool is permitted for use on assignments in this course, please contact me. Attempting to pass off AI-generator work as your own will violate DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy.

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

University Counseling & Psychological Services (UCAPS) helps remove barriers to learning and support academic success by providing free, goal-focused, collaborative, short-term, confidential, individual, and group counseling services for DePaul's students. UCAPS has a diverse multi-disciplinary staff that includes licensed mental health professionals in psychology, counseling, and social work.

Students* can talk to a therapist or schedule a brief screening and consultation appointment in the following ways:

- To speak directly to a therapist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, students should call 773-325-CARE (2273) and Press "1" when prompted.
- To schedule a brief screening and consultation (BSC) appointment, students should call 773-325-CARE (2273) during regular business hours and Press "2" when prompted.
- Students can visit go.depaul.edu/ucaps and click the 'Schedule a Consultation' button to use online scheduling for a Brief Screening & Consultation (BSC) appointment. Online scheduling is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. All BSCs scheduled online are for phone appointments. To schedule an in-person or telehealth BSC, please call 773-325-CARE (2273) and Press "2" when prompted.

*Services are provided based on student eligibility. For full eligibility details please visit go.depaul.edu/ucaps.

SEXUAL & 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 may 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) and/or the Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 312-362-8970 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.