

DC 402
WRITING THE FEATURE I
WINTER 2015 - 2016
Wednesday 5:45 - 9:00 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Gary Novak
Office: CDM 405
Office Hours:
Wed. 4:00 - 5:30 pm
Phone: 312-362-7200
E-mail: gnovak@cim.depaul.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on creating a well-vetted original concept, step outline, and first act for a feature length screenplay. Students will analyze the conventions of plot and character-driven narratives and participation in workshop sessions in an effort to develop their unique voice on the page. This script should be completed, revised and polished in DC 403 and DC 404.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will enhance their knowledge of screenwriting conventions and script analysis through assigned readings and in-class workshops.
- Students will develop a feature length outline that adheres to three-act dramatic structure.
- Students will learn techniques to enhance audience identification for their story.
- Students will complete two drafts of the first act of a feature length screenplay.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Writing Movies for Fun and Profit by Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon, ISBN-10: 1439186766
Additional assigned readings provided by the instructor posted on D2L.

PREREQUISITE:

DC 501 Storytelling for the Screenwriter

COURSE POLICIES:

-Attendance:

Each week's class consists of lectures and screenings; attendance is mandatory. For the purposes of this class an absence is defined as not showing up for class or showing up 15 minutes, or more, late for a class. All absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

-Assignments:

Reading assignments must be completed by the date to which they are assigned in the syllabus. Reasonable deadlines are given for completion for each assignment. Consequently late assignments will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

-Plagiarism:

Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on tests are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you are in doubt about the definitions of plagiarism, consult your student handbook.

-Course Lectures/Reading Assignments:

Lecture presentations will occur weekly. The textbooks offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lecture presentations. The instructor will use both the classroom and the textbooks. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. BOTH SOURCES ARE NEEDED.

-Content Changes:

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

-Sexual Harassment:

The policy as specified in the student handbook will be adhered to in this class.

-Attitude:

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

-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.

-Cell Phones/On Call:

If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.

GRADING:

Class attendance and participation	15%
Assignments	15%
Feature Length Outline	20%
Rough Draft of First Act	20%
Final Draft of First Act	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 in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

COURSE OUTLINE**WEEK ONE**

Course Introduction

Character & Conflict

Assignment: "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit" Chapters 24 and 25, Script Reading – Posted on D2L

WEEK TWO

Structure, Loglines

Assignment: Three Premise Ideas, "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit" Chapters 1-3, Script Reading – Posted on D2L

WEEK THREE

Scenes & Sequences, Pitch Premise Ideas

Assignment: Plot Points Outlines, "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit" Chapter 23, Script Reading – Posted on D2L

WEEK FOUR

Dialogue & Exposition – Plot Point Outline Due

Assignment: Feature Length Outline, "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit" Chapters 6 and 26, Appendix Sample Outlines

WEEK FIVE

Act One, Tone & Voice - Feature Length Outlines Due

*Assignment: Script Pages 1-10
Script Reading – Posted on D2L*

WEEK SIX

Workshop

Assignment: Script Pages 11-20

WEEK SEVEN

Workshop

Assignment: Script Pages 21-30

WEEK EIGHT

Workshop – First Act Due

Assignment: Rewrite First Act

WEEK NINE

Workshop

Assignment: Rewrite First Act

WEEK TEN

Workshop

Assignment: Rewrite First Act

WEEK ELEVEN

Workshop - Final Draft Due

ASSIGNMENTS:

Three Story Ideas

Develop three story ideas to pitch in class on Wednesday, January 20th. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a feature length script for your final project. Each premise should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the Dropbox on D2L.

Plot Points

Develop brief description for your plot points - due Wednesday, January 27th via D2L. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the Dropbox on D2L. Your logline (one sentence description of your script) and plot points should be in the following format:

Logline:

Hook:

Inciting Incident:

1st Act Turning Point:

2nd Act Turning Point:

Climax:

Resolution:

Step Outline

A feature length outline should have anywhere from 50 - 100 scenes depending on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character-driven story/more scenes for plot driven material). It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the length of a feature film. Coming up with 40 scenes or less is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Please make a point to speak with me if you're planning to write an unconventional narrative that will require an unorthodox outline. Each scene of your step outline will contain a slug line for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered, as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene. Additional sample outlines are provided in the appendix of "Writing Movies for Fun and Profit".

Example:

Scene 1: INT. DON CORELONE'S OFFICE - DAY

AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men. Don Corelone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corelone's daughter, is very matter-of-fact/business-like.

General Guidelines

- Use 12 pt. Courier New Font
- Make sure your scene descriptions are in present tense
- Use all CAPS when introducing a new character.

This assignment should be submitted to the Dropbox on D2L before class on Wednesday, February 3rd.

First Act

You are expected to submit the first act of your feature length screenplay (minimum of 30 pages) to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link before class on Wednesday, February 24th. A couple of things to keep in mind, as this assignment is 20% of your final grade:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well.

- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to Syd Field's Screenplay, the scripts we read in class and your instructor for assistance.
- Action description should be lean - only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Your first act must be at least thirty pages, but should not exceed forty pages.
- Ask questions if you need help.
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative - You won't be able to do it in one night.

Final Draft

You are expected to submit your revised first act (minimum of 30 pages) for your final assignment before class on Tuesday, November 26th to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link. A couple of things to keep in mind as this assignment is 30% of your final grade:

- The final version of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort
- You must include a cover page
- Use notes you received from the instructor, script workshops and coverage assignments to craft your revised draft
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again and then proofread it one more time just to be sure
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to the textbook for this class, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance
- Your submission must be at least thirty pages

SCHOOL POLICIES:

- 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.

- Online Instructor Evaluation:

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. Students complete the evaluation online in Campus Connect.

- Email:

Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at Campus Connect is correct.

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/> If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

- 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:

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

- Resources for 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:

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296