

DC 101
SCREENWRITING FOR MAJORS
Spring 2018
Tuesday 1:30 - 4:45 PM

INSTRUCTOR: Gary Novak
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Office Hours: Tue. 11:45 - 1:15 PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces digital cinema majors to dramatic writing for motion pictures. The topics covered include theme, plot, story structure, character, and dialogue. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in visual terms. Students are expected to develop and write a short screenplay. PREREQUISITE(S): None

REQUIRED TEXT:

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard, ISBN-13: 978-0312119089
The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley, ISBN-13: 978-1932907636

SCREENWRITING SOFTWARE:

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a serious career focus on screenwriting, producing, and/or directing. The software is \$99 with a student discount at: <http://www.finaldraft.com/edu>. You can also obtain a free download of the Celtx screenwriting program at: <https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at: <https://storywriter.amazon.com>. All assignments are to be saved as a PDF.

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:

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%
Morning pages/Journal	10%
First Draft of Screenplay	10%
Assignments	25%
Final Draft of Screenplay	40%

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****INTRODUCTION TO COURSE AND REQUIREMENTS**

- Screenwriting vs. traditional writing (novels, plays, etc.).
- Why we need to tell stories.
- Why we write.

KEY TO CREATIVITY

- Right brain versus left brain
- Don't think, don't censor, just do.
- Morning Pages.
- Artist dates.

WRITING WHAT YOU KNOW

- Turning your life experiences into drama.
- Confronting who you are - goals, needs, and desires.
- One true sentence.

Read: Howard – Introduction, Pages 1 - 17

Assignment #1: Buy a notebook and start morning pages. Write at least two pages a day, everyday, from now until end of Week Six. These pages can be about anything. They don't have to be profound or particularly insightful; for that matter, they don't even have to make sense – just write. I won't read what you write in the notebook (unless you want me to); however, I will count the number of pages you write.

Assignment #2: Write about five incidents from your own life that you consider movie moments. This can be either an incident that seems like a scene from a movie or an incident that could be the idea for a movie.

WEEK TWO

CHARACTER

- What defines character?
- Action and character.
- Behavior.
- Environment, as it relates to character.

Read: Howard – Pages 19 - 65

Assignment #3: Writing from an Image. The details for this will be handed out and discussed in class.

Assignment #4: Create a character. Write a character biography for the potential protagonist of your story. Use the in-class discussion and handouts as a guide. Remember, the key to a dimensional character, write in the first person, and in complete sentences. Be as specific as you can – the more details the better. Also, keep in mind that nothing is chiseled in stone.

WEEK THREE

CONFLICT

- Cause and effect and obstacles.
- Change in character.

SCENES

- Defining goals of each scene.
- The function of each scene.
- Beats.

DIALOGUE

- Good and bad dialogue.
- Character voices.
- Ear training.

Read: Howard – Pages 66 - 94

Riley – Introduction, Pages 1 - 28

Assignment #5: Scene Exercise. The details for these scenes will be handed out and discussed in class.

WEEK FOUR

STRUCTURE

- Beginning, middle and end.
- Plot points.
- The pulse of a script.
- The Aristotelian curve.

Assignment #6: Outline a feature film hitting all the major beats and plot points. Follow the format used in the example handed out in class. Record the time into the movie that the major beats occur (the 10's).

WEEK FIVE

SHORTS

- Writing the short.

PREMISE

- Premise/Plot/Theme.
- The unifying element.
- Loglines

WRITING IN VISUAL TERMS

- Metaphor.

TREATMENTS

- Step outlines.

Assignment #7: Write a step outline for your story. You will present your outline to the class next week.

WEEK SIX

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION OF STEP OUTLINES

SCREENPLAY FORMAT

- The method to the madness.
- Script writing software.

Assignment #8: Begin writing your screenplay. The first ten pages are due next week.

WEEK SEVEN

FIRST TEN PAGES OF SCREENPLAY DUE

- Bring five copies.

Assignment #9: Continue writing the first draft.

WEEK EIGHT

FIRST DRAFTS DUE

- Bring five copies.

REVISING/REWRITING

- Getting through writer's block.
- Review of format.

WEEK NINE

WORKSHOP

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

WEEK TEN

WORKSHOP

WEEK ELEVEN

FINAL DRAFT OF SCREENPLAYS ARE DUE

- Your script must be submitted by 6:00 PM on Friday, June 8th.
- No exceptions unless arranged ahead of time.

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