DC 101-101: Screenwriting for Majors
Autumn Quarter 2018
MoWe 11:20am-12:50pm
Location: Levan 305

Instructor Information
Jef Burnham
Email: jburnha1@depaul.edu*
Office: LPC Student Center, Tutoring Room 332
Office Hours: MoWe 1pm-1:45pm (or by appointment)

*If you do not receive a response from me within 24 hours, assume I did not get your email.

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.

Prerequisites: None

Course Outcomes: In addition to completing several writing assignments, students are expected to develop, outline, and write a short screenplay.

Learning Objectives:
Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:
- employ standard screenplay format
- identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- produce original writing projects on a deadline
- revise their writing based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Learning Domain Description
DC 201 (Introduction to Screenwriting) is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts while developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity, come to better understand the original audience that witnessed a work of art and how its meaning and significance changes over time. These courses focus on works of art or literature, however the process of analysis may include social, cultural, and historical issues. Genres covered in this domain include literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music, and theater.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced
  - Articulate and explain the "content" of that work and/or its methodology of production.
- Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
  - How does the 14-line sonnet both enable and inhibit its practitioner, for example?
  - What are the generic expectations of a particular form?
  - How does an artist complicate, enrich, or subvert such expectations?
- Assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
- Contextualize a work of art.
  - Do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre.
  - Contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

Required Textbooks:

1. *Tools of Screenwriting* by David Howard and Edward Mabley [ISBN-10: 0312119089]
2. *The Hollywood Standard* by Christopher Riley [ISBN-10: 1932907637]

Additional required readings will be provided via D2L in PDF format.

Screenwriting Software

You are required to use screenwriting software in this course. Students interested in continuing to develop their screenwriting skills beyond this course may consider purchasing the industry standard Final Draft (available to students at a discounted $129.99 at store.finaldraft.com/final-draft-10-edu-verified.html). Free options for screenwriting software include **Celtx** (celtx.com), **Amazon Storywriter** (storywriter.amazon.com) or **Writerduet** (writerduet.com).

Grading Scale

A	93-100 %
A-	90-92 %
B+	87-89 %
B	84-86 %
B-	80-83 %
C+	77-79%
C	74-76 %
C-	70-73 %
D+	67-69 %
D	60-66 %

Assignments

Scene Writing: Mood & Atmosphere	5 points
Scene Writing: Preparation & Aftermath	5 points
Concepts/Loglines	5 points
In-Class Pitch Exercise	5 points
Draft Pages (Step Outline/One Scene)	15 points
Final Draft Screenplay	25 points
Midterm	20 points
Attendance/Participation	20 points
TOTAL	100 points possible

Scene Writing

Prior to drafting full screenplays, you will write sample scenes according to guidelines provided to you in the assignment sheets on D2L under Content.

1.) Due 1/9 - For the first scene writing exercise, **Mood & Atmosphere**, you will write 3 sample scenes focusing on the visual and aural presentation of a single space in differing genres. **Submit files as PDFs to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder by 10:00am on 9/12.**

2.) Due 1/16 - For **Preparation & Aftermath**, you will write a pair of scenes showing a character preparing for an event and then returning from that event. This assignment will force you to tell a story visually and to convey information about events without showing those events. **Submit files as PDFs to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder by 10:00am on 9/19.**

Concepts/Loglines

You will expand in writing on at least 2 original, narrative film concepts (i.e. no experimental or non-narrative films) for an 8-10 minute film. One of these you will develop into a short film screenplay throughout the rest of the quarter. For each proposed film concept, you will include:

1.) **a single sentence logline relating the core concept of the narrative (in present tense)**, and

2.) **a minimum of one written paragraph indicating the following information about the proposed film**: who the protagonist is, the source/potential of conflict in the story, the film's genre classification (comedy, horror, action, thriller, etc), and any other details necessary to clearly convey your concept.

Files must be uploaded to the corresponding D2L Submissions Folder **in PDF format by 10:00am on 9/26. Also, bring a hard or digital copy to class for workshopping in groups.**

Midterm Exam

The midterm is an **online** exam covering the assigned readings from *The Tools of Screenwriting* and *The Hollywood Standard* through Week Five. It will be taken on your own time outside of class through D2L (under Content>Midterm or More>Quizzes). The exam is timed. You will

have 90 minutes to complete it from the time you begin, and **it must be completed and submitted by 11:59pm on 10/10** in order to receive credit for the assignment.

Draft Pages (Step Outline/One Scene)
This assignment is comprised of two parts:
> 1.) You will expand your film concept into a **Step Outline** written in your chosen screenwriting software. This step outline will elaborate on the content of every scene in your film and must include an ending, even if that ending is likely to change in the future.
> 2.) You will **choose one scene from your Step Outline *for which you plan to include a significant exchange of dialogue* and develop that scene** fully, dialogue and all.
> > [Note: You may of course include dialogue in other scenes, but only one scene needs to be written in its entirety with dialogue.]

The style and formatting of your scene must adhere to the guidelines specified in *The Hollywood Standard* (i.e. written in *present* tense, proper indentation for dialogue, etc.). Only write about what can be seen or heard. Avoid writing about the characters' thoughts or feelings in the direction.

All Draft Pages files must be uploaded to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder **in PDF format by 10:00am on 10/17**.

In-Class Pitch Exercise
Students will be expected to write a two-minute teaser pitch for their films and deliver it in-class on the last day of class (**Monday, 11/12**).

Final Draft Screenplay
Your completed, 8-10 page screenplay must be uploaded to the appropriate D2L Submissions Folder **in PDF format by Monday, 11/19 at 1:45pm.** Scripts must adhere to the guidelines specified in *The Hollywood Standard*.

Notes on the Evaluation of Student Work:
Assignment sheets and grading rubrics according to which each assignment is assessed will be available on D2L under Content. In order to obtain the desired grade on any assignment, students must review and adhere to these guidelines. In general, written work will be evaluated according to the clarity of your writing, adherence to guidelines detailed in assigned textbooks and worksheets, and basic mechanics (i.e. spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Please allow approximately 7-10 days for the return of graded materials.

Class Policies
Attendance/Participation:
Each week's class consists of a combination of lectures, workshops, screenings, and class discussions and/or group exercises. Attendance is mandatory and participation in all discussions/exercises is expected. I assess both the quality and quantity of participation in class to elevate collective learning. Students who are absent obviously cannot participate in class.

For the purposes of this class, an absence is defined as not showing up for class, sleeping in class, or showing up 15 minutes late or more for a class. All absences will result in a deduction of 1 point from your overall Attendance/Participation grade; **if you are absent more than three times, you fail the course**.
> (Note: Excused absences may be obtained *from the Dean of Students Offices* under certain circumstances and given the proper documentation.)

Outside Screenings:
Students are *required* to view two feature films (*Alien* (1979) and *Groundhog Day* (1993)) outside of class for participation in lecture/discussion presentations throughout the quarter. Screenings must be completed on your own time by the date listed in the course schedule.

These films will be made available to you on ColTube in addition to a selection of classic "common ground films" that will be referenced repeatedly throughout the quarter. If you have not seen these common ground films, viewing them earlier in the quarter will help ensure retention of course concepts.
> [DISCLAIMER: *Assigned features include adult language, violence, & sexual content. Also, please inform the instructor if you have photosensitive epilepsy prior to the screenings.*]

Late Work:
Assignments must be completed and uploaded to D2L in PDF format and quizzes completed by the date and time specified in the Class Schedule. **Late written work will receive a 20% grade deduction for each day it is submitted late. Midterms and Final Draft Screenplays, however, must be turned in by the assigned due date/time (the Final Draft deadline marks the official end of the course).** Printed submissions or submissions by email will not be accepted. I also suggest backing up work with a Cloud file storage service, as computers crash.

Technology Statement:
Laptops/tablets may be used during lectures/discussions **ONLY** to take notes.* Also, texting, etc. on your cell phone is not allowed, as it is distracting to your fellow students as well as the instructor. You are asked to keep yours on vibrate and may excuse yourself to the hallway if there is an emergency call you must take. If you are expecting such a call, please let the instructor know in advance.

No technology use of any kind will be allowed during film or clip screenings. Use of technology during screenings may result in you being asked to leave and being marked as absent.
> *If I receive complaints about the distracting nature of your technology use or if you are not paying attention, I will no longer allow your continued use of technology in class.*

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 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. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

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.

If the instructor finds a student has violated the Academic Integrity Policy/plagiarized their work, the student will fail the course, receiving an automatic F grade. (Note: Turnitin is used to check the originality of submissions on D2L.) Actions taken by the instructor in this regard do not preclude the university from taking further action, including dismissal from the university. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could also result in criminal or civil prosecution.

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

> IMPORTANT DATES:
> Sept. 11 by 11:59pm- Last day to add/swap classes
> Sept. 18- Last day to drop classes with no penalty, last day to select pass/fail option
> Oct. 23- Last day to withdraw from classes, receiving a grade of "W"

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: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.
Phone number: (312)362-8002
Fax: (312)362-6544
TTY: (773)325.7296

Class Schedule

Week 1 (9/5): Introductions & What is a Screenplay?
Readings Due
> *Tools of Screenwriting*: About Screenwriting and Basic Storytelling (3-40), Visuals (88-90)
> *The Hollywood Standard*: Script-Typing Software & Proofreading (154-163), Appendix A Sample (166-175)

Assign: 1. **Scene Writing: Mood & Atmosphere** due by 10:00am on 9/12
> 2. [Choose screenwriting software that works for you and find tutorials online. You are responsible for learning how to use your software properly.]

Week 2 (9/10 & 9/12): Character & Exposition / Mood & Atmosphere Workshop
Readings Due
> *Tools of Screenwriting*: Planting & Payoff / Elements of the Future (72-76), Protagonist, Conflict, Obstacles (43-49), Characterization (63-65), Activity and Action (81-83)
> *The Hollywood Standard*: Quick Start Guide & Single-Camera Format (1-27)

Assign: **Scene Writing: Preparation & Aftermath** due by 10:00am on 9/19

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Scene Writing: Mood & Atmosphere (to D2L by 10:00am on 9/12)

Week 3 (9/17 & 9/19): Stakes, Urgency & Obstacles / Preparation & Aftermath Workshop
Reading Due
>*Tools of Screenwriting*: Premise, Main Tension, Theme, Unity (49-59)
>*The Hollywood Standard*: Scene Headings (29-32 & 42-62)

Assign: **Concepts/Loglines** due by 10:00am on 9/26

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Scene Writing: Preparation & Aftermath (to D2L by 10:00am on 9/19)

Week 4 (9/24 & 9/26): Writing the Short Film I / Concepts & Loglines Workshop
Readings Due:
>*Tools of Screenwriting*: Development of the Story (66-68), The Outline and Step Outline/ Plausibility (76-81)
>*The Hollywood Standard*: Direction (63-80)

Assign: **Draft Pages** (Step Outline & One Scene) due by 10:00am on 10/17

ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Concepts/Loglines (due **to D2L by 10:00am on 9/26** & students must bring a hard copy to class for workshopping)

Week 5 (10/1 & 10/3): Writing the Short Film II / Three-Act Structures
Readings Due
>*Tools of Screenwriting*: The Dramatic Scene (91-94)

Assign: **Midterm Exam** (complete on D2L under Content or Quizzes by 11:59pm on 10/10)

Week 6 (10/8 & 10/10): Beats, Scenes, & Sequences / Dramatic Irony & Dialogue
Readings Due
>*Tools of Screenwriting*: Dramatic Irony (68-70), Dialogue (84-87)
>*The Hollywood Standard*: Dialogue (81-102)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Midterm Exam (must be submitted on D2L by 11:59pm on 10/10)

Week 7 (10/15 & 10/17): Genre Writing & *Alien* Discussion / Workshop Draft Pages
Readings Due
    The Hollywood Standard: Special Pages (131-139)

Assign: **Read** *Groundhog Day* Screenplay

Outside Screening Due by 10/15: *Alien* (1979) [Watch it on http://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu]

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Draft Pages (to D2L by 10:00am on 10/17)

Week 8 (10/22 & 10/24): Workshop Draft Pages / Formatting Issues & FAQs

Assign: **Final Draft Screenplay** (due to D2L by Monday, 11/19 at 1:45pm)

Week 9 (10/29 & 10/31): Workshop Draft Pages / *Groundhog Day* Script-to-Screen Analysis
Readings Due: *Groundhog Day* Screenplay

Outside Screening Due by 10/31: *Groundhog Day* (1993) [Watch it on coltube.cdm.depaul.edu]

Week 10 (11/5 & 11/7): *Groundhog Day* Script-to-Screen Analysis / Rewriting & Packaging
Reading Due
    Tools of Screenwriting: Rewriting (95-97)
    The Hollywood Standard: revisit Proofreading (160-163)

Week 11 (11/12): Pitches
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Pitches (delivered in class)

FINAL DRAFT SCREENPLAY DUE: Upload to D2L by Monday, 11/19 at 1:45pm