

DC 401-701 REWRITING THE FEATURE

Instructor: Lee Madsen

Monday: 5:45PM to 9PM

14 E. Jackson Room 207

Office: CDM 434 Monday 1-5:30PM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class focuses on rewriting the feature film screenplay. Through group workshops and course discussions, students will learn how to identify missteps in their writing and develop a practical means to efficiently address these issues moving forward. Student must possess a complete feature length script in order to enroll in the course.

This class focuses on practical ways to approach the rewriting process for feature film screenplays. Through group workshops and assignments, students isolate issues with plot, character development, dialogue and pacing in their script and work on addressing them in a full draft rewrite.

COURSE OUTCOMES: Students will complete a rewrite plan and a full rewrite of an existing original feature screenplay.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Students will enhance their knowledge of screenwriting conventions and script analysis through assigned readings and in-class workshops.
- Students will learn rewriting strategies and techniques. Students will devise a detailed plan for a comprehensive rewrite.
- Students will evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback. Organize and assess script feedback from their peers and the professor.
- Students will complete a thorough rewrite of a feature length screenplay at a professional pace.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

"Screenwriting is Rewriting: The Art and Craft of Professional Revision" by Jack Epps Jr. ISBN-10: 1628927402

Additional assigned readings provided by the instructor posted on D2L.

September 13, 2017 - 8:00 AM Deadline to add classes to AQ2017 schedule

September 19, 2017 - Last day to drop AQ2017 classes with no penalty
(100% refund of tuition if applicable and no grade on transcript)

Prerequisite: None

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. 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 un-disruptive 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%

Logline/Plot Points/Self-Critique 5%

Character Bio 5%

Script Feedback 5%

Note Overview 10%

Rewrite Plan 10%

Rewritten Draft of Screenplay 50%

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 - Monday, Sept. 10th

Lecture: Course Introduction, The Sequence Approach

Assignment: Submit your current draft via D2L. Read Group Screenplays.

Assignment: Loglines & Plot Points & Self-Critique.

Assignment: Text Reading Chapter 5

WEEK TWO - Monday, Sept. 17th

Lecture: Interpreting Feedback, Character Bio

Workshop: Group Feedback, Loglines & Plot Points

Assignment: Notes Overview, Character Bio

Assignment: Text Reading Chapter 1

WEEK THREE - Monday Sept. 24th

Lecture: Sequence One

Workshop: Notes Overview, Character Bio

Assignment: Rewrite pages 1-10 (Sequence 1)

Assignment: Text Reading Chapters 2 & 3

WEEK FOUR - Monday Oct. 1st

Lecture: Sequence 2

Workshop: Pages 1-10 (Sequence 1)

Assignment: Text Reading Chapter 4 & 6

Assignment: Pages 10-20 (Sequence 2)

WEEK FIVE - Monday Oct. 8th

Lecture: Subplots, Sequence 3

Workshop: Page 11-20 (Sequence 2)

Assignment: Text Reading Chapter 7

Assignment: Page 20-30 (Sequence 3)

WEEK SIX - Monday Oct. 15th

Lecture: Midpoint, Sequence 4

Workshop: Workshop Sequence 3

Assignment: Text Reading Chapters 8 & 9

Assignment: Pages 30-40 (Sequence 4)

WEEK SEVEN - Monday Oct. 22nd

Lecture: Theme, Sequence 5

Workshop: Sequence 4

Assignment: Text Reading Chapters 10-13

Assignment: Pages 40-50 (Sequence 5)

Assignment: Rewrite Plan (Notes Overview part II)

WEEK EIGHT - Monday Oct. 29th

Lecture: Complications, Sequence 6

Workshop: Sequence 5

Assignment: Text Reading Chapters 15-19

Assignment: Pages 60-70 (Sequence 6)

WEEK NINE - Monday Nov. 5th

Lecture: Dialogue, Sequence 7

Workshop: Sequence 6

Assignment: Text Reading Chapters 20-23

Assignment: Pages 70-80 (Sequence 7)

WEEK TEN - Monday Nov. 12th

Lecture: The Climax, Sequence 8

Workshop: Sequence 7

Assignment: Pages 80-90 (Sequence 8 - The Finale)

WEEK ELEVEN - Monday Nov. 19th (Times TBA)

Final Draft Due

Workshop: Sequence 8

ASSIGNMENTS:

Logline & Plot Points & Self-Critique

Develop brief description for your plot points - due Sunday, Sept. 16th. 11PM.

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:

Midpoint

2nd Act Turning Point:

Climax:

Resolution:

In addition, critique your screenplay. What's your take on the current draft?

Include in the critique the following:

- Your impulse to write the story. (The reason you wanted to write this story, the origin of the idea, what drew you to the story, what hooked you into the story.)
- The strengths of the draft in your opinion.
- The weaknesses of the draft in your opinion.
- What do you want to focus on in this draft? What do you want to accomplish with this re-write?

There is no minimum or maximum page requirement – whatever it takes.

Character Biography

Write a character biography for the protagonist of your story - Due by Noon on Monday, Sept. 24th. Focus on the character's backstory. Use the in-class discussion as a guide. Remember, the key to a dimensional character, write in the first person, as if he or she is talking to the reader. Be as specific as you can – the more details the better. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the Dropbox on D2L.

Note Overview

Complete the Note Overview template (available to download on D2L) using feedback on your feature length screenplay from the instructor, workshop, and self-evaluation. These vetted concerns should be listed as bullet points under each category heading. Feel free to edit the headings to align with the notes you received and order them by severity. It is important to do a thorough job on this, as the overview will act as the foundation for your rewrite plan. You are expected to submit a PDF copy of the note overview to the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L before class on Monday, Sept. 24th.

Rewrite Plan (Note Overview Part II)

Complete the Rewrite Plan template (available to download on D2L). Each chart heading is broken into two categories (Concerns/Solutions). The concerns should be taken from your Note Overview assignment, broken into the appropriate categories, and then order by severity. Across from each concern, list possible solutions. The length of your Rewrite Plan will depend on the amount of work that needs to be done. Keep the cause-and-effect nature of cinematic storytelling in mind. You must consider the effect these alterations will have on the rest of the narrative. It is important to do a thorough job on this overview, as it will act as the foundation for your feature length rewrite. Please bring enough copies of this assignment for your group members to review in-class and submit a PDF copy to the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L before class on October, 29th.

Final Draft

You are expected to submit your revised draft (minimum of 90 pages) on Monday, Nov. 19th to the Submissions on D2L. A couple of things to keep in mind, as this assignment is 50% of your final grade:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Action description should be lean - only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, script workshops and coverage assignments to craft your revised draft

- The final version of your script should read as a marked improvement over your first effort
- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to Syd Field's Screenplay or The Hollywood Standard, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well
- You must include a cover page
- Your submission must be at least ninety 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.

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