

## **DC201 Introduction to Screenwriting**

Fall Quarter 2018

Tues/Thurs, 1:00-2:30pm, Levan 304 and online

Instructor: Kevin Endres

Office: STDC332

Office hours: 5:00-6:30 pm, Tuesdays, via Blue Star appointments

Email: [kendres@depaul.edu](mailto:kendres@depaul.edu)

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to and overview of the elements of theme, plot, character, and dialogue in dramatic writing for cinema. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in terms of action and the reality of characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Development of synopsis, treatment and drafts for a short theatrical screenplay: theme, plot, character, mise-en-scene and utilization of cinematic elements.

**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 Objectives**

After successful completion of this course students will:

- have a fundamental understanding of the structure of a typical Three-Act feature length screenplay
- be able to write a logline and step outline for a short screenplay
- be introduced to visual storytelling through the screenplay form
- see how key incidents, story progressions, conflict and resolution, and character arcs affect a film

Learning objectives will be met through creative writing assignments and analysis of produced scripts. In addition, students will write and revise a 15 page screenplay, satisfying the Arts and Literature domain writing requirement.

## **Required Textbooks and materials**

*Tools of Screenwriting* by Howard and Mabley

Other readings assigned/distributed on D2L

## **Suggested Reading:**

*The Hollywood Standard* by Chris Riley

*Several Short Sentences About Writing* by Verlyn Klinkenborg

*The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri

## **Software needed:**

Celtx – free download via D2L or free cloud account (or another screenwriting program such as Writer Duet, which is browser based)

## **Grading**

Attendance and participation 15%

First Draft of Screenplay 10%

Midterm 15%

Assignments 1-6 35%

Final Script 25%

A = 100-93 A- = 92-90

B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83

B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77

C = 76-73 C- = 72-70

D+ = 69-67 D = 66-60

F = 59-0

Standards for Achievement:

Grade A:

Student performs in an outstanding way. Student exhibits achievement and craftsmanship in all work. Creative criteria are exceeded and student challenges him/herself in project development. Student exhibits commitment to expanding ideas, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade B:

Student performs beyond the requirement of the project. Student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship. A creative criterion is exceeded. Student exhibits above average interest in expanding ideas, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade C:

Criteria of assignment are met, and all requirements are fulfilled. Student shows average quality work and minimum time and effort on projects. Student shows moderate interest.

Grade D:

Student performance is uneven and below average. Requirements for projects are only partially fulfilled. Minimal interest is shown and attendance, participation and involvement are inadequate.

Grade F

Student fails to meet minimum course requirements and shows no interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance is inadequate.

**Assignments and Exercises** – Class work and assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. All assignments are due 15 minutes before the beginning of class; if you come in late with an assignment it will not be accepted. Submission folders on D2L close automatically so you will not be able to turn work in late.

I do not accept any assignments by email. Submitting to D2L is the only way to get credit for your work.

**D2L** - We use D2L for pretty much everything in this class. In an attempt to save some trees and cash, assignments will be turned in via D2L except where noted. If you are unfamiliar with D2L please see me after class. In some cases you must print and bring in an assignment. These are noted on the syllabus.

### **Film screenings**

All films that you will need to watch as homework will be posted on Panopto, DePaul's university-wide streaming platform. You may watch the films in their entirety there after logging in with your CampusConnect credentials. You are welcome to find the films at the library or elsewhere online if desired.

You can access Panopto via D2L. Navigate to the Content page, and find the "Panopto screenings" tab. Click the link there and log in if prompted.

**Back up your work:** Failure of computer software and or hardware will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance for late projects or incomplete grades so back up your work daily. I recommend automatic backup services like BackBlaze or CrashPlan, though they are not required for this class.

**Course Lectures/Reading Assignments** – The assigned readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lectures. Lectures will introduce material not available in the readings, and the readings will explore concepts not mentioned in class. It is not my intention to overwhelm you with reading, but rather to use the textbook as a way to support and reinforce the concepts we learn in class. I will also be adding supplemental readings throughout the quarter that are not outlined in the syllabus.

**Content Changes** – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. All updates to the syllabus will be announced on D2L, and updated syllabus files will be available for download there.

Last day to withdraw (without penalty): 9/18

Last day to withdraw (with penalty): 10/23

### **Class 1 -- 9/6**

Introductions, Why we tell stories, What to write about, Screenwriting vs. novels and plays, Final Script guidelines (very briefly), Intro to Loglines

**ASSIGNMENT 1** (4%): Write 3 loglines for potential final short scripts for this class.

**DUE: 9/13** -- be prepared to pitch them to the class

**FORMAT:** Uploaded to D2L (bring paper copy if you have trouble reading projectors)

**WATCH:** Star Wars (Episode IV--A New Hope--The Original Movie) if you haven't seen it. Re-watch it if it has been a while. I will make the film available via Panopto.

**READ:** Pg 1-18

### **Class 2 -- 9/11**

Story game, What is a Screenplay?, Three act structure, The Subject, Plot points introduced

**ASSIGNMENT 2** (6%): 3-Act Structure--3 Act Structure breakdown. Watch one of the following movies (if you haven't seen any before or if you haven't seen any recently): Toy Story, Shrek, Indiana Jones, or Chinatown. They're all available on Panopto. Identify the following: set-up, protagonist and super objective, inciting incident, first plot point, main conflict, at least three obstacles, second plot point, resolution. Write 1-2 sentences explaining the set-up, main conflict, resolution, and supporting your choice for the first plot point and second plot point.

**DUE: 9/18**

**FORMAT:** Uploaded to D2L

**READ:** Pg 19-29

### **Class 3 -- 9/13**

Take The Oath, read loglines and choose which story you will develop for you final project

### **Class 4 -- 9/18**

Story and Character, Character Arcs, Build a character exercise, Character intro examples

**ASSIGNMENT 3** (3%): Find two (2) great character intros from produced screenplays. You will not write these; you just need to copy and paste them from a screenplay.

**DUE: 9/25**

**FORMAT:** Typed, **PRINTED** and brought to class, and uploaded to D2L

Online script resources:

<http://www.imsdb.com/>

<http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/dircut.html>

<http://www.simplyscripts.com/>

Google

D2L script bank (my least favorite), bottom of D2L Content page

**READ:** Pg 30-40

**READ:** Assigned script excerpt

### **Class 5 -- 9/20**

Read Character intros, Endings and Beginnings, Watch The Lunch Date and discuss

**ASSIGNMENT 4** (6%): Character Bio, Craft a character bio for your protagonist. Write two to three pages, double spaced, creating your character's backstory. Anything that's important for you as the writer to know about the character is fair game. Who is he/she? How old? Where from? Aspirations? Job? Relationships? Embarrassing stories? Traumas? Fears? Etc. Think carefully about this assignment. This is one of your best windows into your character's mind.

**DUE: 9/27**

**FORMAT:** Typed, uploaded to D2L

**READ:** Pg 41-59

### **Class 6 -- 9/25**

Script Excerpt questions, Treatments, Step Outlines, Plot Points review, Building the Story

**ASSIGNMENT 5** (7%): Write a step outline of your final project

**DUE: 10/2**

**FORMAT:** Uploaded to D2L (bring paper copy if you have trouble reading projectors)

### **Class 7 -- 9/27**

Scenes, Sequences

### **Class 8 -- 10/2**

Presentation/discussion of Step Outlines

### **Class 9 -- 10/4**

Finish presentation/discussion of Step Outlines, Short film screening and discussion if time allows

### **Class 10 -- 10/9**

The Screenplay format, Software Celtx (and WriterDuet, etc), Genre

**ASSIGNMENT 6** (9%): Genre assignment—Your scene is: A man and a woman arrive separately to a bookstore. She is concealing something in her clothing. He has a secret.

Your assignment is to write 2 different versions of that scene, 2-4 pages each, with each version being in a different genre. Use proper screenplay format. Include a clear beginning middle and end to the scene (think of it as a very short film). Choose 2 from the following genres:

- a. An Action film
- b. A Drama
- c. A Romantic Comedy
- d. A Mystery or Thriller
- e. A Sci-fi film

**DUE: 10/23**

**FORMAT: PRINTED**, brought to class, and uploaded to D2L (D2L only for onliners)

**Class 11 -- 10/11**

Dialogue -- good and bad, Efficiency of words, Exposition -- good and bad

**READ:** Pg 60-98

**Class 12 -- 10/16**

Midterm Review, Watch short films, discuss

**ASSIGNMENTS:** study for the test, continue working on Assignment 6

**Class 13 -- 10/18**

Midterm (15%)

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Begin writing your first draft of your final screenplays (10%). First 5 pages are due 10/30, second 5 pages due 11/1, completed first draft due 11/6

**DUE: 11/6**

**FORMAT:** PDF, Uploaded to D2L

**Class 14 -- 10/23**

Business, Copyright, Pitching, Development, Watch short film to inspire you, Sign up for one-on-one conferences, Volunteer for first table read

I am asking for one volunteer to upload their completed first draft before class on 11/1 for a sample table read and critique. You get the most feedback and you're done early.

**Class 15 -- 10/25**

Table read selected genre scenes, give feedback/criticism

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Continue writing your final screenplays. First five pages **due 10/30**, Second 5 pages **due 11/1**, all 15 pages **due 11/6**

**FORMAT:** PDF, Uploaded to D2L

**Class 16 -- 10/30**

**NO FORMAL CLASS** -- One-on-one conferences instead

**Class 17 -- 11/1**

Table read a volunteer's first draft

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Complete first draft of your screenplay **DUE 11/6**

**Class 18 -- 11/6 -- do not be absent**

Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Start revising first drafts

**Class 19 -- 11/8 -- do not be absent**

Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Revise first drafts

**Class 20 -- 11/13 -- do not be absent**

Table reading and critique of selected screenplays as a class

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Revise first drafts, into final drafts

**DUE: 11/16 at 11:59pm**

**FORMAT:** uploaded to D2L

**Final Draft due November 16th at 11:59pm--worth 25% of your grade**

### **My Course Policies**

**Attendance** – Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15 minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, *make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent*. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

The only way to get an excused absence is through the Dean of Students Office. You can read about the procedures for getting an excused absence at <http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence-notification.aspx>

Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 6 classes will automatically fail. However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don't want your evil germs. Please email me at

kendres@depaul.edu if you are going to miss class and make arrangements to have the absence documented by the Dean of Students Office.

**\*\*Special attendance policy for classes on 11/6, 11/8, and 11/13\*\*** -- If you miss class on one of these days your final draft of your script will be docked **15 points** for each day you miss. Do not miss class on these three days.

**Class Participation**—Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions, critique other people's work, and participate in workshops. We are a community. We're all here to support each other. Remember, this is your class, you will get out of it what you put into it.

Be advised that many of the assignments that you write for this class, with the exception of your journals, will be read aloud. My intention is not to embarrass anyone, but rather to have a fostering and openly creative environment where people are comfortable sharing their work.

**Cell Phones**—Use of cell phones in the class is prohibited. Please turn your phone off before entering class. Mistakes will happen but repeated failure to turn your phone off will result in a lowered grade for the class. Absolutely no texting in class!

**Laptops**—No laptops in class. Unless you have a university verified need for a computer in class, please keep them in your bags. No exceptions.

**Special Accommodations:** If you need any special considerations please see me after class or send me an email before the start of the second class period.

**Respect** — Please be respectful of everyone's opinions, tastes, and beliefs. We do not have to agree on everything but we should be able to discuss anything civilly. This is not the comments section on YouTube.

Please respect the films we'll watch and the scripts we'll read, some of which will have mature themes and situations. During screenings, please do not talk and keep all comments/observations to yourself.

### **Course Policies** (from the university)

#### **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.

### **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: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544