

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 308/408: Writing on Assignment

Winter 2019

Wednesday 5:45-9:00 PM, Lewis Center 1515

Professor Brad Riddell: brad.riddell@depaul.edu, 312-362-5212

Office Hours: Tues. 3-5:00 PM (via Zoom), W: 9:00AM-1:00 PM, and by appointment.

Course Description:

Modeled after professional writing assignments, this advanced course challenges students to complete a feature length screenplay within specific parameters provided by the instructor in ten weeks. Lectures and strict weekly page submission deadlines provide a practical framework on how to write quickly without sacrificing quality. Constructive analysis will be used in discussing produced scripts, weekly assignments and group workshops to reveal the writer's unique voice and perspective.

Course Outcomes:

A completed feature screenplay.

Learning Objectives:

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

- create original content within the boundaries of a professional writing assignment
- demonstrate the ability to write at a professional pace
- utilize the sequence approach to create consistent tension and effective story organization
- assess and then apply peer and instructor feedback to revise their screenplays

Required Textbooks:

Any reading material will be provided.

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and submissions can be found there, as well as video-recorded lectures and discussions.

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 may also obtain a 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 delivered in PDF.**

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time, even if your group is not workshopping. Each unexcused absence beyond the first equates to a loss of ten points from the student's final score.

Assignments:

The class will break into groups to minimize the reading load, and to make sure everyone receives an equal amount of feedback. Screenwriting assignments are to be submitted to D2L on Mondays by NOON. Students are expected to have read and annotated the work submitted by their classmates each week BEFORE class. Your weekly participation grade will be determined by your demonstrated preparation and consistent conversation in class.

Late work will not be accepted without a valid excuse, and out of fairness to all, it cannot be workshopped in class.

Pitch:	10 Points
Sequence Breakdown:	10 Points
First Act:	20 Points
Midpoint:	20 Points
End of Act two:	20 Points
Third Act:	<u>20 Points</u>
	100 Total

Grading:

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.

Assignments must demonstrate professionalism and investment in the material, showcase techniques and ideas discussed in class, offer a unique take with a clear voice, and demonstrate proper grammar, format, and style.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: January 9

Course Intro and Expectations. What does Writing on Assignment mean? Assignments distributed. Five minute pitches due January 16th.

Week 2: January 16

Project pitches for both groups. Discuss sequence breakdowns.

Week 3: January 23

Group A Sequence breakdowns due on D2L January 21st. Discuss making it personal.

Week 4: January 30

Group B Sequence breakdowns due on D2L January 28th. Discuss Act One.

Week 5: February 6

Group A First Act due on D2L on February 4th. Discuss time management + deadlines.

Week 6: February 13

Group B First Act due on D2L on February 11th. Review Act 2-A.

Week 7: February 20

Group A to midpoint due on D2L on February 18th. Discuss scene work in a first draft.

Week 8: February 27

Group B to midpoint due on D2L on February 25th. Review Act 2-B.

Week 9: March 6

Group A end of second act due on D2L on March 4th. Discuss personal process and dealing with development.

Week 10: March 13

Group B end of second act due on D2L on March 11th. Review Act Three.

Third act due for both groups March 20th on D2L by midnight.

Laptops/Cell Phones:

Laptops may remain open during lectures and discussions. If the instructor suspects a student of using the laptop for applications not related to participating in class, he/she may lose privileges. Cell Phone usage will be permitted during class breaks.

Decorum and 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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Obvious inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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 students will be notified via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed

against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
 Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
 Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
 Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss

the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM.

All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form. By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor. An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

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:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677