

DC 304 Topics in Screenwriting: Developing the Pitch

When: Tuesday · 5:45pm – 9:00pm
Where: Daley Building / RM 209 / Loop Campus

Instructor: Matt Quinn · mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu · 312-362-5807 · CDM 509
Office hours: Monday / Thursday · 11:15am – 1:15pm / Tuesday · 11:15am – 5:30pm

Summary of Course

Advanced study in screenwriting focusing on a specific genre each quarter such as: Science Fiction, Film Noir, Comedy, Action-Adventure, Nonfiction, etc.

This course asks students to create an inventory of new material for future writing projects by developing and pitching stories for independent and studio films, as well as cable, streaming, and network television series. Through lectures, guest speakers, and workshop exercises, we will analyze the vital role of pitching in the entertainment industry, and build a foundation to help students master professional pitching techniques.

Course Objectives

- Describe the genres and styles of projects that speak to and inspire them
- Discuss how they wish to be seen as content creators by industry professionals
- Analyze story ideas to determine market viability and depth of personal interest
- Practice the pitch development process for a set of several diverse projects
- Create one-page story treatments that are ready to move to the outline phase

Prerequisites

None

Grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Writer's Statement	5%
OWA Story Package	5%
Story Packages	70%
Story Package Rewrite	10%

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.

Textbooks

"Good in a Room" by Stephanie Palmer ISBN-10: 1400156726 (Recommended)
Additional assigned readings provided by the instructor

Attendance

Attendance and participation is mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up to class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction in your overall grade.

D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:
<https://login.depaul.edu/ldap/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fd2l.depaul.edu%2fd2l%2fcustom%2fcas> and enter using your campus connect logon and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

Group Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, every student will be assigned to one of four groups: Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, or Group 4. A segment of each class will focus on a discussion of that week's group writing assignment and then breaking off into your assigned group to workshop each student's submission for the week.

Story Package assignments must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm every Sunday for the duration of the course. No late assignments will be accepted.

You are required to login to D2L and read your fellow group member's submissions and come prepared to provide feedback during workshop – No exceptions.

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 8th

Lecture: Course Intro, Developing the Cinematic Concept
Assignment: Screenwriter's Statement, OWA Script Reading, Good in a Room

Week 2 – January 15th

Lecture: Pitching Basics, Teaser Pitch, One Sheets
Assignment: OWA Story Package

Week 3 – January 22nd

Lecture: Film Market, IP Properties
Group 1
Assignment: Feature IP Story Package

Week 4 – January 29th

Lecture: Concept to Script – High Concept Film
Group 2

Assignment: Feature High Concept Story Package

Week 5 – February 5th

Lecture: Concept to Script – Character Driven Film
Group 3

Assignments: Feature Character Driven Story Package

Week 6 – February 12th

Lecture: Television Market, TV Series Reboot
Group 4

Assignments: TV Series Brand Story Package

Week 7 – February 19th

Lecture: Concept to Script – TV Branding
Group 1

Assignments: TV Series Format Story Package

Week 8 – February 26th

Lecture: Concept to Script – TV Limited Series
Group 2

Assignments: TV Series Ensemble Story Package

Week 9 – March 5th

Lecture: Concept to Script - The Web Series
Group 3

Assignments: Web Series Story Package

Week 10 – March 12th

Lecture: Rewriting the Concept
Group 4

Assignments: Story Package Rewrite

Assignments**Writer's Statement (5% of final grade)**

The aim of the Writer's Statement is to articulate the purpose, philosophy and inspiration of your creative work. Questions to consider when crafting your statement:

- What genres and styles of projects inspire you?
- How do you wish to be seen as a content creator by industry professionals?
- What recurring storylines and themes are exhibited in your work?
- Who is your audience and why does your work appeal to that audience?

The Writer's Statement should be one page single-spaced. It is worth a total of 5 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L

Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Sunday, January 13th.

OWA Story Package (5% of final grade)

The OWA (Open Writing Assignment) Story Package is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a teaser pitch on an assigned screenplay that focuses on a personal connection, characters, plot overview, etc. There are no rules or expected format for the pitch other than making a strong attempt as a team to "sell" your assigned script within the allotted time frame. The pitch will be presented in-class on Tuesday, January 22nd.
- One Sheet – This document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Sunday, January 27th.

Story Packages (70% of final grade)

There are seven story package assignments due in this course: 3 Features, 3 TV Series, and 1 Web Series. Each Story Package assignment is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a teaser pitch that focuses on a personal connection, characters, plot overview, etc. There are no rules or expected format for the pitch other than making a strong attempt as a team to "sell" your assigned script within the allotted time frame.
- One Sheet – This document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm every Sunday for the duration of the course.

Specific details and due dates for each Story Package can be viewed on the corresponding D2L Submission links for the assignments.

Story Package Rewrite (10% of final grade)

Choose one of the Story Packages you created for the course and develop a completely new take on the material. Every narrative element should be reevaluated, while keeping the core idea of the concept intact. The Story Package Rewrite is worth a total of 10 points and

is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a revised teaser pitch that focuses on a personal connection, characters, plot overview, etc. for your original story. There are no rules or expected format for the pitch other than making a strong attempt as a team to "sell" your story within the allotted time frame. This teaser pitch will be presented during an individual meeting with the instructor the week of March 12th.
- One Sheet – This revised document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 5:45pm on Tuesday, March 19th.

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

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.

Changes to the 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

Instructor and 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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

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/>.

Academic Policies

This course 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 Grades

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. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

DePaul University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational and extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) offers reasonable academic accommodations and services to support our students. We also serve as a resource to the many university departments that have a responsibility to accommodate students.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.