

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

SCWR 400-702: Foundations of Screenwriting

Fall 2019

Wednesday 5:45 – 9:00PM

14 E. Jackson, Room 209 (Loop campus)

Instructor: Fatou Samba

Office: CDM 462

Office Hours: Monday 3:00-4:30pm, Wednesday 3:30-5:00pm

If students can't come to my office, I can make myself available via the phone or video conference

Phone: 312-362-1466

Email: fsamba@depaul.edu

Course Description:

Students begin their screenwriting journey with a strong foundation in the basic building blocks of solid, engaging storytelling. Students will mine their own lives in order to create memorable stories, characters, and settings. Additionally, students will learn basic screenwriting skills such as character development, constructing atmosphere, and the fundamental components of a scene.

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
- assess their own work and that of their peers

Required Software:

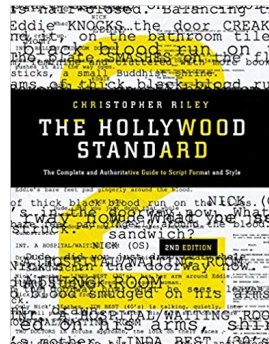
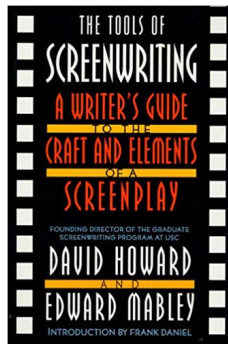
Final Draft or comparable screenwriting software such as Celtx, Highland (only for Mac), and Fade In.

All assignments are to be saved as PDF!

Required Textbooks

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089

The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637



Previous Course Number: DC 501

Course Management

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your campus connect username and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, materials, weekly assignments, etc.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation (participation includes discussions, workshops, Morning Pages, and Spark Journals): 20%

First Three Creative Assignments: 15%

Loglines: 5%

Outline/Treatment of Short: 15%

First Draft: 15%

Second Draft: 15%

Final Draft and Refined Pitch: 15%

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.

Class Outline:

Week 1, September 11th

Course introduction, Formatting, Storytelling basics, Developing your Voice,
Bootcamp: Writing Outside your Demographic & Foundations of Workshopping
Please bring *The Hollywood Standard* to class!

Reading: *The Tools of Screenwriting* from page ix through page 27
Creative Assignment 1: (Storytelling)
Spark Journal and Morning Pages

Week 2, September 18th

Conflict and Character
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting* pages 28-29, 43-54, 63-76, 78-83
First Workshop: Storytelling

Creative Assignment II: (Conflict and Characters)
Spark Journal and Morning Pages due next class

Week 3, September 25th

Visual Storytelling and Dialogue
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting*, pages 30 through 39; 60 through 62; 84 through 90
Second Workshop: Conflict and Character
Creative Assignment III: (Visual Storytelling and Dialogue)
Spark Journal and Morning Pages due next class

Week 4, October 2nd

Putting it all together: Writing the dramatic scene /What is a
Sequence/Writing the Short Film I (including loglines)
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting*, pages 91 through 94
Third Workshop: Visual Storytelling/Dialogue
Assignment: THREE LOGLINES for Short Films Due

Week 5, October 9th

Writing the Short Film II (including step outlines and treatments)
Fourth Workshop: Pitch Loglines
Assignment: STEP OUTLINES or TREATMENTS for short films Due.

Week 6, October 16th

Workshopping/The Professional Arena (Writers Rooms, Pitch Meetings, Meet and Greets,
Producers and Directors, etc.)/Rewriting /What To Do with All of These Notes
Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting*, pages 76 through 78; 55 through 59.
Fifth Workshop: STEP OUTLINES or TREATMENTS for short films
Assignment - First Draft/Revision of Treatment/Character Development Due - will be decided by
professor

Week 7, October 23rd

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ME

Assignment: FIRST SET of Scripts Due (Half of the Class)

Week 8, October 30th

Writing the Feature Film (Part I): Breaking Down the Beats

Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting*, pages 95 through 97. Short Scripts.

Sixth Workshop: FIRST SET of Scripts (Half of Class)

Assignment: SECOND SET of Scripts Due (Other Half of Class)

Week 9, November 6th

Writing the Feature Film (Part II): Sequences

Read: *The Tools of Screenwriting*, pages 95 through 97.

Seventh Workshop: First Half of Short Films Workshopped

Workshop: SECOND SET of Scripts (Other Half of Class)

Assignment: ALL SECOND DRAFTS DUE

Class 10 November 13th

Eighth Workshop: ALL SECOND DRAFTS

Assignment: Final Drafts of Short Films and Refined Pitches Due by Wednesday, November 20th at the beginning of class.

Week 11, November 20th

Refined Pitches due

Screening

Week 12, November 27th

FINAL scripts due, Wednesday November 26th at the beginning of class.

Assignments:

Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and may result in a reduction in the student's grade.

Three Creative Assignments (15% of final grade)

These exercises will be based on the screenwriting conventions we cover in class. Specific guidelines for each exercise will be provided after the lectures and will be critiqued in class the following Wednesday. You are expected to bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L. Each assignment is 5% of your final grade (15% in total).

Loglines for Short Script (5% of final grade)

Develop three premise ideas for your short film. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a short screenplay. Each premise should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Be mindful of the aim and limitations

of the short film medium. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Outline or Treatment of Short Script (15%)

Taking your chosen idea, please develop a scene-by-scene outline for your short film. Use your plot points! Be ready to pitch the document in class. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Short Script Draft I (15% of final grade)

A few things to keep in mind as you write your scripts:

- Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell. Show don't tell.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again, and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Re-read your narrative for clarity - It may be a good idea to have a friend/family member look over the script as well.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to texts for the course, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Action description should be lean - Only revealing what can be heard/seen on screen.
- Use your plot points as a guide.
- Avoid exposition heavy dialogue - Always ask yourself, "Is there a way I can communicate this information visually?"
- Your script must be at least 6 pages (not including title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.
- Ask questions if you need help.
- Don't wait until the last minute. It takes time to develop a solid narrative - You won't be able to do it in one night.

Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a copy to the corresponding Submissions link on D2L.

Rewrite of Short Script (15% of final grade)

A few things to keep in mind as you REWRITE your scripts:

- The rewrite of your script be a marked improvement over your first draft.
- You must include a cover page.
- Use notes you received from the instructor, workshops and self-evaluation in order to craft your revised draft.

- Characters, dialogue, structure and scene work should be completely reevaluated and enhanced.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation count - Proofread your work, proofread it again and then proofread it one more time just to be sure.
- Standard screenwriting formatting is required. Refer to the textbook for this class, the scripts we read in class, and your instructor for assistance.
- Your script must be at least 6 pages (not including the title page), but should not exceed 10 pages.

Portfolio and Final Pitch Due (15% of your final grade)

Workshops, Attendance, and Participation (20% of your final grade):

Attendance

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

Participation

You may be called upon to discuss various topics on screenwriting and storytelling during class and discussions may develop throughout the course online, with which you are required to participate. Please be prepared having read the texts and screened the assigned films. Also, spark journals and morning pages will be discussed in class.

Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly small group workshop sessions that will enable you to showcase your assignments and the first draft of your short screenplay. Please be sure to adhere to the following workshop guidelines.

Workshop Guidelines

- First and foremost, a workshop is about the piece of writing, not the writer. Both the writer and those critiquing the piece need to keep in mind that the goal is to make the writing the best it possibly can be.
- Workshops are never destructive. They are constructive. Writing is never “bad.” The writing is addressed so that it can get stronger.
- We will always start with something that is working in the piece.
- Then we will go to the aspects that are not yet fully developed or that are not quite working yet.
- The writer must stay quiet during the workshopping of her or his piece.

- If the majority of the readers agree on a particular element of the piece that is working or not working, listen. If the readers are completely divided, it simply may just be a matter of opinion.
- The writer should always listen, but ultimately must trust his or her gut. The writer's name will be on the page when all is said and done.

Additional Policies and Information:

Attitude and 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.

Emergency Plan

An emergency can occur at any time, suddenly and without warning. Proper planning is essential to minimize the impact of any emergency on the university community, operations and facilities. The following link provides detailed information on Emergency Evacuation and Fire Alarm safety: <https://resources.depaul.edu/emergency-plan/emergency-evacuation/Pages/Evacuation.aspx>. The University will use the DPU Alert to announce school closing or other emergencies. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the primary outdoor assembly area for CDM will be Grant Park (Southeast corner of Jackson and Michigan Ave).

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

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 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 at <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 on my.cdm.depaul.edu/.

- 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: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312) 362-8002

F: (312) 362-6544

<https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx>