

# FILM 397 Capstone Development

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**When:** Wednesday · 1:30pm – 4:45pm  
**Where:** Daley Building / RM 209 / Loop Campus

**Instructor:** Matt Quinn · [mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu) · 312-362-5807 · CDM 509  
**Office hours:** Monday · 11:30am – 5:00pm / Wednesday · 11:30am – 1:00pm

## Summary of Course

In this course, students will create a proposal that outlines what they will do for their Senior Capstone Project. The project should be a culmination of all of the course work that the student did during their time in the School of the Cinematic Arts. Each project must adhere to the guidelines for their degree concentration. Students will begin to work on their projects in this class; the first version, cut, or draft of their project must be ready by the time the student begins DC 398 Digital Cinema Capstone.

## Course Objectives

- 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 a treatment for an original feature film or a series bible for an original television series
- Create a step outline for an original feature film or a step outline for an original television pilot

## Prerequisites

None

## Grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Writer's Statement	5%
Five Loglines	5%
Story Package	10%
Hook / Teaser	10%
Treatment / Series Bible	10%
Step Outline	20%
Step Outline Rewrite	30%

*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

Assigned readings provided by the instructor

## Attendance

Attendance and participation are 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 six groups. 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.

## Course Outline

### Week 1 – September 11<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Course Intro, The Auteur Screenwriter

*Assignment: Writer's Statement*

### Week 2 – September 18<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Developing the Cinematic Concept, IP Properties

Workshop: Writer's Statement

*Assignment: Loglines*

### Week 3 – September 25<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Pitching, Story Packages

Workshop: Loglines

*Assignment: Story Package*

### Week 4 – October 2<sup>nd</sup>

Lecture: Treatments & Series Bibles

Workshop: Story Package – Groups 1 & 2

*Assignment: Treatment / Series Bible*

**Week 5 – October 9<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Four Pillars

Workshop: Story Package – Groups 3 & 4

*Assignments: Treatment / Series Bible*

**Week 6 – October 16<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Step Outlines

Workshop: Treatment / Series Bible

*Assignments: Step Outline Draft I*

**Week 7 – October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Lecture: Genre Storytelling

Workshop: Treatment / Series Bible

*Assignments: Step Outline Draft I*

**Week 8 – October 30<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Crafting the Hook / Teaser

Workshop: Step Outline

*Assignments: Step Outline Draft II, Hook / Teaser*

**Week 9 – November 6<sup>th</sup>**

Workshop: Hook / Teaser – Groups 3 & 4

*Assignments: Step Outline Draft II, Hook / Teaser*

**Week 10 – November 13<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Moving to Draft

Workshop: Hook / Teaser – Groups 1 & 2

*Assignments: Step Outline Draft II*

**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 Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Five Loglines (5% of final grade)**

Develop five loglines to pitch in class on Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. One of these loglines should be based on IP (intellectual property) in the public domain. You will eventually develop one of these ideas into a feature length screenplay or an original television series that you will be working on for the duration of the course. Each logline should include character (protagonist), conflict (what is the central conflict of the narrative?) and a sense of resolution. Please bring a copy of the assignment to class for workshop and submit a PDF file with the loglines to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 1:30pm on Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Story Package (10% of final grade)**

The Story Package is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch - You will present a teaser pitch in-class on Wednesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> or Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> 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. One sheets for TV series will differ slightly from a feature one sheet, as they focus more on pivotal character breakdowns and the aim/arc of the series. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 1:30pm on Wednesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Treatment / Series Bible (10% of final grade)**

The Treatment (feature film) or Series Bible (TV series) is worth a total of 10 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Monday, October 14<sup>th</sup>. You will select a treatment or a series bible depending on the project you are developing.

Treatment – Create a feature film treatment that provides a thorough overview of the plot in present tense prose. This assignment must be a minimum of 4 pages. While there is no fixed template for a treatment, it should include the following:

- Title
- Logline
- First act in roughly three paragraphs (page 1) – Introduce central characters and dramatize the setup for main conflict

- Second act in roughly six paragraphs (pages 2 & 3) - Dramatize how the conflict in act one leads to tangible subplots, the midpoint, and the second act turning point
- Third act in roughly three paragraphs (page 4) - Dramatize the climax and resolution

Series Bible - Create a series bible that provides a thorough overview of the series. This assignment must be a minimum of 5 pages. While there is no fixed template for a series bible, it should include sections on the following:

- Overview
- Origin/Inspiration
- Themes
- World
- Characters
- Season One Breakdown

### **Step Outline (20% of final grade)**

The Step Outline is worth a total of 20 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 11:59pm on Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>.

A feature length outline should have anywhere from 50 - 100 scenes, a one-hour pilot should have anywhere from 25-50 scenes, and a half-hour comedy should have anywhere from 12 - 25 scenes. The length is largely dependent on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character-driven story/more scenes for plot driven material).

It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the intended length of your narrative – Ex: Coming up with 40 scenes or less for a feature is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Please make a point to speak with me if you're planning to write an unconventional narrative that will require an unorthodox outline.

Each scene of your step outline will contain a slug line for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene.

Example:

Scene 1: INT. DON CORELONE'S OFFICE - DAY

AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men. Don Corelone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corelone's daughter, is very matter-of-fact/business-like.

General Guidelines

- Use 12 pt. Courier New Font

- Make sure your scene descriptions are in present tense
- Use all CAPS when introducing a new character.
- Must be submitted as a PDF file

### **Hook / Teaser (5% of final grade)**

The Hook or Teaser is worth a total of 5 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link by 11:30am on Wednesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>. Craft the hook (opening scene/sequence) for your feature length script or the teaser (opening scene/sequence) for your pilot. There is no required page length for this assignment, but the hook / teaser must clearly establish the genre, world of the story, and your voice as a writer. A couple of things to keep in mind:

- Document must be saved as a PDF file
- 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
- Ask questions if you need help

### **Step Outline Rewrite (30% of final grade)**

The Step Outline Rewrite is worth a total of 30 points and must be submitted to the corresponding D2L submission link by 11:30am on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> to the corresponding D2L submission link. Use notes you received from the instructor, group workshops, and self-evaluation to craft the revision.

As a reminder, a feature length outline should have anywhere from 50 - 100 scenes, a one-hour pilot should have anywhere from 25-50 scenes, and a half-hour comedy should have anywhere from 12 - 25 scenes. The length is largely dependent on the type of narrative (general rule of thumb is that there are less scenes for character-driven story/more scenes for plot driven material).

It is critical that you provide enough scenes to sustain the intended length of your narrative. For example, coming up with 40 scenes or less for a feature is simply not enough material and will result in a significant deduction in your step outline grade. Please make a point to speak with me if you're planning to write an unconventional narrative that will require an unorthodox outline.

Each scene of your step outline will contain a slug line for the location and time of day. The scenes should be numbered as they will eventually appear in your screenplay followed by a brief description of what will transpire in that scene.

Example:

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AMERIGO BONASERA, undertaker, tells DON VITO CORLEONE, the aging head of the successful Corleone crime family, the story of how his daughter was assaulted by two men.

Don Corelone will help Amerigo deal with his problem in exchange for a favor in the future. The meeting, which is being held during the wedding of Corelone's daughter, is very matter-of-fact/business-like.

### **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.

### **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

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>

## 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>

## 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 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).

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