

**Description**

No matter what your entry point into writing for television, you need an original pilot. It's important to have more than one, in fact. And while writing that pilot is a process unique to each writer – this course provides an industry-standard methodology for creating a compelling first draft of a one-hour pilot. Additionally, the course will focus on one of the most important aspects of being a television writer: pitching and discussing your ideas from a conceptual, thematic, or story level. In a mock writers-room, students will write and develop a 10-page pitch document, break and outline three complete (A, B, and C) stories, and create the first draft of a one-hour pilot. All the while, in-class exercises will focus on developing fully realized characters, building a story engine that will sustain a show for more than three seasons, and finding a personal thematic hook. Classes will be a blend of three-hour lecture classes, and two 8-hour intensive “writers room” workshops, with ample writing time.

**Requirements**

- Access to and working knowledge of script writing software such as Final Draft, Fade In, Celtix or similar.
- Two solid ideas for one hour television to pitch to the class day one.
- **Required Reading:** Creating Character Arcs, KM Weiland. ISBN# 1944936041

**Objectives**

- To identify and make use of the time, effort, and creative resources involved in reworking and rewriting an outline for an hour-long episode of television.
- To learn and participate in the process of both giving feedback and incorporating notes given in a workshop/writers room setting.

**Deliverables**

- A 10-page pitch document
- A rough pilot outline.
- Complete Story Notes
- A first draft script of an original one-hour episode of television.

**Evaluation**

- Writers-Assistant Notes: 5 pts.
- Show Questions Document: 5pts
- Pitch Document: 15 pts.
- ABC Story Docs: 10 pts.
- Blended Outline: 15 pts.
- Written/Verbal Feedback on student script: 10 pts
- Pitching: 10 pts.
- Act 1&6: 10 pts
- First Draft of Script: 20 pts.

### **Course Policies**

The course is designed to treat you as an employer would. In return, I invite you to wrap your head around the idea that your livelihood (rather than a grade) will one day be based on your performance. Further, it's been proven time and again that the greatest barrier to finishing writing is the development of a discipline that will keep the writer writing. To that end, and again, because this is how the world works: turning in the work at the appropriate length is the criteria upon which you'll be evaluated. Content of the assignments will be given consideration, but what we're after here is the process it takes to make a product within a deadline. In feedback, make every effort to center the people around you more than you center yourself in conversation, and know how to speak to other people respectfully at all times. Do your best, sincerely make the effort.

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Class One: The Pitch, The Structure, And You**

*Weds, Sept 4, 2019, 6:30-9:30*

We start with the Basics. Students will pitch two television shows to the room and based on feedback and questions, decide which they'll be writing for the length of the course. Final decision will be with the student. From there, we'll review one-hour TV structure, and in particular take a look at how three act structure splits into five or six acts, while also examining ways that beginning, middle, and end can scale all the way down to a single beat, and all the way up to a series arc. Additionally, we will come up with a show together, based on a fable of the classes choosing.

#### **Assignment One: The Writer's Assistant (ongoing)**

*Perhaps the most important job in any writers room is that of the Writers Assistant, the person who is assigned to take detailed notes of everything that is said by every person in the room, index it at the end of the day, highlight the most important parts, and distribute said notes to every member on staff. All while, in many cases, expressly not using a recording device. To that end, each student will be required to act as the Writers Assistant for three hours.*

#### **Assignment Two: The Show Questions**

***Due: September 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:30pm***

*Students will a worksheet that asks an insane amount of questions meant to clarify the initial brainstorm (due Sept 11).*

#### **Assignment Three: The Pitch Document (10-12 pages)**

***Due: November 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:30pm***

*The Pitch Document should be a living creation that lasts the extent of the course. Decisions made should be honed here, information reworked, decisions made. Students should keep it updated throughout the process.*

**Class Two: Becoming the Deity of a World in Your Head**

*Weds, Sept 11, 2019, 6:30-9:30*

Again, using our Group Show as an example, we'll talk about building the world of the show, and in particular how the world is created by not just setting, place, and time, but mainly by character want. Through several class exercises, students will begin to construct the language it takes to sell the story to a listener, while fleshing out the thematic elements. We'll also break the pilot episode of our Group Show: As a writers room, we'll orchestrate three storylines (ABC). From there, we'll blend the episode, construct the outline pieces.

**Assignment Four: Write a scene in Outline**

*Students will take one of the scenes created in the Three Little Pigs exercise and write the scene (1/2 page).*

**Class Three: Series Arc, Season Arc, Episode Arc.**

*Weds, Sept 18, 2019, 6:30-9:30*

Working in groups and based off the ideas generated in the pitch document, we'll take a deep dive on season arcs, and look at how three act structure works over both a season and a series. Additionally, in preparation for the upcoming week's assignment, relying on our Group Show as an example. We'll talk about the story of each individual pilot. Without looking at three act structure – we'll walk through multiple exercises meant to help pitch story area. That is, we're telling stories, what are they in the broadest (but not too broad) terms?

**Assignment Five: The Outline Documents**

**Due: October 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:30pm**

*Write three documents detailing each scene in their A story, B story, and C Story. The A story should be between 4-5 pages, the B story 3-4, and the C story 2-3 pages.*

**Class Four: Writers Room One**

*Saturday, October 5, 2019, 9am-3pm*

How a Room Works. In a fairly ambitious day. And split into teams to do what's known as a barn raising: a team of writers creating one outline. And from there? We'll write nearly half a script. And that's before lunch. From there, students will work together to break their own stories, and create

**Assignment Six: Blended Outline**

**Due: October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 11:30pm.**

*As students construct Acts One and Act Six in a script, they will also blend all of the anything left open in their outline for a read by other students upon next*

*class.*

**Assignment Seven: First and Last Acts**

**Due: October 18, 2019 at 11:30pm**

*Over the course of the week, students will write four scenes of their script. Two from the very front and two from the very back. After writing the scenes and giving time to think it through, students will come to the next writers room class having identified three problems with their ABC Stories, based on feedback.*

**Class Five: Scripting Intensive**

*Weds October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 6:30-9:30pm*

A professional Script Coordinator will be on hand to help students with a script formatting intensive. Online, students will receive two outlines for reading and preparing verbal feedback.

**Assignment Eight: Verbal Feedback**

*Students will read and evaluate two of the collected outlines, preparing verbal feedback for the next class.*

**Class Six: Writers Room Two**

*Saturday, October 19, 2019, 9am-3pm*

Based on the morning notes session, students will do a deep dive on solving any remaining issues with their ABC stories while blending their episode together. From there, students will present their blended episode, pitching the story of the episode to the room, accepting real time feedback. Additionally, students will do a workshop on scene-work, with a special emphasis on finding the event, thematic arc, and thrust of each scene in their script, as well as a deep dive on the first three pages of their script. From there, we'll discuss all the ways in which we move from outline to script. Students will end the day with a solid attack plan

**Assignment Nine: The First Draft**

**Due: November 11, 2019 at 11:30pm**

Well, look at that, you're gonna write the first terrible draft, based on your outline and your document. And turn it in on Sunday night! And then.

**Assignment Ten: Written Feedback.**

**Due: November 13, 2019 at 11:30pm**

Students will be emailed a draft of a script on Monday morning, November 4<sup>th</sup> and have 36 hours to read and provide at least 2 pages of detailed written feedback.

**Class Seven: Pitch Fest**

*Weds, November 6, 2019, 6:30-9:30pm*

Before a high-level industry professional, students will present a 5-minute pitch. Note that this is not for any kind of contest, deal, or opportunity other than to practice getting in front of people who hear television pitches for a living and charming them into liking your show.

**Class Eight: Written Feedback Exchange (Online Only)**

Students will exchange written-feedback only on a message board in D2L.

**Class Nine: Final Workshop**

*Weds, November 20, 2019, 6:30-9:30pm*

In this class, we'll determine how to incorporate notes into a workable plan of action for rewrites, and explore the verbal feedback loop as opposed to the written feedback loop. Class will finish with a final practice and comparison of original pitch vs the new fleshed out pitch.

**COUNSELING AND SUCH**

A reminder that in the event that students need to take advantage of counseling services, the link is here: <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/ucs.aspx>

**CHANGE 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 sent via email.

**ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is MANDATORY. More than one **excused absence** (doctor's note, sickness, last minute emergency, etc.) will result in the lowering of one letter grade for each additional absence. Students must notify the instructor before class for the absence to count as excused. Students coming in 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early will be marked as tardy. Three tardies will count as one **unexcused absence** and will result in the lowering of one letter grade. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

**CLASS DISCUSSION**

Students are encouraged to ask questions and contribute verbally to the class. It is a small class so there is no reason why every student shouldn't ask at least a few questions over the course of the summer. The guests are volunteering their time to be with the class so students are expected to be respectful by being attentive and asking questions.

### **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.

### **CELL PHONES/ON CALL**

If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, you must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job or any other reason, please advise me at the start of the course.

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

### **EMAIL**

Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at CampusConnect is correct.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <https://offices.depaul.edu/oaa/faculty-resources/tching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

**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>

**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 exceptional 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.