

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 301-501: Story Development

Winter 2020

Monday 1:30 – 4:45PM, Daley 207 and Online

Professor Scott Myers: smyers15@cdm.depaul.edu
312-362-1120

Office Hours: (CDM 403) WED 1:00-4:00PM and by appointment.

Description

Students will develop a story for an original feature length movie from concept to scene-by-scene outline. They will do this by progressing weekly through a set of story summaries – Logline, Character Map, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, Outline – as tools to develop their characters and narrative structure. Each class meeting will feature a brief lecture, class discussion, and extended group workshops in which students will provide feedback on each other's evolving story. The course will culminate with a complete Scene-By-Scene Outline which students can use to write a first draft of their script in SCWR 302.

Objectives

- Generate and assess story concepts, comparing the merits of multiple projects before making a selection as to what each student will write
- Apply character development tools to the story-crafting process
- Write Logline, Synopsis, Breakdown, Treatment, Beat Sheet, and Scene-By-Scene Outline, and in so doing learn a repeatable story development process
- Engage in constructive critique, both in analysis of other writer's material and in receiving feedback from classmates
- Deliver assignments on deadline

Outcomes

Multiple iterations of student's story in a progressive set of narrative forms culminating in a Scene-By-Scene Outline.

Required Reading

Lectures, writing assignment examples, and Go Into The Story posts as linked on the D2L course site.

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There students will find announcements, reading and writing assignments, discussion boards, and additional materials.

In Week 1, the class will be divided into three groups: Group A, Group B, and Group C. Each class session will involve a general discussion of that week's select group writing assignment and breaking off into smaller groups to workshop each student's story.

All written assignments must be typed with pages numbered. Title page:

Your Name

Course Number

Date

Writing Assignment: [Name of assignment]

Save your writing assignments as PDFs and with this file name (see example):

WA1 Chayefsky

WA2 Ephron

Weekly writing assignments are due by **NOON SUNDAY**. Upload to that week's Submissions forum and your group's Discussion forum on the D2L site.

NOTE: You are responsible for reading each of your group's weekly writing assignments before every class session. Come prepared with feedback:

- What you liked about the story / what worked for you
- What issues or problems you experienced in considering the story
- What suggestions you have to resolve those issues and make the story better

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – January 6

Introductions

Overview: Aristotle and The Hero's Journey

Syllabus and course review

Story Summaries: From Logline to Scene-By-Scene Outline

Group assignments

Lecture: The Importance of Story Concepts

Writing Assignment (WA1)

3 - 5 feature film story concepts

Refer to examples (D2L): Story Concepts

Week 2 – January 13

Group A: Story concept discussion

5 Questions: Assessing Story Concepts

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Logline

Writing Assignment (WA2)

Logline of preferred story or series concept

Refer to examples (D2L): Logline, Genre, Movie Associations, Movie Studios

Week 3 – January 20

Group B: Logline discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Character Development

Writing Assignment (WA3)

Master Brainstorming List: (Indirect) Protagonist Biography, Questionnaire, Scene, (Direct) Interview, Monologue, Stream of Consciousness

Refer to example (D2L)

NO CLASS ON JANUARY 27

Week 4 – February 3

Group C: Character development discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Character Archetypes and Transformation

Writing Assignment (WA4)

Character Map

Refer to example (D2L)

NOTE: I will schedule one on one meetings in my office (CDM 403) with each student this week and next.

Week 5 – February 10

Group A: Character map discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Synopsis
Writing Assignment (WA5)
 Synopsis

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 6 – February 17

Group B: Synopsis discussion
 Small group workshops
 Class discussion

Lecture: Breakdown

Writing Assignment (WA6)
 Breakdown

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 7 – February 24

Group C: Breakdown discussion
 Small group workshops
 Class discussion

Lecture: Treatment and The Whammo Theory

Writing Assignment (WA7)
 Treatment

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 8 – March 2

Group A: Treatment discussion
 Small group workshops
 Class discussion

Lecture: Beat Sheet and Narrative Throughline

Writing Assignment (WA8)
 Beat Sheet

Refer to example (D2L)

Week 9 – March 9

Group B: Beat Sheet discussion
 Small group workshops
 Class discussion

Lecture: Note Cards and Plotting

Writing Assignment (WA9)

Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

Refer to example (D2L)

We will set aside 20 minutes for course evaluations in class this week. You may complete the evaluation on a laptop or mobile device.

Week 10 – March 16

Group C: Preliminary Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) discussion

Small group workshops

Class discussion

Lecture: Seeing the Movie

Writing Assignment (WA10)

Final: Revised Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline)

Revised final Narrative Throughline (Scene-By-Scene Outline) due in the appropriate D2L Submissions folder by 5:00PM, March 20.

Grading

Point totals for each week's assignments are as follows:

5 points each: 5 Story Concepts (WA1), Logline (WA2), Character Development (WA3), Character Map (WA4)

10 points each: Synopsis (WA5), Breakdown (WA6), Treatment (WA7), Beat Sheet (WA8), Preliminary Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA9)

20 points: Revised Scene-By-Scene Outline (WA10)

10 points: Participation

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 93	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

Participation

This class is a workshop. That means you are expected to focus on each writer's assignments, assess what works and what – in your opinion – needs work, express your thoughts, and come up with suggestions to improve the story.

Even when your story is not being reviewed in class, you must participate in workshop discussions. This is not only part of your grade, but also a way to develop your critical analytical skills.

For more, see separate post on the D2L site called Constructive Critique.

Attendance

Missing 2 classes or more will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you do have a legitimate reason for missing class, you must email me in advance of the class for it to be considered an excused absence. We begin class right on time. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

Office Hours and One On One Meetings

WED 1:00-4:00PM in CDM 403. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, etc.

In addition, we will schedule a **one on one meeting** with each student to discuss your story and any issues you may be having with the story development process.

In-Class Workshops

By enrolling in this course, you agree to share your ideas and writings with the professor and other students in the class. You must acquire express written consent from any writer in the class should you wish to share their work with someone who is not enrolled in this course. Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. Students should expect to read, hear, and participate in discussions about some stories which include varied subject matter including sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, politics, religion, and so forth. Students have the 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 for the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class, or direct personal attacks on members of the class will not be tolerated in course material. If you feel you are being individually targeted by material written or discussed in class, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

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.

Laptops/Cell Phones

I will trust that on your honor as a DePaul University student and as a creative individual who aspires to learn the writing craft, you will not stray into any form of social media during class – except for classroom breaks.

Phones must be silenced and stowed unless needed for course work.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

Alterations

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.

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: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

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
TTY: (773)325.7296

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. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session.