SCWR201 Introduction to Screenwriting

Winter Quarter 2020
Tues/Thurs, 11:20-12:50pm, Student Center 330

Instructor: Kevin Endres
Office: STDCTR332
Office hours: 5:00-6:30 pm, Mondays (Blue Star appointments please)
Email: kendres@depaul.edu

Course Description

This course is an introduction to and overview of the elements of theme, plot, character, and dialogue in dramatic writing for cinema. Emphasis is placed on telling a story in terms of action and the reality of characters. The difference between the literary and visual medium is explored through individual writing projects and group analysis. Development of synopsis, treatment and drafts for a short theatrical screenplay: theme, plot, character, mise-en-scene and utilization of cinematic elements.

Learning Domain Description — SCWR 201 Introduction to Screenwriting is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts while developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning, and through critical and/or creative activity, come to better understand the original audience that witnessed a work of art and how its meaning and significance changes over time. These courses focus on works of art or literature, however the process of analysis may include social, cultural, and historical issues. Genres covered in this domain include literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music, and theater.

Learning Objectives

After successful completion of this course students will be able to:
- Analyze and break down the structure of a typical Three-Act feature length screenplay
- Write a logline and step outline for a short screenplay
- Tell a story visually through the screenplay form
- Analyze how key incidents, story progressions, conflict and resolution, and character arcs affect a film

Learning objectives will be met through creative writing assignments and analysis of produced scripts. In addition, students will write and revise a 12-15 page screenplay, satisfying the Arts and Literature domain writing requirement.

Required Textbooks and materials
Tools of Screenwriting by Howard and Mabley

Suggested Reading:
The Hollywood Standard by Chris Riley
Several Short Sentences About Writing by Verlyn Klinkenborg
The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri

Software needed:
Celtx – free download via D2L or free cloud account (or another screenwriting program such as Writer Duet, which is browser based)

Grading

Attendance and participation 15%	A = 100-93 A- = 92-90
First Draft of Screenplay 10%	B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83
Midterm 15%	B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77
Assignments 1-6 35%	C = 76-73 C- = 72-70
Final Script 25%	D+ = 69-67 D = 66-60
	F = 59-0

Standards for Achievement:

Grade A:
Student performs in an outstanding way. Student exhibits achievement and craftsmanship in all work. Creative criteria are exceeded and student challenges him/herself in project development. Student exhibits commitment to expanding ideas, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade B:
Student performs beyond the requirement of the project. Student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship. A creative criterion is exceeded. Student exhibits above average interest in expanding ideas, vocabulary, and performance.

Grade C:
Criteria of assignment are met, and all requirements are fulfilled. Student shows average quality work and minimum time and effort on projects. Student shows moderate interest.

Grade D:
Student performance is uneven and below average. Requirements for projects are only partially fulfilled. Minimal interest is shown and attendance, participation and involvement are inadequate.

Grade F
Student fails to meet minimum course requirements and shows no interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance is inadequate.

Assignments and Exercises – Class work and assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. All assignments are due at 11:00am; if you come in late with an assignment it will not be accepted. Submission folders on D2L close automatically so you will not be able to turn work in late.

I do not accept any assignments by email. Submitting to D2L is the only way to get credit for your work.

Descriptions of each assignment can be found in the Course Documents module on the Content page of D2L.

D2L - We use D2L for pretty much everything in this class. In an attempt to save some trees and cash, assignments will be turned in via D2L except where noted. If you are unfamiliar with D2L please see me after class. In some cases you must print and bring in an assignment. These are noted on the syllabus.

Film screenings
All films that you will need to watch as homework will be posted on Panopto, DePaul's university-wide streaming platform. You may watch the films in their entirety there after logging in with your CampusConnect credentials. You are welcome to find the films at the library or elsewhere online if desired.

You can access Panopto via D2L. Navigate to the Content page, and find the "Panopto screenings" tab. Click the link there and log in if prompted. If you are having trouble viewing the films on Panopto, it is your responsibility to reach out to me or DePaul's tech support <panoptoadmin@depaul.edu>.

Back up your work: Failure of computer software and or hardware will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance for late projects or incomplete grades so back up your work daily. I recommend automatic backup services like BackBlaze or CrashPlan, though they are not required for this class.

Course Lectures/Reading Assignments – The assigned readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lectures. Lectures will introduce material not available in the readings, and the readings will explore concepts not mentioned in class. It is not my intention to overwhelm you with reading, but rather to use the textbook as a way to support and reinforce the concepts we learn in class. I may also add supplemental readings throughout the quarter that are not outlined in the syllabus.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. All updates to the syllabus will be announced on D2L, and updated syllabus files will be available for download there.

Last day to withdraw (without penalty): 1/17
Last day to withdraw (with penalty): 2/21

Class 1 -- 1/7
Class period: Introductions, Why we tell stories, What to write about, Screenwriting vs. novels and plays, Final Script guidelines (very briefly), Intro to Loglines
Assignment 1 due 1/14 -- be prepared to read aloud in class
Watch: *Sorry to Bother You* (2018, 112 minutes, Dir/Wri: Boots Riley)
Read: Pg 1-18

Class 2 -- 1/9
Class period: Story game, What is a Screenplay?, Three act structure, The Subject, Plot points introduced
Assignment 2 due 1/21
Read: Pg 19-29

Class 3 -- 1/14
Class period: Take The Oath, read loglines and choose which story you will develop for you final project

Class 4 -- 1/16
Class period: Story and Character, Character Arcs, Build a character exercise, Character intro examples
Assignment 3 due 1/28 (please bring physical or digital copy to class that day)
Read: Pg 30-40
Read: Assigned script excerpt

Class 5 -- 1/21
Class period: Endings and Beginnings, Watch The Lunch Date
Assignment 4 due 1/28
Read: Pg 41-59

Class 6 -- 1/23
Class period: Treatments, Step Outlines, Plot Points review, Building the Story
Assignment 5 due 1/30

Class 7 -- 1/28
Class period: Script Excerpt questions, Scenes, Sequences

Class 8 -- 1/30
Class period: Presentation/discussion of Step Outlines

Class 9 -- 2/4
Class period: Finish presentation/discussion of Step Outlines, Short film screening and discussion if time allows

Class 10 -- 2/6
Class period: The Screenplay format, Software Celtx (and WriterDuet, etc), Genre
Assignment 6 due 2/20

Class 11 -- 2/11
Class period: Dialogue -- good and bad, Efficiency of words, Exposition -- good and bad
Read: Pg 60-98

Class 12 -- 2/13
Class period: Midterm Review, Watch short films, discuss
Assignment: study for the test, continue working on Assignment 6

Class 13 -- 2/18
Class period: Midterm
Assignment: Begin writing your first draft of your final screenplays. First 5 pages are due 2/27, second 5 pages due 3/3, completed first draft due 3/5

Class 14 -- 2/20
Class period: Business, Copyright, Pitching, Development, Watch short film to inspire you, Sign up for one-on-one conferences, Volunteer for first table read

I am asking for one volunteer to upload their completed first draft before class on 3/3 for a sample table read and critique. You get the most feedback and you're done early.

Class 15 -- 2/25
Class period: Table read selected genre scenes, give feedback/criticism
Assignment: Continue writing your final screenplays. First five pages due 2/27

Class 16 -- 2/27
Class period: **NO FORMAL CLASS** -- One-on-one conferences instead
Assignment: Continue writing your final screenplays. Second 5 pages due 3/3

Class 17 -- 3/3
Class period: Table read a volunteer's first draft
Assignment: Finish writing first draft of your screenplay. Complete script due 3/5

Class 18 -- 3/5 -- do not be absent
Class period: Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups.
Assignment: Start revising first draft due 3/18

Class 19 -- 3/10 -- do not be absent
Class period: Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups
Assignment: Continue revising first draft

Class 20 -- 3/12 -- do not be absent
Class period: Table reading and critique of selected screenplays as a class
Assignment: Finish revising final draft of screenplay

Final Draft due Wednesday, 3/18 at 11:00am--worth 25% of your grade

My Course Policies

Attendance – Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15 minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, *make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent.* Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

The only way to get an excused absence is through the Dean of Students Office. You can read about the procedures for getting an excused absence at http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence-notification.aspx

Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 6 classes will automatically fail. However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don't want your evil germs. Please email me at kendres@depaul.edu if you are going to miss class and make arrangements to have the absence documented by the Dean of Students Office.

Special attendance policy for classes on 3/5, 3/10, and 3/12 -- If you miss class on one of these days your final draft of your script will be docked **15 points** for each day you miss. Do not miss class on these three days.

Class Participation—Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions, critique other people's work, and participate in workshops. We are a community. We're all here to support each other. Remember, this is your class, you will get out of it what you put into it.

Be advised that several of the assignments that you write for this class will be read aloud. My intention is not to embarrass anyone, but rather to have a fostering and openly creative environment where people are comfortable sharing their work.

Laptops and Cell Phones—Use of cell phones and laptops in class is prohibited. No screens in class. Please silence your phone before entering class. Unless you have a university verified need for a computer in class, please keep them in your bags. No exceptions.

Special Accommodations: If you need any special considerations, whether it be a learning or physical disability, etc, please see me after class or send me an email before the start of the second class period.

Respect — Please be respectful of everyone's opinions, tastes, and beliefs. We do not have to agree on everything but we should be able to discuss anything civilly. This is not the comments section on YouTube.

Please respect the films we'll watch and the scripts we'll read, some of which will have mature themes and situations. During screenings, please do not talk and keep all comments/observations to yourself.

Course Policies (from the university)
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.

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

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 your professor.

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

Fax: (312)362-6544