

**DEPAUL UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS**

**SCWR 250-301 Introduction to Television Writing**

Spring 2020

Tuesdays 1:00pm-4:15pm (CST)

Remote

**Instructor: Fatou Samba**

Office Hours: Tuesday 11:15am-12:45pm (CST), Wednesday 4:00pm-5:30pm (CST)

Drop-ins won't be available. Please schedule a Zoom meeting with me in Blue Star or by email to meet during my office hours or by appointment. Once scheduled, I will send you a link to the meeting.

Phone: I will provide my cell number during our first Zoom session

Email: [fsamba@depaul.edu](mailto:fsamba@depaul.edu)

**Course Description:**

This course focuses on writing the sitcom and one-hour drama television formats. Students will examine the conventions of serialized and procedural series and will learn how the collaborative dynamic of the writer's room impacts story. The lectures and workshop provide a foundation of what it takes to be a professional staff writer and culminate in crafting a spec episode of a current television series.

**Prerequisites:** SCWR 100 or SCWR 101

**Course Outcomes:** Episodic outline, spec script for an existing series

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- create a spec script for an existing television series that captures the tone and tenor of the show
- recognize the different formats for television
- employ standard format for the chosen television series
- identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- revise their writing based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

**Required Textbooks:**

- None
- Any other required supplementary reading materials such as television scripts or other documents will be posted on D2L.

Previous Course Number: DC 272

Required Software:

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

Students can request a free, fully functional, 18-week Final Draft 11 EDU TRIAL for one personal machine. They can only make this request once by using their .EDU school email address on the form found here:

[https://trial.finaldraft.com/edutrial/?utm\\_campaign=EDU&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=85046040&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8-kB11xYScYydmJRvtQBm5ZXYv7b0L\\_430ZR2a-KrfVDZorzEy-ugtX175\\_LArq6mNPZJCP\\_RGdRaIB2AOHOySgGRbZQ&hsmi=85046040](https://trial.finaldraft.com/edutrial/?utm_campaign=EDU&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=85046040&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8-kB11xYScYydmJRvtQBm5ZXYv7b0L_430ZR2a-KrfVDZorzEy-ugtX175_LArq6mNPZJCP_RGdRaIB2AOHOySgGRbZQ&hsmi=85046040)

**IMPORTANT!**

Please note that **ONLY THE FORM AT THE ABOVE URL OFFERS THE 18-WEEK EDU TRIAL**. DO NOT request the regular 30-Day Trial or the web form will subsequently deny your EDU Trial request.

**All assignments are to be saved in PDF!**

**COURSE MANAGEMENT**

**Asynchronous vs. Synchronous Online Learning:**

This class will be run BOTH asynchronously and synchronously.

**Asynchronous** learning involves coursework delivered by web, email, and message boards that are posted in online forums. A benefit of asynchronous learning is that you're able to be self-paced. For the purposes of this class, that means that there will be weekly pre-recorded lectures posted to D2L that you can watch whenever you like but before a given deadline.

In addition to the lectures, you will also watch assigned television pilots, which we will discuss during our weekly Zoom sessions. Ensure that you watch all of the lectures AND the assigned episode(s) BEFORE the weekly Zoom meetings, as the screenings will guide our discussion.

**Synchronous** online learning means working together at the same time. Chat rooms and online conferences are good examples of synchronous communication. For the purposes of this class, it

means that we'll be conducting weekly synchronous Zoom sessions, both as a whole class and in groups. During these meetings we'll discuss the weekly screenings, pitch show and episode ideas, as well as workshop beat sheets, outlines and actual script pages through live table reads.

This is also an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have. The meetings will always be held during the allotted class time (Tuesdays between 1:00pm and 4:15pm Central Standard Time), but not necessarily for the entire 3 hours. Be sure to check D2L every week for meeting times, as they vary.

In the event that technology fails us during any of our Zoom sessions, which is likely to happen because the whole world will be using it now, there will always be a plan B to ensure we don't miss any actual class time. If a session is interrupted, I will be sure to create a weekly discussion board that you can post your work, answers, and feedback to instead.

If I find that the Zoom sessions aren't as effective in terms of providing feedback, or we continue to experience technical difficulties, the class may become completely asynchronous. If that happens, you will post your answers to the screening prompts on the discussion board on D2L. I will also have you read each other's work on your own time and provide written feedback on the discussion board before the given deadline.

### **D2L:**

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.

### **Zoom:**

We will also be using Zoom extensively in this course. You will not need to sign up for an account. I will post weekly links to our sessions on D2L, and you should be able to simply run it through your browser to attend the meetings. You can also download the Zoom app, if preferred.

You will need internet access, a camera and a microphone to fully participate with Zoom. It is possible to use a phone or a tablet, though a computer or laptop is preferable. In addition to communicating through video conference, Zoom will also allow you to share your screen and chat with me or with each other during our sessions. When the time comes for workshopping, Zoom also allows me to send you into breakout rooms where you can workshop in groups.

Visit the link below for more information on how to use Zoom:

[https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206175806-Top-Questions?flash\\_digest=0d96b1924dbc68c124d363d5d255d51fda1a78e2](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206175806-Top-Questions?flash_digest=0d96b1924dbc68c124d363d5d255d51fda1a78e2)

### **Tech Support:**

Students having any tech issues this quarter should email [scaavsupport@depaul.edu](mailto:scaavsupport@depaul.edu).

This new resource is for general tech support and will serve as a unified point of contact for these issues. This email address will be monitored by during the following hours:

Monday through Friday: 8:30am – 8:30pm

Saturday: 10:00am – 6:00pm

Sunday: 12:00pm – 6:00pm

### **Online Streaming Services:**

For the first six weeks, you will watch a number of television pilots based on the weekly lectures. This will require you to have access to several streaming services (Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime and HBO). Most of you have access to at least three of them. As such, instead of making you subscribe to the ones you don't already have, I encourage you to consider sharing your login information with no more than one person in the class, if necessary. One person may have access to a site another person doesn't and vice versa. An exchange would therefore be beneficial to both parties. You can create a temporary password if you're worried about continued use beyond this class.

That said, I want to make clear that sharing your login information for the purposes of this class is not a requirement, and I will not share who has access to what streaming site without that person's expressed consent. I am also willing to share my own login information to ensure everyone has access to every episode, if needed.

If you don't have access to all the streaming sites and would like to pay for your own subscriptions or get a free trial, that's up to the individual student.

If an episode isn't available to everyone for any reason, I'll either change the episode that week to ensure everyone has access or provide the written script instead. In some cases, I may even have students watch different shows to match what they have access to and break you up into discussion groups accordingly.

Be on the lookout for any updates regarding the screenings on a weekly basis.

### **Weekly Pilot Screenings:**

- You are required to watch the weekly lectures BEFORE you watch the episodes for that week. This is how you will know what to look for in any given episode. The discussion prompts will be based on the lectures, so you will not be able to properly engage without having watched them.

- You are required to watch the episodes even if you've watched them before. There are two reasons for this:
  - 1: The point of the screenings is to *analyze*, something we rarely do when just watching TV for fun. As such, I want you to watch the episodes through an analytical lens, keeping in mind the standards and practices you've learned that week.
  - 2: The episode should be fresh in your mind to ensure you're able to properly participate in the post-screening discussions.
- I highly encourage you to take notes, either while watching or directly after. Bring your notes to the Zoom meeting to ensure you're prepared for the discussion. You may think you'll remember everything, but trust me, you won't.

### **Post-Screening Discussion:**

These discussions count towards your attendance and participation grade. Please come prepared to talk about the episodes based on the prompts provided by me. Again, this is why taking notes is important. The discussions offer a way for you to demonstrate that you have watched the lectures and the weekly episodes, and they're a great way for you to stay engaged in the class and get some face-to-face time with your classmates.

### **Attendance:**

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An unexcused absence, which is defined as not showing up to Zoom sessions, constitutes a reduction in your participation grade. Missing 3 or more sessions will result in an automatic failure in the class.

If you have to miss a Zoom session or a deadline, make sure to plan ahead, and inform me in advance. Be sure to also let me know if you're having technical problems that are preventing you from joining the session on time. Letting me know in advance does not automatically excuse an absence or a missed deadline, but it is the only way to present your case. If you fail to communicate before the next class period to explain an absence or a missed deadline, they will not be excused.

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss sessions 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.

**Participation:**

At this level students should be interested in the subject of the class. The only way to see this is through participation during our Zoom sessions, either asking questions, participating in class discussions, or adding constructive comments to other student's presentations and works. Feedback is an essential part of the class, and it's the only way for you to learn and grow as a writer. Students who don't provide feedback on their classmates' work can't expect to receive feedback on theirs. Failure to participate will result in a reduction of your grade.

**Time Zones:**

Some of us will be in different time zones for the duration of Spring Quarter. All times provided by me, including Zoom sessions and due dates/times will be in Central Standard Time. It is your responsibility to ensure you are present and on time for the meetings and that you turn in your work on time no matter what time zone you're in.

**Assignments:**

All assignments for this course must be typed, submitted on D2L and saved as PDF. Assignments not saved as PDF will receive a reduction in points, and you will be asked to reupload it correctly.

Assignments will be treated like absences, meaning that without prior approval and a documented reason for missing the deadline, **LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. There will be no exceptions. This is a zero-tolerance policy.

**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 his/her 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.

**Online activities:**

For obvious reasons we will all be on our computers, tablets or phones during class sessions. That does not mean that you are free to browse online, be on social media or do other things not related to the task at hand.

If I so much as suspect you of unrelated online activities, you will be asked to leave the session, which will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

### **Creative Subject Matter:**

As this is a creative writing course, controversial subject matter may enter into the conversation. 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.

### **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. But know this: plagiarism will earn you an 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](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system <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.

### **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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

TTY: (773)325.7296

### **Grading:**

Show breakdowns: 15%

Series overview and pitch: 10%

Loglines: 5%

Beat Sheet: 10%

Outline: 15%

Final script: 30%

Class Participation: 15%

All assignments must be typed and free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. It's your work; you're responsible for its quality. All Scenes and Scripts must be in proper Screenwriting format. Use of screenwriting software such as Final Draft [www.finaldraft.com](http://www.finaldraft.com) or celtx [www.celtx.com](http://www.celtx.com) is HIGHLY recommended.

### **Grading Rubric:**

A	95-100	C	73-76
A-	90-95	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	0-60

### **Have fun!**

You've just slogged through a lot of boring text about rules and practices, and while they are important, so is this last part. I love TV. I love watching TV, I love writing TV (sometimes), and I love talking about TV. I hope you do as well. Yes, this is a college level class designed to make you grow as a writer and storyteller, and while doing this online isn't ideal, I still hope we all have some fun and enjoy the class as much as we can under the circumstances. This is a trying



time for everyone, and I'm sure there'll be a lot of trial and error during this process. Be patient with me, and I promise to be patient with you. We're in this together!

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **WEEK 1 MARCH 31**

RECORDED LECTURE: The Spec Episode, Spec Dos and Don'ts

Be sure to watch these BEFORE our first Zoom session. We're not meeting for the full 3 hours, which means you should have time to watch the clips during our allotted class time.

#### **Synchronous Zoom Session: 2:45pm-4:15pm (CST)**

Introductions: Who am I? Who are you? What are you watching right now? Favorite shows.

Syllabus Overview, Questions about the class & lectures.

#### **HOMEWORK:**

Decide what show you want to spec and email me letting me know which one you choose.

Reading: Television Format & Style Standards (on D2L)

RECORDED LECTURE: TV Basics

SCREENINGS & ANALYSIS: RAMY: Between the Toes (Hulu), SEX EDUCATION: Pilot (Netflix)

Be sure to watch every lecture and TV episode BEFORE our next Zoom session.

**DUE: Tuesday April 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

#### **WEEK 2 APRIL 7**

#### **Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm (CST)**

Questions about the lecture

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: RAMY & SEX EDUCATION

**HOMEWORK:**

Write an Overview of your chosen series and prepare a 5-10-minute verbal Zoom Pitch to the class based on this overview. You do not have to decide what your episode is going to be about yet. The point is to simply introduce the show and the characters to people who may not be familiar with it. (example provided on D2L)

Upload your written overview to the Submissions Folder AND the Discussion Board for everyone to access.

Write a Pilot Breakdown of your chosen series (example provided on D2L).

RECORDED LECTURE: Plot & Story, A, B & C stories, Loglines

SCREENING & ANALYSIS: THIS IS US: Pilot (Hulu)

**DUE: Tuesday April 14th at 1:00pm (CST)**

**WEEK 3**

**APRIL 14**

**Synchronous Zoom Session (in groups):**

Questions about the lecture

WORKSHOP: 5-10-minute pitches of chosen TV series

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: THIS IS US

Group 1: 1:00pm-2:30pm (CST)

Group 2: 3:45pm-4:15pm (CST)

**HOMEWORK:**

Write 3-5 loglines for different episode ideas you may want to write for your chosen series. Be prepared to pitch them to the class. Upload to Submissions Folder AND Discussion Board.

2<sup>nd</sup> Episode Breakdown of chosen series

RECORDED LECTURE: Characterization, Story Structure, Beat Sheets

SCREENING & ANALYSIS: BREAKING BAD: Pilot (Netflix)

**DUE: Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

**WEEK 4**

**APRIL 21**

**Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm-3:00pm (CST)**

Questions about the lecture

WORKSHOP: Logline Pitches

POST SCREENING DISCUSSION: BREAKING BAD

**HOMEWORK:**

Create a Beat Sheet for your episode. Upload to Submissions Folder only.

We won't workshop these as a class. Instead, you will have 10-minute individual meetings with me on Zoom.

**DUE: Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm (CST)**

3<sup>rd</sup> Episode Breakdown of chosen series

**DUE: Tuesday April 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

RECORDED LECTURE: Outlines

SCREENING & ANALYSIS: FLEABAG (Amazon Prime) or BARRY (HBO). You only have to watch one of them.

Watch/read the pilot episodes of your group members' shows by May 12<sup>th</sup>.

**WEEK 5**

**APRIL 28**

**Synchronous Zoom Sessions: (Check D2L for times)**

10-minute individual meetings with me (beat sheet workshop).

**ASYNCHRONOUS POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: FLEABAG or BARRY**

Post your responses to the discussion prompts on the corresponding Discussion Board.

**HOMEWORK:**

Develop your Beat Sheet into an Outline. Upload to Submissions Folder AND Discussion Board.

READING: David Mamet (on D2L) (Do the reading before you begin work on your outline)

**DUE: Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:59pm (CST)**

Watch/read the pilot episodes of your group members' shows by May 12<sup>th</sup>.

**WEEK 6**

**MAY 5**

**Synchronous Zoom Session (in groups):**

WORKSHOP: Outlines

GROUP 1: 1:00pm-4:15pm (CST)

GROUP 2: 1:00pm-4:15pm (CST)

**HOMEWORK:**

RECORDED LECTURE: Scene Writing, Script formatting, Punctuation, Tone & Style, Teaser/Cold Open, First Act

SCRIPT READING & ANALYSIS: Teasers/Cold Opens & First Acts (on D2L)

Write Act One of your episode, including the teaser if you have one (GROUP 1) (10 pages minimum)

Upload to Discussion Board only.

Watch/read the pilot episodes of your group members' shows.

**DUE: Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

**WEEK 7**

**MAY 12**

**Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm-4:15 (CST)**

WORKSHOP: Table read Act One (GROUP 1)

**HOMEWORK:** Write Act One of your episode, including the teaser if you have one (GROUP 2) (10 pages minimum).

Upload to Discussion Board only.

**DUE: Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

## **WEEK 8**

**MAY 19**

**Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm-4:15 (CST)**

WORKSHOP: Table read Act One (GROUP 2)

**HOMEWORK:** Write Act Two of your episode (BOTH GROUPS)

Upload to Discussion Board only.

**DUE: Tuesday May 26<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

## **WEEK 9**

**MAY 26**

**Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm-4:15 (CST)**

WORKSHOP: Table read Act Two (in your groups)

**HOMEWORK:** Write Act Three of your episode (both groups)

Upload to Discussion Board only.

**DUE: Tuesday June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00pm (CST)**

## **WEEK 10**

**JUNE 2**

**Synchronous Zoom Session: 1:00pm-4:15 (CST)**

WORKSHOP: Table read Act Three (in your groups)

**HOMEWORK:** Revise (for comedy writers) & completed your episode

Upload the entire Spec Episode to Submissions Folder only.

**DUE: June 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm**

**WEEK 11**

**JUNE 9**

**No Class!** All SPEC SCRIPTS DUE **Tuesday June 9th at 1:00pm.**

**The syllabus is subject to change. You will be notified of any such changes. Be sure to check D2L and emails frequently for the latest updates.**