

# SCWR 440 Developing the Pitch

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**When:** Thursday · 5:45pm – 9:00pm  
**Where:** Synchronous Online Learning

**Instructor:** Matt Quinn · [mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu) · 312-362-5807  
**Office hours:** Tuesday & Thursday · 11:00am – 3:00pm

## Summary of Course

This course asks students to create an inventory of new material for future writing projects by developing and pitching stories for independent and studio films, as well as cable, streaming, and network television series. Through lectures, guest speakers, and workshop exercises, we will analyze the vital role of pitching in the entertainment industry, and build a foundation to help students master professional pitching techniques.

## Learning Objectives

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

- describe the genres and styles of projects that speak to and inspire them
- 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 one-page story treatments that are ready to move to the outline phase

## Synchronous Online Learning

This course will be delivered using synchronous online learning. You will log in using a Zoom Video Conferencing link provided by the instructor for weekly lectures and small group discussions of the assignments. These meetings are held within the class period time frame of Thursday 5:45pm – 9:00pm Central Time.

## 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, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

## Prerequisites

None

## Grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Writer's Statement	5%
OWA Story Package	5%
Story Packages	70%
Story Package Rewrite	10%

*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.*

*Students in graduate classes may opt to change the grading basis for any or all of their courses to Pass/D/Fail. A grade of Pass (P) will indicate that the student's work met expectations for a grade of at least C-. Work that would merit a grade of D+ or D in the traditional grading basis would still earn a D+ or D. Work that does not merit a passing grade will earn a Fail (F). The Pass/D/Fail grading option may apply to any graduation requirement.*

<https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx>

## Textbooks

"Good in a Room" by Stephanie Palmer ISBN-10: 1400156726 (Recommended)  
Additional assigned readings provided by the instructor

## Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not participating in the weekly Zoom meetings, constitutes a reduction in your overall grade.

## Group Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, every student will be assigned to one of four groups: Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, or Group 4. A segment of each class will focus on a discussion of that week's writing assignment and then breaking off into your assigned group to workshop each student's submission for the week.

Story Package assignments must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 5:45pm every Wednesday for the duration of the course. No late assignments will be accepted.

You are required to login to D2L and read your fellow group member's submissions and come prepared to provide feedback during workshop – No exceptions.

## Course Outline

### **Week 1 – September 10<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Course Intro, Developing the Cinematic Concept

*Assignment: Writer's Statement, OWA Script Reading, Good in a Room*

### **Week 2 – September 17<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Pitching Basics, Teaser Pitch, One Sheets

*Assignment: OWA Story Package*

### **Week 3 – September 24<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Film Market, IP Properties

*Assignment: Feature IP Story Package*

### **Week 4 – October 1<sup>st</sup>**

Lecture: Concept to Script – High Concept Film

*Assignment: Feature High Concept Story Package*

### **Week 5 – October 8<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Concept to Script – Character Driven Film

*Assignment: Feature High Concept Story Package*

### **Week 6 – October 15<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Television Market, TV Series Reboot

*Assignments: TV Series Reboot Story Package*

### **Week 7 – October 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Lecture: Concept to Script – Half-Hour Series

*Assignments: Half-Hour Series Story Package*

### **Week 8 – October 29<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Concept to Script – One-Hour Series

*Assignments: One-Hour Series Story Package*

### **Week 9 – November 5<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Concept to Script – Limited Series

*Assignments: Limited Series Story Package*

### **Week 10 – November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Rewriting the Concept

*Assignments: Story Package Rewrite*

### **Week 11 – November 19<sup>th</sup>**

Due: *Story Package Rewrite*

## 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 5:45pm on Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>.

### OWA Story Package (5% of final grade)

The OWA (Open Writing Assignment) Story Package is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a teaser pitch on an assigned screenplay 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. The pitch will be presented in-class on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>.
- One Sheet – This document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 5:45pm on Wednesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>.

### Story Packages (70% of final grade)

There are seven story package assignments due in this course: 3 Features, 4 Television Series. Each Story Package assignment is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a teaser pitch 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. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of

the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 5:45pm every Wednesday for the duration of the course.

Specific details and due dates for each Story Package can be viewed on the corresponding D2L Submission links for the assignments.

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

Choose one of the Story Packages you created for the course and develop a completely new take on the material. Every narrative element should be reevaluated, while keeping the core idea of the concept intact. The Story Package Rewrite is worth a total of 10 points and is broken down into two parts:

- Teaser Pitch – You will present a revised teaser pitch that focuses on a personal connection, characters, plot overview, etc. for your original story. There are no rules or expected format for the pitch other than making a strong attempt as a team to "sell" your story within the allotted time frame. This teaser pitch will be presented during an individual meeting with the instructor the week of November 16<sup>th</sup>.
- One Sheet – This revised document must include: Title, contact information, logline, genre, plot overview. Make sure to focus on the protagonist and what is compelling about their role in the story. Examples provided on the D2L Content page. This portion of the assignment must be submitted to the corresponding D2L Submission link and your assigned D2L Group Discussion Forum by 5:45pm on Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Zoom Policies**

The DePaul [Code of Student Responsibility](#) applies to online behavior as well as in-person or classroom behavior. The following are policies for the course meetings with Zoom:

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name and last name. If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal; try to locate an internet-enabled device to use for this course. Please stay engaged in class activities. Close any apps on your device that are not relevant and turn off notifications.
- Video – Turn on your video when possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. You may elect to turn off your video if you have limited internet bandwidth, no webcam or if you're unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions.
- Audio – Mute your microphone when you are not talking. Be in a quiet place when possible and turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.

## 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

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 university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/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>

### 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 seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus (312) 362-8002
- Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677
- Email: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.