

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 502/552: MFA Thesis II

Winter, 2021

Tuesday, 5:45PM-9:00 PM, Online

Professor Brad Riddell (he/him): brad.riddell@depaul.edu

Office Hours: M: 11AM-1PM, T: 3-5PM, TH: 11AM-1PM and by appointment.

Note: I will only be present for office hours if you have an appointment.

Course Description:

Students will revise their project. In a workshop environment, students will receive notes to help revise their project. Students will also be expected to meet with their thesis committee to receive additional notes to be applied to the rewrite.

Prerequisites:

SCWR 501 or SCWR 552 is a prerequisite for this class.

Course Outcomes:

Students will complete a rewrite plan, and then a revised and polished draft of their thesis project to be delivered to their committee by the end of finals week.

Learning Objectives:

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

- organize script feedback
- develop a detailed plan for a comprehensive rewrite
- rewrite a project at a professional pace
- employ multiple focused rewrite passes on a project
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Textbooks:

[*Screenwriting is Rewriting*](#) by Jack Epps, Jr. is recommended. [*The Hero Succeeds*](#) by Kam Miller (TV), and [*Writing the TV Drama Series*](#) by Pam Douglas are good, too.

Course Management:

This course is managed on D2L. Additional reading content, lecture slides, attendance records, grades, discussion boards, and submission folders can be found there.

Course Operation

Lectures will be conducted asynchronously, so you are to watch them on your own time, before the next class. Class time will be reserved for discussion and workshop.

Screenwriting Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft, Fade In, Writer's Duet, Highland, and Celtx are popular options. **All assignments are delivered in PDF.**

Attendance:

Absent students forfeit their assignment grade for the first two unexcused absences.

Three unexcused absences will constitute course failure.

Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. [The form is here](#). Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right to offer an excused absence and/or accommodations for an excused absence.

Assignments:

We will break into groups to minimize the weekly reading load and to insure everyone receives equal feedback. **Assignments are to be submitted to D2L by Midnight each Sunday.** Late work will not be accepted without a valid excuse.

Notes Compilation:	10
Rewrite Plan:	10
New Outline or Beat Sheet:	10
Four Script Passes:	15 Each (60)
Participation:	<u>10</u>
	100 Total

Screenwriting assignments must demonstrate professionalism and investment in the material, showcase techniques and ideas discussed in class, offer a unique take with a clear voice, and present a proper grasp of grammar, format and style.

Grading:

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.

Thesis Timeline

- Final Thesis Scripts are due to committee members on March 26th by 5PM.
- We will hold defense meetings with you individually on April 16th at times TBD.
- If you pass, you need to complete and pass your coursework to graduate in June.
- If it is determined that you need a rewrite, you will have until May 28th by 5PM to deliver that rewrite. If the project passes, you will be eligible to graduate in June.
- If the project still does not pass, you will be enrolled in a non-credit, zero-tuition Summer I thesis continuation course. This rewrite will be due by 5PM July 16th.
- If you pass, you will be awarded a summer graduation. If it still does not pass, you may seek to have your credits transferred into an MS degree in Cinema.

Course Schedule:

Assignment details and corresponding lectures will be posted to D2L.

For Week 1, January 5:

- Notes organization document
- Course Overview Lecture

For Week 2, January 12:

- Rewrite plan
- Outline and Beat Sheet Lecture + Scene-Focused Format Lecture

For Week 3, January 19:

- New Outline (Sequence Breakdown optional for features) or Beat Sheet
- Character and Theme Pass Lecture

For Week 4, January 26:

- Group A Character and Theme Pass
- Structure and World Pass Lecture

For Week 5, February 2:

- Group B Character and Theme Pass
- Tracking Sub-Plots Lecture

For Week 6, February 9:

- Group A Structure and World Pass
- Checking on Tone Lecture

For Week 7, February 16:

- Group B Structure and World Pass
- First and Last Image Lecture

For Week 8, February 23:

- Group A: Reset (Two more weeks to get all the above in order.)
- Dialogue and Description Pass Lecture

For Week 9: March 2:

- Group B: Reset (Two more weeks to get all the above in order.)
- Final Polish Lecture

For Week 10, March 9:

Group A Dialogue & Description Pass

For Week 11, March 16:

Group B Dialogue Pass & Description Pass

In-Class Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly workshop sessions. Show your classmates the courtesy of reading their material as they should yours. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out.

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.

Zoom Policies:

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

- General – Sign in with your preferred first name, last name, and pronoun preferences (if you so choose). If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone with internet access, call into class. This is not optimal, so 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 whenever 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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have the right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you are uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Please follow up with the instructor immediately if such a situation arises. Stories developed in class may involve issues such as hate and violence, but writing with from point of view that glorifies hate and violence will not be tolerated. Inclusion of individuals from the class in submitted creative materials is not acceptable.

Changes 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 students will be notified via email.

Academic Support Resources

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the [Campus Connection](#) system. 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.

Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval. College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM.

The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter

Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter

Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter.

Incomplete

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. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptional cases will receive such approval. If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirements independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form. By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor. An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

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:
Student Center, LPC, Suite #370
Phone number: (773)325.1677

Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't, can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!