

SCWR100 Introduction to Screenwriting

Winter Quarter 2023

Weds, 6:00-9:15pm and online async

Prerequisites: none

Instructor: Kevin Endres

Office: Zoom

Office hours: 5:00-6:30 pm, Tuesdays (Blue Star appointments)

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. Films and scenes examined in this class will reflect creators and characters from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities. Development of a synopsis and treatment for a short theatrical screen play: theme, plot, character, mise-en-scene and utilization of cinematic elements.

Learning Domain Description

This course 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 by 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 to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

Course Outcomes

In addition to completing several writing assignments students are expected to develop, outline, and write a short screenplay.

Learning Objectives

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

- employ standard screenplay format
- identify elements of scene craft, character development, and narrative structure
- demonstrate expanded visual writing skills
- identify how diverse backgrounds and perspectives uniquely affect story and character development

- apply a work-flow process to their creative writing
- produce original writing projects on a deadline
- revise their writing based on feedback from the professor and their peers
- evaluate the work of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Learning objectives will be met through creative writing assignments and analysis of produced scripts. In addition, students will write and revise a 10-12 page screenplay, satisfying the Arts and Literature domain writing requirement.

Required Textbooks and materials

Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089

Suggested Reading

The Hollywood Standard by Christopher Riley ISBN-10: 1932907637

Several Short Sentences About Writing by Verlyn Klinkenborg

The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri

Software needed

WriterDuet – free cloud account (or another screenwriting program)

Course Management We use D2L for everything in this class. All assignments must be turned in via D2L for credit. All updates to the course will be posted to D2L. You're expected to check it regularly for updates about the course. If you like getting emails, you can configure D2L to send you an email whenever I post something.

Grading

Attendance and participation 10%

Assignments 1-6 35%

First Draft of Screenplay 5%

Final Script 10%

Self-evaluation 40%

A = 100-93 A- = 92-90

B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83

B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77

C = 76-73 C- = 72-70

D+ = 69-67 D = 66-60

F = 59-0

This course utilizes an approach known as “ungrading.” I will award up to 60% of the total course points available for delivering completed assignments on deadline.

Assignments will be deemed complete at my discretion based on the stated parameters and expectations. The remaining 40% of the score will be determined by the individual students themselves in a self-evaluation (described with the rest of the assignments on D2L).

This grading philosophy only works if students treat it with integrity. In order to pass the class you must complete a majority of the assignments and your script. Any attempts to **majorly** subvert the ungrading policy will result in grades earned by the student's performance, not according to this policy.

Assignments and Exercises

Class work and assignments must be handed in on time. I will not accept late work. All assignments are due at 12:00pm (noon). 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.

Film screenings

Most 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>.

Any films that are assigned outside Panopto will be freely available through a platform such as YouTube or Vimeo.

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): 1/15

Last day to withdraw (with penalty): 2/19

Class 1 -- 1/4

Topics: Introductions, Screenwriting vs. novels and plays, Final Script guidelines (very briefly), Intro to Loglines

Assignment 1 due Class 2 -- be prepared to read aloud in class

Read: Pg 1-18

Topics: Three act structure, Plot Points

Assignment 2 due Class 3

Watch: *Sorry to Bother You* (2018, 112 minutes, Dir/Wri: Boots Riley)

Read: Pg 19-29

Class 2 -- 1/11 -- WORKSHOP

Topics: Take “The Oath,” read loglines and choose which story you will develop for you final project

Topics: Story and Character, Character Arcs, Build a character exercise, Character intro examples

Read: Pg 30-40

Read: Assigned script excerpt

Assignment 3 due Class 4

Class 3 -- 1/18

Topics: Endings and Beginnings

Read: Pg 41-59

Topics: Step Outlines, Treatments, Plot Points review, Building the Story

Assignment 4 due Class 5

Class 4 -- 1/25

Topics: Script excerpt questions, Scenes, Sequences

Topics: Dialogue -- good and bad, Efficiency of words, Exposition -- good and bad

Read: Pg 60-98

Class 5 -- 2/1 -- WORKSHOP

Topics: Presentation/discussion of Step Outlines

Topics: The Screenplay format, Software Celtx (and WriterDuet, etc)

Assignment 5 due Class 6

Class 6 -- 2/8

Topics: Finish presentation/discussion of Step Outlines

Topics: Genre, screenings

Assignment 6: due Class 7

Class 7 -- 2/15

Topics: Business, Copyright, Pitching, Development

I am asking for one volunteer to go first in our end of quarter workshops. You get the most eyes on your script and thus the most feedback.

Topics: Table read selected genre scenes, give feedback/criticism

Assignment: Continue writing your final screenplays. First five pages due 2/22

Class 8 -- 2/22

Topics: **NO FORMAL CLASS** -- One-on-one conferences

Assignment: Continue writing your first draft

Topics: **NO FORMAL CLASS** -- One-on-one conferences

Class 9 -- 3/1 -- WORKSHOP

Topics: Table read a volunteer's first draft

Topics: Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups

Assignment: Start revising first draft; Final draft due 3/15

Assignment: Self-Evaluation due Class 10

Class 10 -- 3/8 -- WORKSHOP

Topics: Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups

Assignment: Continue revising first draft

Online students Assignment: Coverage/critique sheets due 3/10 at 12:00pm

Topics: Table reading and critique of screenplays in groups

Assignment: Finish revising final draft of screenplay

Final Draft due 3/15 at 12:00pm

My Course Policies

Attendance for in-person students

Attendance is mandatory. If you have extenuating circumstances, please let me know as soon as possible. Please do not come to class if you're sick.

****Special attendance policy for classes 9-10**** -- 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 unless you are able to provide appropriate documentation to have your absence excused through the Dean of Students Office.

Attendance for online students

You are required to turn in your lecture notes from viewing the class recordings for every class period EXCEPT classes 9 and 10. You are not required to take notes on the film screenings or readings, but you may if you choose. You may type your notes or hand-write them and upload photos, whichever you prefer. Think of this as the async version of weekly attendance. At the end of the quarter, your lowest weekly note score will be dropped.

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.

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.

Content Warning

This course attempts to recognize that to engage with media is to engage with historic and ongoing problematic representation, as well as the ways that harmful representation impacts students in different ways. Course content may implicitly or explicitly address racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, violence, social violence, sexual violence/rape, suicide, or otherwise challenging material. So that students may make informed decisions about their mental and emotional health and well-being, please inform me if you would like more specific content warnings about each film. This can be done at the beginning of the quarter or at any point throughout the quarter, either in person or via email. You may leave a screening because of the content or request an alternate screening because of the content.

Special Accommodations

If you need any special considerations, whether it be a learning or physical disability, etc, please send me an email within the first week of the quarter.

Artificial Intelligence

With one exception, you may not use AI to complete any assignments for this course. The only exception is that one of the three loglines you submit for Assignment 1 may be generated by AI (as long as you properly cite that). Use of AI outside this exception will result in an Academic Integrity violation and/or failure of the course.

Expectations

Yes, this is an intro level course for non-majors. That does not mean it should be easy. I expect the same high quality writing and work befitting DePaul's standards of excellence that all the professors in your major/program expect.

Copyright

The materials provided by the instructor in this course are for the use of the students enrolled in the course. Copyrighted course materials, including lecture slides, may not be further disseminated.

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

<https://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Student-Resources/Pages/Enrollment-Policies.aspx>

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

Grading

Students in all undergraduate classes, with the exception of those in CEO cohort programs, 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, including courses in the major, minor, Liberal Studies Program or open electives.

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