

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 326 Screenwriting: Fall 2014
Corboy Law Center, Room 526
Thurs. 4:15 - 6:45 p.m.

Instructors: Gary Hoover and Beth Hoover

E-mail: ghoover@luc.edu and bhoover3@luc.edu. Always email both instructors. Please allow 24 hours for a response to your question. Any emails received over a weekend or holiday will be answered the next weekday. Please use only your @luc.edu account when emailing instructors.

Office hours: Thursday 2:45-3:45 pm Lewis Towers 900; let us know if you plan on coming.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the process of writing for the screen. Through exercises and analysis of structure and storytelling fundamentals, students will develop a working sense of the art of crafting a screenplay, learning how to build a script, step by step, from an original and compelling idea. Extensive writing requirements cover all aspects of screenwriting, from creating a treatment and in-depth character bios to writing action and dialogue, culminating in the development of a beat-by-beat outline and complete Act I of a feature-length screenplay.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *The Screenwriter's Workbook, Revised and Updated (2006)*, by Syd Field
- *The Screenwriter's Bible, 6th Edition, Expanded and Updated (2014)*, by David Trottier
- **NOTE: Students will also select, read and analyze FOUR produced feature screenplays from the "Script Bank" posted on SAKAI.** Ideally, the four scripts you choose to study will be in your genre or otherwise comparable in tone/subject to your own project.
- You will also be reading/viewing other materials posted on SAKAI or distributed in class.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

- Adobe Acrobat: **You will submit all assignments as PDFs. No Word docs. No Celtx files.**
- Screenplay formatting templates (free downloads):
 - [Celtx for PC](#)
 - [Celtx for Mac](#)

You can also use Word or Pages and set the screenplay format yourself using the standard margins and tabs laid out in Trottier's *Screenwriter's Bible*. Whichever you choose, make sure to **submit every assignment as a PDF!** Note that many COMM 326 assignments won't be done in screenplay format (bios, treatments, etc.) but will be submitted in 12 pt. Courier, doubled spaced.

GRADING & EVALUATION

100-95	A	94-90	A-	89-87	B+
86-83	B	82-80	B-	79-77	C+
76-74	C	73-70	C-	69-67	D+
66-65	D	Below 65	F		

Your final grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Weekly writing assignments:	30%	Full step outline (beat sheet):	20%
In-class exercises/workshops:	15%	Revised Act I of screenplay:	20%
Mid-term review (exam):	5%	Polished scene for table read:	10%

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

All student work must be wholly original. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade. Please read the SoC's *Statement on Academic Integrity* here: www.luc.edu/soc/academics/academicintegrity/.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The focus of this course will be on constructing a story for a feature-length screenplay. Each student will develop his/her own concept through a series of cumulative written assignments:

- Original story concept & title for a feature-length film
- Genre, logline, synopsis & treatment of your story
- Developing your story's "ordinary" + "special" worlds
- Character bios for your hero and other main characters
- Mapping and refining the major "turns" of your story
- Building your story's key sequences
- Step outline/beat sheet for Acts I-III
- First draft of Act I (min. 20 pgs.)
- Second draft of Act I (min. 20 pgs.)
- Polished scene for table read (5 pgs.)

All assignments must be typed in 12 pt. Courier, double spaced, and **emailed in a PDF by 12 noon the day before class to both bhoover3@luc.edu & ghoover@luc.edu**. Your full name, assignment description (e.g. "logline") and due date must be typed at the top of the first page of each assignment. **** Please begin your PDF filename with your LAST NAME, always. ****

PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS

As you were emailed the week before class, we'll be hitting the ground running in the very first class. So each student must bring to the table an initial story concept, however rough, that you'd like to develop over the course of the semester. Your idea will be strength-tested to ensure it has the legs to sustain a feature, and will need to be approved by your instructors before proceeding.

DEADLINES

Students are expected to complete all of the assigned readings and writing projects on time. Late work not only holds you back, but holds the class back because of the collaborative nature of the course. **Late work will be automatically penalized 10 points for each day past the original due date.** Moreover, *assignments will not be accepted more than five business days past due.*

ATTENDANCE

This class meets once a week for a total of 14 sessions. Because of the sheer amount of material covered in each session, attendance is critical. Consequently, **no absence will be excused unless it is because of the death of a loved one, or due to serious personal illness or injury.** Proof must be given no later than your first day back. After two excused absences, **your final grade will be reduced by 2.5 points per absence.** Please note that *any in-class work missed because of absence cannot be made up.* It is the student's responsibility to obtain notes from classmates.

COMPUTER USE

Please be aware the occasional software bugs, viruses, human error and/or hardware failure can result in damaged, corrupted or deleted files. Therefore, **it is your responsibility to routinely back up project files** throughout your writing process and to deliver readable, uncorrupted files in the required PDF format. *Computer failure is no excuse for lost work or late assignments.*

*** The instructors reserve the right to revise or change anything in this syllabus. Work created in or for this course can be re-used and shared by the instructors with other students/classes.**

COMM 326 COURSE SCHEDULE: FALL 2014 (Subject to change - updates to be posted)

***NOTE: EMAIL all assignments by NOON on the due date listed below + BRING 2 hard copies for class use**

- Class 1**
08.28.14 **Three-act structure.** Set up, conflict, resolution. In-class workshop: view/analyze a film's structure.
Due 9/3: READ: Syd Ch. 1&2; Trottier p. 3-57, 117-122; Sakai handouts on story and logline help.
WRITE: 1-paragraph description of story idea; your logline; pick 4 scripts in your genre from bank.
- Class 2**
09.04.14 **Strengthening your story idea.** In-class workshop: in-depth breakdown & rework of your loglines.
Due 9/10: READ: screenplay #1 & write its logline; Syd Ch. 3&4, Trottier p.122-126. WRITE: Your title + revised logline; Syd exercises p. 58-60 (4 elements paradigm) + p. 76-78 (4-page treatment).
- Class 3**
09.11.14 **The engine of the story.** Conflict & dramatic need. Workshop: "study buddy" share-and-pitch.
Due 9/17: READ: script #2 & i.d. its turns; Syd Ch. 5; Trottier p. 57-78; Hero's Journey handout.
WRITE: I.D. your story's turns on cards; Syd exercise p. 93-94 (4 essential qualities for your hero).
- Class 4**
09.18.14 **All about character.** Analyzing familiar character types used in film and their story function/role.
Due 9/24: READ: script #3 & i.d. each main character's role/archetype; Syd Ch. 6&7; Trottier p. 127-130. WRITE: i.d. your hero's secret ("circle of being") & describe how it has shaped who he/she is; write character bios on your hero, villain & one other main character (2-3 pp each) as discovery.
- Class 5**
09.25.14 **Building the story.** Constructing sequences and how to effectively build a story using index cards.
Due 10/1: READ: sequence handouts. WRITE: I.d. your story's sequences (8-12) on cards, give each an active headline & description. Be sure to mark your turns as well. Type up/submit as an outline.
- Class 6**
10.02.14 **Making a scene.** Writing action and dialogue that reveals character and moves your story forward.
Due 10/8 READ: script #4 & describe how each main character is intro'd & what their dialogue/ action reveals; Trottier, p. 93-100, 247-249 + p. 148 onward (formatting); David Mamet's memo on Sakai. WRITE: a key scene in script format that marks a major turn in your story (approx. 3-5 pps.)
- Class 7**
10.09.14 **Story/structure review + Act I focus.** MID-TERM EXAM. In-class: Blade Runner viewing/ analysis. Ordinary world vs. special world; Act I turns. **Due 10/15:** READ Syd Ch. 9&10. WRITE: use cards to create a scene-by-scene outline of your Act I w/ your first 2 turns marked, plus do a first draft of your first 10 pages.
- Class 8**
10.16.14 **Two stories in one.** Action line vs. emotional line. In-class workshop: swap & critique of 10 pages.
Due 10/22: READ: Syd Ch. 11. WRITE: Rework your 10 pages and do a rough draft of the next 10. You will have ample opportunity to revise & polish later. Update your outline so it tracks w/ script.
- Class 9**
10.23.14 **Dialogue and exposition.** In-class workshop: Reading, analyzing and reworking dialogue from student Act I screenplay drafts' key scenes: your openings, inciting incidents and "big events."
Due 10/29: READ: Syd Ch. 12. WRITE: Rewrite your all-important first 3-5 pages to hook us in.
- Class 10**
10.30.14 **Keeping your story moving.** Escalating stakes. Workshop: swap & critique of revised 5 pages.
Due 11/5: READ: Syd Ch. 13-14, Trottier p. 79-82 (theme), 100-104 (suspense). WRITE: Detailed outline through end of Act II, mapped on cards first, then typed: see Chinatown step sheet as model.
- Class 11**
11.06.14 **Rewriting, Pt. I.** Now that your first draft has cooled for 2 weeks, we'll look at ways to improve it. Workshop: one-on-ones with instructors and in-class revisions of draft & outline based on feedback.
Due 11/12: READ: Syd Ch. 15-16; Trottier p. 134-143. WRITE: Revised Act I of script (20 pages).
- Class 12**
11.13.14 **Endings.** Crisis, showdown & resolution. Writing lab: use class time to rework Act I & your outline.
Due 11/19: WRITE: Act III stepped out in detail on cards & added to existing outline (submit full), plus your REVISED 1-sentence logline & short synopsis (1 graf per Act). Select your reading scene!
- Class 13**
11.20.14 **Rewriting, Pt. II.** Now that you've stepped out your full script and know your ending, we'll look at how to tweak Act I to best set up that payoff and ensure your story unfolds logically + unpredictably. Workshop/writing lab: in-class discussions/revisions of script and outline, and ensuring they track.
FINAL Due 12/4 at 4:15 pm (email + hard copies): Act I (20 pages), beat sheet, polished scene.
- T-DAY BREAK** *** Thanksgiving Break Nov. 26 - Nov. 29. Class will not meet on Nov. 27***
- Class 14**
12.04.13 **TABLE READ** of each student's movie scene. Assign speaking parts for your scene (bring hard copies for each actor/narrator) Scene reads. Next steps in executing your script. Pizza. And more!
NO FINAL EXAM: Your Final Projects serve as your exam, so do yourself proud. *Make them rock.*