

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 326 Screenwriting: Spring 2015
School of Communication, Room 003
Wednesday, 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: Wed, 3 PM-4 PM, Lewis Towers 900B & D; 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 full step 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
- **Students will also select, read and analyze FOUR produced feature screenplays posted on the class "Script Bank" on SAKAI.** Ideally, the four scripts you choose to study will be in your chosen 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:	20%	Final step outline (24+ beats):	20%
In-class exercises/workshops:	20%	Act I of screenplay (22+ pgs):	20%
Mid-term review:	10%	Polished scene for table read:	10%

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 for a feature-length film
- Title, genre, logline and synopsis of your story
- Detailed character bios for your main characters
- Identifying your story's major turns & sequences
- Step outline/beat sheet for entire script
- Creating ordinary vs. special worlds
- Writing/polishing Act I (min. 22 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 4 pm the Monday before class (48 hrs.) to both bhoover3@luc.edu & ghoover@luc.edu**. Type your full name, assignment description (e.g. "logline") and due date at the top of the first page of each assignment. ***** Please always start your PDF filename with your LAST NAME. *****

PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS

As you were emailed the week before the semester began, we'll be hitting the ground running the very first class. So **each student must have read the screenplay CHINATOWN** before Jan. 14. Also, **each student must bring to the table an original story idea** (fill out the worksheet we sent) to be developed over the course of the semester. Your idea will be strength-tested in class to ensure it has the legs to sustain a feature, and it will need to be refined by you and approved by both instructors before proceeding. Make it worthy of your focus for 14 weeks.

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 five points for each day past the original due date.** Moreover, *assignments will not be accepted more than five calendar days past due.*

ATTENDANCE

This class meets once a week. 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.** Each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 2.5 points. More than two excused absences will do the same. Note that ***any in-class work missed because of absence cannot be made up.*** Do not email the instructors asking for assignment details. It's your 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.***

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Cheating includes:

- Obtaining, distributing or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the instructor.
- Providing information to another student during an examination.
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination.
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor.
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom.
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or deadline extensions.
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

All student work must be wholly original. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material.
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit.
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism.

Moreover, a student may not submit the same paper or other work from another class. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the assigning an "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication. Please read the SoC's *Statement on Academic Integrity* here: www.luc.edu/soc/academics/academicintegrity/.

COMM 326 AT-A-GLANCE SCHEDULE: SPRING 2015 (Subject to change. Updates to be posted.)

***NOTE: EMAIL all assignments by 4 PM on the due dates listed + BRING a hard copy to class for workshop use**

Class 1
01.14.15 **Three-act structure.** Set up, conflict, resolution. Workshop: strength-test students' initial concepts. **Due 1/19:** READ: Syd Ch. 1&2; Trottier p. 3-57, 117-122; assigned handouts. WRITE: Revised logline and working title for your story idea; choose 4 scripts in your genre from the SAKAI "bank."

Class 2
01.21.15 **Strengthening your story idea.** Breakout group concept work. Viewing inciting incident/set up examples. **Due 1/26:** READ: screenplay 1 & write its logline; Syd Ch. 3&4, Trottier p.122-126. WRITE: Syd exercises p. 58-60 (4 elements paradigm), 1-page synopsis (~ 3 grafs) of your story.

CAREER WEEK ** School of Communication Career Week event., 4-6 p.m. WTC. Class will not meet 1/28. **

Class 3
02.04.15 **All about character.** Analyzing familiar archetypes used in film. Workshop: your 4 hero qualities. **Due 2/9:** READ: script 2 & i.d. each main character's role/archetype; Syd Ch. 6&7; Trott. p. 57- 78. WRITE: i.d. your hero's secret ("circle of being" event) & describe in 1 paragraph how it's shaped who he/she is; write bios (3 pgs each) on your hero, villain & one other main character as discovery.

Class 4
02.11.15 **The engine of the story.** Conflict & dramatic need. Workshop: demonstrate with narrative example. **Due 2/16:** READ: script #3 & i.d. its turns; Syd Ch. 5, Trottier p. 20-28 (7 Plot Points), Hauge & Hero's Journey handouts. WRITE: I.D. your story's major turns on cards, type up & submit as PDF.

Class 5
02.18.15 **Building the story.** Constructing sequences and how to effectively build a story using index cards. **Due 2/23:** READ: 2 sequence handouts. WRITE: I.d. your story's sequences on cards, give each a headline & description. Type up as an outline and submit as PDF, marking your major turns in bold.

Class 6
02.25.15 **Making a scene.** Openings. Action & dialogue that reveals character and hooks us into the action. **Due 3/9:** READ: script #4 & tell us: how did its opening set the stage for the story? Trott., p. 93-100, 247-249 + p. 148 onward (formatting); David Mamet handout. WRITE: a draft of your screenplay's opening (action & dialogue) in screenplay format, pulling us into the world of your story (3-5 pgs.)

SPRING BREAK *** No classes held March 2-7. Class will not meet on 3/4. ***

Class 7
03.11.15 **Story/structure/character review.** In-class: Feature film viewing & analysis. **Due 3/16:** READ Syd Ch. 9&10. WRITE: Execute a ROUGH draft of your first 10 pgs. (including your inciting incident). You'll have ample opportunity to revise & polish later. Use cards to drill down from your sequences to identify specific Act I scenes, fleshing out first section of your sequence outline. Submit outline.

Class 8
03.18.15 **Two stories in one.** Action line vs. emotional line. In-class workshop: swap & critique of 10 pages. **Due 3/23:** READ: Syd Ch. 11. WRITE: Identify your "two stories in one" in a paragraph. Revise your first 10 pages w/ instructor & class feedback. Update step outline to track w/ script & PDF.

Class 9
03.25.15 **Dialogue and exposition.** In-class workshop: Reading, analyzing and critiquing dialogue from your 10-page drafts. **Due 3/30:** READ: Syd Ch. 12. WRITE: Your "change of plans" scene to end Act I. Step outline of Act II, mapped on cards then typed: Chinatown step sheet as model. Submit as PDF.

Class 10
04.01.15 **Act I.** Fleshing out out your Act I. In-class workshop: putting your inciting incidents + "big events" on whiteboard & connecting the dots to i.d. your missing scenes. **Due 4/6:** READ: Syd Ch. 13-14, Trottier p. 79-82 (theme), WRITE: I.d. your theme. Finish your full Act I draft & flesh out outline.

Class 11
04.08.15 **Endings.** Crisis, showdown & resolution. Logical, but unpredictable. *How does it all turn out?* In-class workshop: showdown study-buddy pitch & whiteboard rework. **Due 4/13:** READ: Trottier p. 134-137 + 243-282 rewriting tips. WRITE: Choose/revise reading scene. Step outline thru Act III.

Class 12
04.15.15 **Rewriting.** Now that your Act I has cooled for 2 weeks and you know your story's ending, we'll tweak your draft to setup that payoff. In-class: one-on-ones with instructors + rewriting lab. **Due 4/22 by 4:15 PM (email AND hard copy): YOUR FINAL PROJECTS:** revised Act I (22+ pgs.); step outline of your full story with your major turns noted in bold; polished scene for the table read.

Class 13
04.22.15 **TABLE READ** of each student's polished scene. BRING HARD COPIES for each of your actors + narrator. Getting organized. Choosing scene order. Scene reads. End-of-semester victory party with vegan 'za. BYO snacks & sodas. This is our last class meeting. **THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR COMM 326.** Your Final Projects serve as your final exam, so do yourself proud. *Make them rock.*