

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 326 Screenwriting: Spring 2017
School of Communication, Room 003
Wednesdays, 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 your @luc.edu account when sending us email inquiries.* Office hours: Wednesday, 3 PM-4 PM, Lewis Towers 900. Please make an appointment by email.

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 logical 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 (3-act) step outline and polished 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, try to choose scripts in your own story's genre or otherwise comparable or relevant to the subject/tone of your own screenplay 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 or other files.
- FREE screenplay formatting software (sign up using your @luc.edu email address):
 - Final Draft Trial (18 weeks free): <http://bit.ly/trialfinaldraft>
 - Adobe Story Free: <http://bit.ly/freadobestory>

You can also use Word or Pages and set the screenplay format up yourself using the standard margins and tabs laid out in your Trottier book or this [Oscars guide](#). Whichever you choose, submit every assignment as a PDF. Note that early in the semester, discovery assignments (bios, etc.) won't require script formatting. *These 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%	Full step outline (~24 beats):	20%
In-class exercises/workshops:	20%	Act I draft of screenplay (~25 pgs):	20%
Produced script reads/analysis:	10%	Polished scene for table read (~5 pgs):	10%

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

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

- Original story concept for a feature-length film
- Title, genre, logline, theme and story synopsis
- Detailed character bios for your main characters
- Mapping out your story: major turns & sequences
- Short narrative treatment of your story
- Step outline for your entire screenplay
- Writing & revising Act I of your script
- Polished scene(s) for class table read

All assignments must be typed in 12 pt. Courier, double spaced, and emailed in a PDF by 5 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 your assignment. **** NOTE: Please always start your PDF filename with your LAST NAME. ****

PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS

As you were emailed before the semester began, we’ll be hitting the ground running the very first class. So **each student must have read Vogler’s “Hero’s Journey” handout and Robert McKee’s “Story” handout** by Jan. 18. Also, **each student must bring to the table an original story idea** to be developed this term. It cannot have been created for another class, or recycled from a previous writing/film project. Your idea will be strength-tested in class to ensure it has the legs to sustain a feature, and it will be refined by you and approved by us 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 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 School of Communication's *Statement on Academic Integrity* by visiting [this link](#).

COMM 326 AT-A-GLANCE SCHEDULE: SPRING 2017 (Subject to change. Updates to be posted.)

***NOTE: Email homework by 5PM on due date listed (48 hr. advance) + BRING a copy to class for workshop use**

Class 1
01.18.17 **Class intro + your story ideas.** Course overview & expectations. Review of story & screenwriting principles/terms. White board demo. Workshop: sharing & improving students' initial story ideas using logline worksheet. **Due 1/25:** READ: Syd Ch. 1&2; Trottier p. 3-57, 117-122. WRITE: Refined idea + 3-graf synopsis. Pick 4 scripts off Script Bank to analyze this semester & tell us. **Due 1/30:** Read script #1 & write its logline using worksheet + screen film & map turns using worksheet.

CAREER WEEK * No class held on Wed., Jan. 25, due to SOC Career Week event: 4-6 PM, Regents Hall, Lewis Towers.**

Class 2
02.01.17 **Three-act structure.** Set up, conflict, resolution. Workshop: strength-test and finalize students' story ideas. **Due 2/6:** READ: Syd Ch. 3&4, Trottier p.122-126. WRITE: Finalize your script concept based on feedback, add working title. Execute Syd exercise p. 58-60 (4 elements paradigm). Execute Syd "kick in the ass" exercise p 76-77 and bang out 4-page treatment (double spaced). Submit by email.

Class 3
02.08.17 **Act I turns.** Viewing inciting incident/set up example(s). Study-buddy share and pitch. **Due 2/13:** READ: Trottier p. 16-17. Script #2 analysis: I.d. first 2 major turns and why they work. WRITE: I.d. *your* story's first 2 turns (inciting incident/catalyst + change of plans/Big Event), describe in 1 graf.

Class 4
02.15.17 **You've gotta have a hero.** All about characters. **Due 2/22:** READ: Syd Ch. 5-7; Trott. p. 57-78; archetype & hero handouts; bio examples on Sakai. Script #3 analysis: i.d. character archetypes + hero's secret; WRITE: i.d. *your* hero's secret (Syd's "circle of being" event) & how it's shaped who he/she is; create detailed bios (2-3 pp.) on three of your story's key characters, noting role/archetype.

Class 5
02.22.17 **Mile high view.** Study buddy character homework workshop. Mapping your major turns to define the hero's journey/spine/arc of your entire story. **Due 2/27:** READ: Hague detailed turns handout; Trottier p. 20-28. WRITE: I.d. & briefly describe your major turns: use cards, then type up & PDF.

Class 6
03.01.17 **Constructing the story.** Drilling down from turns to sequences. Screen sequence examples in class. **Due 3/13:** READ: sequence handouts. WRITE: Map your sequences on cards, carrying your story from turn to turn. Type up as outline using handout's format, giving each sequence an active, DVD-chapter style headline & 1-sentence description. This is your first stab at step outline. Submit PDF.

SPRING BREAK * No Loyola classes held March 7-12. Class will not meet on March 9. *****

Class 7
03.15.17 **Making a scene.** Also, openings. Action & dialogue that reveals character and hooks us into the story. **Due 3/20:** READ: Script #4 & tell us: how did its opening set the story's stage? Trottier, p. 93-100, 247-249 + p. 148 on (formatting); Mamet & other handouts. WRITE: draft your script's opening (action & dialogue) in screenplay format, pulling us into the world of your story (3-5 pgs.)

Class 8
03.22.17 **Story/structure/character review.** Study buddy script opening swap. Discussion. **Due 3/27:** READ Syd Ch. 9&10. WRITE: Execute a ROUGH draft of your first 10 pgs. (including 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 full Act I of your sequence outline. Submit outline.

Class 9
03.29.17 **Two stories in one.** Action line vs. emotional line. In-class workshop: swap & critique of 10 pages. **Due 4/3:** 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 10
04.05.17 **Dialogue and exposition.** In-class workshop: Reading, analyzing and critiquing dialogue from your 10-page drafts. **Due 4/10:** 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 11
04.12.17 **Writing backward.** How does it all turn out? Workshop: putting your turns on the board to find your ending. **Due 4/17:** READ: Syd Ch. 13-14, Trottier p. 79-82 (theme), p. 134-137 + 243-282 rewriting tips. WRITE: Draft a 1-2 page ending. I.d. your theme. Finish your Act I draft & revise outline so it tracks. Step out the rest of your story through Act III to complete your outline (~ 24 steps). Choose your best dialogue-driven Act I scene for the table read and work on it.

Class 12
04.19.17 **Rewriting.** Now that you know your story's ending, you'll work to revise your draft to ensure the best setup for that payoff. In-class workshop: one-on-ones with instructors + a rewriting lab. **Due 4/26 by 4:15 PM (email AND hard copy):** YOUR FINAL SCRIPT PROJECTS: revised Act I; step outline of your full story w/ major turns marked in bold; polished Act I scene for the table read.

Class 13
04.26.17 **TABLE READ** of each student's scene. BRING COPIES (hard or digital) for your actors/narrator. Scene reads. This is our last class meeting. (There is no final exam for COMM 326 Screenwriting.)