

**SCWR 392-560: Topics in LA**

Winter 2023

Wednesdays - 6:30pm-9:45pm

Location: in-person; Sunset Las Palmas

**Instructor:** Abby Plante

Office Hours: 5:45pm-6:15pm in-person; additional availability virtually via Zoom session. Please schedule with me via email or via Blue Star.

Email: [gplante@depaul.edu](mailto:gplante@depaul.edu) (please allow 48 hours for a response)

**Course Description:**

This course features an in-depth study of an aesthetic, history, business or filmmaking method. Students will analyze the distinctive traits and application of the selected topic within the broader context of the film and television industry in Los Angeles. Specific topics will be selected by the instructor and will vary with each quarter.

**Course Topic Overview:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will gain exposure to working as a creative in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, including navigating career opportunities, hearing from and creating a network of industry professionals, and creating creative projects to be used as professional samples in their respective field. This course should provide an eye-opening experience to students considering the move to Los Angeles and give a sampling of the process of networking, interviewing, pitching, and more. Students will be required to:

- Report on industry news (a topic of their choosing) each week.
- Complete assignments related to career development.
- Deliver a final creative portfolio and pitch, with corresponding items, to be used in professional settings beyond the classroom.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Additional Material:**

Additional reading and screenings may be provided by the instructor. Specifics to be outlined during the course.

**D2L**

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home> and enter using your Campus Connect login and password. Once you are logged on,

click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

### **Course Policies**

All students should use their depaul.edu email addresses and ensure this information is up to date in D2L.

### **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, sent via email, and/or posted under Announcements in D2L.

As a portion of this course includes discussions with guest speakers, please note guests' schedules are subject to availability and may change at the last minute, in which case students will be notified via email and an alternative will be provided for class.

### **COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions**

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the Los Angeles Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

All faculty, staff and students must inform the university if they have tested positive for COVID-19, received a COVID-19 diagnosis, they learn of a positive COVID-19 case at DePaul, or they believe they were exposed to COVID-19. Learn more and find how to report a case about yourself or someone else on DePaul's [COVID-19 Reporting Protocol webpage](#).

### **Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values**

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include a range of perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their

unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and will strive to create an inclusive space that values all perspectives. If at any time the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or at office hours.

### **DePaul University's Land Acknowledgement**

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, and as faculty teaching in and students studying in Los Angeles, we acknowledge our presence on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples. The Gabrielino/Tongva peoples are the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders) and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

### **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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are

expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity. More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

#### *Posting work on online sites, such as Hero*

All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

#### **Copyright Statement:**

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

#### **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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

#### **Incomplete Grades**

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. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

### **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 addressing you by a preferred name and/or personal pronouns. Please advise me of this 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>

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus (312) 362-8002; Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677; Email: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)

Please note this is a safe space and any need for an accommodation due to a disability of any kind will be honored by me. Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible. Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.

### **Trigger Warnings**

The films, shows, clips, readings, lectures, student work, and class discussions in this course may engage deeply with potentially sensitive or traumatizing material, such as: violence, sexual assault/rape, sexism, racism, police brutality, transphobia, homophobia, abuse, suicide, blood, and body-shaming among other issues.

I will note especially graphic/intense content that intend to present and will do my best to foster a classroom environment in which we can relate safely, courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week.

In that spirit, I ask that you label potential triggers in your written work submitted on D2L, and then again before we read aloud or discuss that work in class.

If you would like more specific or personalized triggers identified throughout the course (especially ones not named above), email me and I will do my best to flag them for you. If you believe any piece of course content may be potentially triggering to you, I will happily search for replacement material that you may view or read instead.

**Content Changes** – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling. I will contact you via email with any deviations from the syllabus. Please ensure that mail sent to the email address that you provided to the school is readily accessible.

### **Grading:**

15% - Attendance

20% - Participation

30% - Weekly assignments\*

35% - Final Project

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, F is substantially unsatisfactory

\*As these are often creative assignments, they are in part subjective but with objective components (these are the components the assignment states you need to include). In evaluating, I will be measuring effort given for asterisked items. Students who apply thoughtful analysis, insightful critique and reach the minimum page count/run time (if applicable) will receive full credit for their work.

### **Assignments**

*Late assignments will not be accepted without the prior consent of the instructor and will result in a reduction in the assignment's grade by 50%. **All work submitted should be to D2L by the start of the next class**, unless otherwise stated, and in pdf form, unless otherwise stated. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible should you need an extension. Additionally, for late work submitted more than five business days late, without an okay from me, students waive their right to written feedback on D2L (if applicable).*

### **Weekly Entertainment News**

Source and identify a topic of timely entertainment-based news using the sources listed in the syllabus (or your own). Be prepared to share and discuss at the start of each class. Successful completion of these news discussions will be credited to participation points.

**Resume and Cover Letter**

Utilizing information and resources for revising provided in class, complete and submit a polished resume and cover letter to D2L.

**Tracking Sheet**

Utilizing the guidelines and information provided in the lecture, create a tracking sheet and research three entities of your choosing, based on supposed career paths. Excel is recommended though students may use a preferred format. Submit to D2L upon completion.

**Mentors and Networking**

Utilizing recommendations and information provided in class, identify connections/opportunities for a mentor and networking opportunities that best suit your field and interests, and contact the appropriate parties. For further details, refer to the in-class lecture. Submit only names (of mentors) or titles of networking opportunities solicited on one page to D2L.

**Mentor/Network Connection**

Utilizing the Mentors and Networking assignment as a starting point, schedule a meeting (format is your choice) with a potential mentor or networking contact. Brief yourself on the listed questions in the long form questionnaire on D2L prior to the meeting. After, in complete sentences and paragraph form, answer the questions in the questionnaire. Specify if this is a mentor or networking connection and submit to D2L upon completion.

**Final Pitch Project**

Discussed during class, each student is to submit a final pitch/creative portfolio at the end of the quarter and participate in a mock interview, or general meeting, during the final class. Specifics will be outlined in class though students should anticipate completing a polished resume, cover letter, and creative sample as per their field of expertise. For the creative sample, students will choose from a creative bio (1.5 pages, single spaced) or a reel (2 minutes). A hybrid or third option for the creative sample may replace the bio or reel upon discussion with and approval from the professor. All materials for the final are to be tailored to the focus of the general meeting, as laid out in class. Students will not be able to change the focus of the meeting past the deadline given in class by the professor.

**Resources:**

**Entertainment News Resources:**

<https://www.imdb.com/news/top>  
<https://blog.finaldraft.com/>  
<https://variety.com/>  
<https://deadline.com/>  
<https://www.kcrw.com/culture/shows>  
<https://www.tracking-board.com/>

**Job Resources:**

<https://staffmeup.com/>  
<https://freethework.com/jobs>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PAJobsLA/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/filmcrewjobs/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/223959770973083/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ineedapa/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/PaidProductionJobs/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/505485066224030/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/419747488193888/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/602848553166707/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1444645689098503/>

**Resources for Screenwriting:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/latvwriters>  
<https://www.networkisa.org/>  
<https://www.coverfly.com/>  
<https://blcklst.com/>  
<https://scriptpipeline.com/>

**Networking:**

<https://hrts.org/hrts-events-calendar/>  
<https://www.womenmedia.com/events/>  
<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/networking-organizations-know-54532/>  
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/hollywoods-top-14-inclusive-networking-groups-1205291/>

**Mentorship:**

<https://hrts.org/hrts-mentorship-program-2021/>  
<https://www.unlockherpotential.com/>



<https://womeninfilm.org/programs/mentoring/>  
<https://eipma.org/resources.html>  
<https://www.cinemaexchange.org/nefl6-industry-mentors/>

## **Course Outline**

### **Week 1:**

Wednesday, 1/11

Introduction: Course Overview, Introductions, Career Goals; Discussion of final project

#### **Assignment due by next class:**

- Submit completed resume to D2L, prepare to review and workshop next class
- Submit completed cover letter to D2L
- Come up with an idea for the type of general meeting you'd take five years out from graduation; submit idea to D2L
- Submit five guest questions for guests weeks 6,7,9; submit to D2L (*guests will be in the following fields: distribution, features or TV screenwriting, TV fellowships, directing or editing, producing*)
- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss

### **Week 2:**

Wednesday, 1/18

Topic: Networking & Mentorship

Topic: Resumes (Review and Workshop) (4 as a class, then small groups)

Housekeeping: assign students for workshop timeslots for creative portfolio piece

#### **Assignment due by next class:**

- Revise resume based on in-class feedback; submit to D2L
- Identify three potential industry mentors; reach out to them
- Identify and schedule two networking "entities" (individuals, events, virtual or otherwise) to attend/plan for
- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss

### **Week 3:**

Wednesday, 1/25

Topic: Personal Pitching Lecture/Disney Method

Topic: Cover Letters (Review and Workshop) (4 as a class, then small groups)

Assignment due by next class:

- Create tracking sheet as per today's lecture
- Revise cover letter based on in-class feedback; submit to D2L
- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss

**Week 4:**

Wednesday, 2/1

Lecture/Group Discussion: Harassment/sexual harassment in the industry

In-Class: creative bio and reel samples

Housekeeping: touch base with professor on focus for creative portfolio and final pitch

In-Class: workshop reels (2 students)

Assignment due by next class:

- Finalize idea with Abby for the type of general meeting you'd like to take five years out from graduation as the simulation for the final
- Begin working on final pitch project
- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss

**Week 5:**

Wednesday, 2/8

In-Class: workshop creative portfolio piece (6 students)

Assignment due by next class:

- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss
- Continue to work on final pitch project

**Week 6:**

Wednesday, 2/15

Guest Speaker

In-Class: workshop creative portfolio piece (4)

Assignment due by next class:

- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss
- Continue to work on final pitch project

**Week 7:**

Wednesday, 2/22

Guest Speaker

In-Class: workshop creative portfolio piece (4)

Assignment due by next class:

- Continue to work on final pitch project
- Summarize an article on trending entertainment news; be prepared to discuss

**Week 8:**

Wednesday, 3/1

Topic: Overview of Final

Housekeeping: sign up for final pitch time

In-Class: workshop creative portfolio piece (4)

Assignment due by next class:

- By now in the quarter, should have met with a mentor or networking contact as per instructions during week 2; fill out long form questionnaire form on D2L for meeting and submit to D2L
- Continue to work on final pitch project

**Week 9:**

Wednesday, 3/8

Topic: From LAQ to Now

Guest: Abby

In-Class: workshop creative portfolio piece (2)

**Begin final pitch meetings (7)**

Assignment due by next class:

- **Finalize pitch project; turn in to D2L**

**Week 10:**

Wednesday, 3/15

Final pitch meetings

Final Due: Pitch general meeting portfolio materials due today