SCREENWRITING (MFA)

The MFA in Screenwriting is the terminal degree in writing for film and television. The program culminates in the successful completion of the MFA thesis screenplay or teleplay.

The MFA Screenwriting Degree has now been split into two (2) concentrations. Students are required to choose one (1) of the following:

- Standard
- Comedy

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Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Describe standard structural paradigms and narrative techniques utilized in the writing of feature films and television shows.
- Assess the narrative strengths and weaknesses of a given piece of scripted content.
- Apply a professional creative process to the development of film and television story concepts.
- Prepare a story pitch for a screenplay or pilot that meets professional standards.
- Write screenplays and teleplays using standard entertainment industry format.
- Complete the first draft of a feature screenplay or television pilot on deadline.
- Rewrite an original screenplay or teleplay based on critical feedback.

Degree Requirements

Course Requirements

- Course requirements are determined by the concentration selected.
- No Introductory Course may be substituted for any other course at any level.

Optional Los Angeles Quarter

Students may apply to participate in the Los Angeles Quarter Program for the spring of their second year; they will spend 12 weeks in Hollywood doing industry internships, living with their fellow DePaul classmates, and having twice-weekly classes on an industry lot where they will have intimate question and answer sessions with industry professionals in all aspects of the film, TV, and videogame world. If selected to participate in the LA program, MFA Screenwriting students would take SCWR 441 and FILM 499 in Los Angeles.

MFA Thesis

Students in the MFA in Screenwriting program must complete a MFA Thesis project which consists of either a feature length screenplay or an original television pilot plus a "show bible" and outlines for six future episodes. We expect the thesis projects to be at a level of quality that would warrant representation by literary agents and managers. Satisfactory completion of the MFA Thesis project is determined by the MFA Advisor Committee (see below).

Student’s MFA Advisor Committee

In the spring quarter of their first year, all MFA candidates will be assigned two thesis committee members plus their thesis instructor; these three faculty members will be the MFA Advisor Committee. The MFA Advisor Committee will offer suggestions and feedback on the student’s work and help guide the student during the thesis phase of the program. They will ultimately judge the final thesis project as pass or fail.

MFA Thesis Timeline: Year One

Students will enroll in SCWR 550 or SCWR 500, in which they will begin to develop their thesis project. This course will conclude with students pitching their stories to their individual MFA Advisor Committee for feedback.

MFA Thesis Timeline: Year Two

The first draft of the thesis project must be submitted to the Advisor Committee on the last day of final exams for the fall quarter. Writers will get notes from their committee at the start of the winter quarter. The final draft of the thesis script will be sent to the committee on the last day of final exams for the winter quarter. The committees will meet during the spring quarter to evaluate thesis projects. Theses chairs will notify each student as to whether they received “distinction,” a “pass,” or a “rewrite” decision. If a student passes, they must then complete their coursework in order to graduate. If a student does not pass, the writer must resubmit his or her thesis by an assigned due date determined by the thesis instructor. The re-defense will take place no later than Friday of week 10 of the spring quarter. If the student passes, he or she can move on to graduation assuming all courses are complete. If the student has a second non-pass, he or she must enroll in SCWR 701 (a zero credit hour and zero cost class) to remain enrolled for the summer session after completion of the year two coursework. The rewritten script is due by the last day of final exams for Summer I. The defense will take place before the end of the Summer II session. If the student passes, he or she may apply for the next round of graduation. If the student does not pass, he or she may elect to speak with the advising office about applying his or her course credit hours to an M.S. in Cinema Production degree.

Degree Requirements

Students in this degree program must meet the following requirements:

- Complete a minimum of 68 graduate credit hours in the designated degree program.
- Complete all graduate courses and requirements listed in the designated degree program.
- Earn a grade of C- or better in all graduate courses of the designated degree program.
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Satisfactorily complete the MFA thesis as determined by the student’s MFA Advisor Committee.
- Students cannot count credit earned towards a previously awarded master’s or MFA degree toward the completion of this MFA program.

For DePaul’s policy on repeat graduate courses and a complete list of academic policies see the DePaul Graduate Handbook.

Students are required to choose one of the following concentrations:

- Comedy Concentration, Screenwriting (MFA) (https://catalog.dePaul.edu/Programs/screenwriting-mfa/comedy-concentration-screenwriting-mfa/)
Screenwriting (MFA)

- Standard Concentration, Screenwriting (MFA) (https://catalog.depaul.edu/programs/screenwriting-mfa/standard-concentration-screenwriting-mfa/)