

# DC 222 Classic Hollywood Film Structure

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**When:** Monday and Wednesday 1:30pm – 4:45pm  
**Where:** 14 EAS RM 801

**Instructor:** Matt Quinn · [mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu) · 312-362-5807 · RM 404 (CDM Building)  
**Office Hours:** M 12:30pm – 1:30pm, W 12:30pm – 1:30pm

## Summary of Course

Critical analysis of successful Hollywood films and their narrative structures. Films of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will learn how to recognize classical three-act structure in finished films and scripts. Students will develop a cinematic language with which to discuss films as well as a toolbox of techniques to use when making films. Key story concepts to be discussed include: protagonist, antagonist, want versus need, elements of the future, poetic justice, planting and payoff, catalyst, climax, and Aristotelian terminology.

## Course Objectives

- Students will develop a solid understanding of the relationship between character and story structure.
- Students will be able to identify the various narrative tools available to filmmakers in the writing and producing process.
- Students will develop a cinematic vocabulary with which to discuss films critically.

## Learning Domain Description

DC 222 Classic Hollywood Film Structure is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.

- Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
- Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
- Students will be able to contextualize a work of art. They will be able to do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre. They will also be able to contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

### Writing Expectations

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of ten pages of writing for this course.

### Textbooks

"Tools of Screenwriting" by David Howard and Edward Mabley ISBN-10: 0312119089 (Required)

### Prerequisites

None

### Grading

Attendance & Participation	15%
Screening Response Assignments	45%
Final Paper	40%

*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 in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.*

### Textbooks

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### D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:  
<https://login.depaul.edu/cas/login?service=https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/orgtools/CAS/Default.aspx>  
 and enter using your campus connect logon 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.

## Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up to class, arriving more than 10 minutes late to class or departing before class is formally dismissed will constitute a reduction in your overall grade. Absent students will be required to participate in a D2L lecture discussion forum where they will respond to a specific topic posted by the instructor.

## Course Outline

### Class 1 – Monday, July 20<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Course Intro, Origin of Cinematic Storytelling

Screening: INDIANA JONES AND THE RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

Assignment: Screening Response, "The Tools of Screenwriting" Pages 3-27

### Class 2 – Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>

Lecture: Character and Conflict

Screening: AMERICAN HUSTLE

Assignment: Screening Response, "The Tools of Screenwriting" Pages 28-39

### Class 3 – Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Paradigm Three Act Structure

Screening: BAREFOOT IN THE PARK

Assignment: Screening Response, "The Tools of Screenwriting" Pages 43-54

### Class 4 – Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: A Hero with a Thousand Faces

Screening: THE LEGO MOVIE

Assignment: Screening Response

### Class 5 – Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>

Lecture: Sequence Approach and Save the Cat

Screening: ALIENS

Assignment: Screening Response

### Class 6 – Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Writer's Toolbox Part I

Screening: NIGHTCRAWLER

Assignment: Screening Response, "The Tools of Screenwriting" Pages 55-71

**Class 7 – Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Writer's Toolbox Part II

Screening: ELECTION

*Assignment: Screening Response, "The Tools of Screenwriting" Pages 72-94*

**Class 8 – Wednesday, August 12<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Genre Conventions

Screening: ZODIAC

*Assignment: Screening Response*

**Class 9 – Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Alternative Methods

Screening: DAZED AND CONFUSED

*Assignment: Screening Response*

**Class 10 – Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: The Future of Cinematic Storytelling

**Assignments****Screening Response Assignments (45% of final grade)**

After each class, the instructor will post a topic in regards to the film that was screened and your response must be a minimum of 500 words, which is essentially two double-spaced typed Word document pages. The response must then be submitted to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link by the assigned due date. Due to the compressed Summer Session schedule, you will have four days to complete each response assignment.

- Monday Screening Response Assignments are due on Fridays by 11:59pm.
- Wednesday Screening Response Assignments are due on Sundays by 11:59pm

**Final Paper (40% of final grade)**

Write an analysis using the Classical Hollywood storytelling conventions we have discussed throughout the quarter on one screenplay of your choosing (script list provided below). The analysis should NOT be a linear retelling of the script's plot. You must discuss the narrative devices employed throughout to build a cohesive and engaging narrative or, depending on your argument, why the current draft of the script will fail to connect with mainstream audiences. You MUST have a definitive opinion on the material and defend it with specific examples from the script that illustrate the conventions we have discussed this quarter –

Don't waiver.

The paper is due via the corresponding D2L Dropbox assignment link on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> by 1:30pm. No late assignments will be accepted. A few things to keep in mind:

- Remember, your opinion is not wrong as long as you can support it with specific examples from the film.
- In an effort to present your work objectively, please do not use any personal pronouns when referring to your opinion, such as "I feel this film exhibits poor structure" – It is clear you are saying it because the entire paper is your opinion.
- The paper must be no less than four pages - MLA Formatting Required  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>

Choose ONE of the following scripts for your analysis (download via the D2L Content Page):

#### THE BRINGING

Genre: Horror

Logline: A man investigating the mysterious death of Elisa Lam, who was found dead in the water tanks on the roof of the Cecil Hotel, stumbles into a nightmare

#### PASSENGERS

Genre: Sci-Fi

Logline: A spaceship passenger is prematurely thawed from a cryogenic slumber a century before anyone else.

#### THE FOUNDER

Genre: Drama

Logline: Details the rise of the McDonald's fast-food empire.

#### THE NEST

Genre: Comedy

Logline: Adult sisters throw a final massive party at their parents house before it is sold to new homeowners.

## Attitude

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

## Civil Discourse

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

## Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

## Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

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## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her

own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

## Withdrawal

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

## Retroactive Withdrawal

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
Winter Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
Spring Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
Summer Terms:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

## Excused Absence

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>.

Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

## Incomplete

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. CDM policy

requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in [MyCDM](#).

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677

Fax: (773)325.3720

TTY: (773)325.7296