

# DC 222 Film Structure

**When:** Thursday 10:00 am - 1:15 PM

**Where:** 14 EAS RM 214

**Instructor:** James Syrek Jsyrek@depaul.edu

**Office Hours:** Wed 4-5:30 PM CDM 703

## Summary of Course

Critical analysis of three-act film structure as well as an introduction to alternative narrative structures including, but not limited to, dual protagonist, ensemble, and non-linear structures. Films of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will develop a cinematic language with which to discuss films as well as a toolbox of techniques to use when making films.

## Learning Outcomes

- 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.

## Textbooks

Assigned digitized readings and handouts provided by the instructor.

## Websites

D2L

COLTube

## Prerequisites

None

## Grading

Attendance / Participation 10%

Screening Response Assignments 50%

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.

## Course Outline

### Class 1

Lecture: Course Intro; Elements of a Viable Story

\*Screening: *Hell or High Water*

Assignment: Screening Response, narrative structure handout reading

\*First screening will be outside of class on COLTube & part of your first assignment

### Class 2

Lecture: Character & Conflict

Screening: *Training Day*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 3

Lecture: Poetics; Plot or Character?

Screening: *Pariah*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 4

Lecture: A Hero with a Thousand Faces

Screening: *The Descendants*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 5

Lecture: Paradigm of Dramatic Structure; Save the Cat

Screening: *Moonlight*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 6

Midterm week - Special screening in class, to be announced

Assignment: instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 7

Lecture: Tragedies

Screening: *The Wrestler*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 8

Lecture: Adaptations

Screening: *Fantastic Mr. Fox*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

### Class 9

Lecture: Ordering of Events

Screening: *500 Days of Summer*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

## Class 10

Lecture: Ensembles

Screening: *Stand By Me*

Assignment: Screening Response, instructor-provided reading assignments on D2L

## Assignments

### Screening Response Assignments (50% of final grade)

The instructor will post a topic for you to write about in regards to the lecture, the film that was screened, and the corresponding screenplay/reading assignment after each class. Your response must be a minimum of 500 words, which is essentially two double spaced typed Word document pages. The document must then be saved as a PDF and submitted to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link by the assigned due date. There are a total of nine Screening Response assignments for the quarter, each worth five points.

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

Write an analysis using the storytelling conventions we have discussed throughout the quarter on one film of your choosing from a list of movies provided by your instructor. The analysis should NOT be a linear retelling of the film's plot. You must discuss the narrative devices employed throughout to build a cohesive and engaging narrative. You MUST have a definitive opinion on the material and defend it with specific examples from the movie that illustrate the conventions we have discussed this quarter – Don't waiver.

- 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/>

## 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 issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such issues.

## Online Students

You must email me @ [jsyrek@depaul.edu](mailto:jsyrek@depaul.edu) by the end of week 1 to check in that you've read the syllabus and understand the course ahead. Online students who do not check in will be reported to DePaul for non-attendance.

Class videos post each week to D2L by Thursday evening. You must view each week's lecture within 72 hours. For your participation, you'll be turning in notes you take from viewing the class lecture, to D2L and each week's designated dropbox folder.

## Attendance (in-class students only)

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. Starting w/absence #2, each class missed results in a 5% reduction of your overall qtr grade automatically at the end of the quarter. This is non-negotiable.

## College Policies

### 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. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

### Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

### 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: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### 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: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296