

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 502 701/710: Story Structures

Fall 2017

Tuesday 5:45-9:00 PM, 14 East Jackson LL105 and online

Professor Brad Riddell: brad.riddell@depaul.edu, 312-362-5212

Office Hours: T/W 2:00-5:00 PM in CDM 521 and by appointment

Course Description:

Advanced critical analysis of film structures beginning with traditional linear narratives told in three acts, and ultimately exploring non-traditional feature film structures including but not limited to: ensemble, dual protagonist, and non-linear. Films will range from classic Hollywood films to contemporary independent films. Students will learn the philosophies and terminologies of various theorists (including Snyder, Field, Campbell, Howard, Vogler, and Film Crit Hulk) in order to develop a language and process through which to discuss and create cinematic narrative.

Course Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives through completion of several short writing assignments, and one ten page paper.

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- examine the relationship between a film's characters and its story structure
- explain *Three Act Structure* and *The Hero's Journey*
- discuss the manner in which story structure is influenced by genre
- employ *The Sequence Approach* and *Save the Cat* paradigms
- analyze nontraditional narratives as a counterpoint to "classic" structure
- use a cinematic vocabulary to discuss films critically and creatively

Required Textbooks:

Screenwriting 101 by Film Crit Hulk

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There, you will find each week's recorded lecture (available shortly after the in-class section meets), additional reading materials, checklists, a calendar, and all of your assignments. Also posted on D2L will be a weekly discussion forum for questions and thoughts concerning the films, the lectures, and assignments.

The films screened in class, as well as those which require individual viewing, are available on **ColTube** – an online DePaul video player available for Mac and PC. There is a ColTube link on the course D2L page. <http://coltube.cdm.depaul.edu/ColTube/Home/>

Course Schedule:

Character Development and Three-Act Structure

Sept. 12, Week 1: Course introduction. What is a movie? Discuss key dramatic terms.
Screen: Various Scenes and Shorts (in class)

Sept. 19, Week 2: Aristotle and The Three-Act Structure.
Read: *Glossary, Screenwriting Tools, What is a Screenplay, Classic Screenplay Structure*
Screen: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (in class) and *Tangerine* (independently)

Sept. 26, Week 3: Character development across three acts.
Read: *Structure and Character, Schechter on Character, Tootsie: Mixed Messages*
Watch: *Lars and the Real Girl* (in class) and *Tootsie* (independently)

The Hero's Journey

Oct. 3, Week 4: The Hero's Journey Part I.
Read: *J. Campbell from The Hero with a Thousand Faces*
Watch: *The Silence of the Lambs* (in class) and *The Babadook* (independently)

Oct. 10, Week 5: The Hero's Journey Part II.
Read: *Vogler: The Writer's Journey*
Watch: *Moon* (in class) and *The Signal* (independently)

Ensemble Films

Oct. 17, Week 6: Ensemble Films.
Read: *Willis and LoBrutto on DTRT*
Watch: *Do the Right Thing* (in class) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (independently)

The Sequence Approach and Save the Cat

Oct. 24, Week 7: Introduction to Sequences and Save the Cat.
Read: *Gulino on Sequences, Howard On Sequences, and Save the Cat Intro* by Snyder
Watch: *Thelma and Louise* (in class) and *Midnight Run* (independently)

Oct. 31, Week 8: Sequence Approach Part II
Read: *Start Screenwriting 101* by Film Crit Hulk, *Sequence Structure*
Watch: *Winter's Bone* (in class) and *Grandma* (independently)

Alternative Narrative

Nov. 7, Week 9: Alternative Narrative Part I.
Read: Ghislotti on *Memento*, *Memento Mori* (short story)
Watch: *Memento* (in class), and *Moonlight* (independently)

Review

Nov 14, Week 10: Quarter Review, screen *Coherence* (in class)

Assignments

There are six required assignments. The one required test can be found under “Quizzes” in D2L. The required essays will be delivered using “Submissions.” Tests and Submissions will close at the assigned time.

Under “**Checklists**” on D2L you will find a checklist of requirements for each class session that will help you to keep up with the schedule. I can monitor your progress according to the checklist. Keep up with the lists and you will be fine.

Assignment 1: *Tootsie* response: 100 Points, Due 5PM Oct. 3th

Midterm: Terminology Review test: 100 points, Due 5PM Oct. 10th

Assignment 2: *The Signal* rewrite: 100 points, Due 5PM Oct. 17th

Assignment 3: *Little Miss Sunshine* response: 100 points, Due 5PM Oct. 24th

Assignment 4: *Grandma* response: 100 points, Due 5PM Nov. 14th

Final: Personal Reflection Essay (Film Crit Hulk): 100 points, Due 5:30 PM Nov. 21st

Readings and lecture slides can be downloaded from “Content” on D2L after the in-class session. You are expected to have read **before** watching or attending the lecture.

Grading:

Late work will not be accepted. 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.

C- is the minimum passing grade in this class.

A level writing demonstrates accurate, thorough comprehension of the material but also provides a unique take and excellent point of view. It offers clear, creative thought.

B level writing demonstrates mostly accurate, mostly thorough comprehension of the material and attempts to provide a creative take or point of view.

C level writing is not entirely accurate nor is it comprehensive. It does not present a notable creative approach to discussing the material.

D level writing may as well be an **F**. It indicates a serious lack of effort, a total failure to comprehend the material, and no effort toward an original point of view.

This is graduate school. Work that contains grammatical errors, misspellings, or generally poor and unclear construction will rarely if ever achieve a grade of **A** or **B** no matter how good the actual thinking presented might be.

Laptops/Cell Phones:

Laptops may remain open during lectures and discussions. If the instructor suspects a student of using the laptop for applications not related to participating in class, he/she may lose privileges. Cell Phone usage will be permitted during class breaks.

In-Class Workshops

Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in weekly small group workshop sessions. Be truthful, but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated. Please refer to the course outline for specific workshop dates.

Decorum and Civil Discourse:

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be socially responsible leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Obvious inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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, posted under Announcements in D2L, and students will be notified 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!

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