

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 304/405: Topics in Screenwriting

The John Hughes Experience

Spring, 2018

Wednesday 1:30-4:45 PM, CDM 924

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

Office Hours: TH: 1:45-3:15 PM, F: 9:30-11:00 AM, and by appointment.

Description:

Advanced study in screenwriting focusing on a specific genre each quarter such as: Science Fiction, Film Noir, Comedy, Action-Adventure, Nonfiction, etc. May be repeated for credit.

Prerequisites:

DC 101 or DC 201

Course Outcomes:

In addition to completing analytical writing assignments, students will write one short screenplay and a treatment for a feature screenplay.

Learning Objectives:

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

- define the common themes and aesthetics of the John Hughes' filmography
- discuss the evolution of Hughes' voice and his influence on American cinema
- analyze Hughes' work critically and debate its viability in a modern context
- apply a Hughesian aesthetic to the creation of original screenwriting projects
- evaluate the writing of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Textbooks

Don't You Forget About Me: Contemporary Writers on the Films of John Hughes Ed. by Jaime Clarke (**Required**). Additional readings provided by instructor.

Screenwriting Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft is strongly recommended for those with a serious career focus on screenwriting, producing, and/or directing. The software is \$99 with a student discount at: <http://www.finaldraft.com/edu>.

You may also obtain a free download of the Celtx screenwriting program at:

<https://www.celtx.com/index.html>. Amazon Story Writer is available at:

<https://storywriter.amazon.com/>. Adobe Story can be found here:

<https://story.adobe.com/en-us/> **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**. There you will find course news, reading materials, and discussion boards for posting assignments and holding conversations. The *Checklist* will be utilized in order to help you stay abreast with this syllabus.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: March 28

- LECTURE: Course introduction
- SCREEN: *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983)
- READ:
 - *Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962* by Andrew Sarris (D2L)
 - *Nothing Compares to Hughes* (D2L)
 - *Don't You Forget About Me* (DYFM):
 - Forward/Introduction
 - Which John Hughes Character are You? (96)
 - How John Hughes Altered My Life (192)

Week 2: April 4

- LECTURE: Hughes Biography & Influences
- SCREEN: *Sixteen Candles* (1984)
- READ:
 - DYFM:
 - Enchanted Night: The Magic of Sixteen Candles (25)
 - Blowing It: My Sixteen Candles (59)
 - I Dated Molly Ringwald, Sort Of (139)
 - The Scream, With Lip Gloss (162)
 - Make a Wish: The First Kiss Lasts Forever (173)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Sixteen Candles* paper

Week 3: April 11

- LECTURE: From *Lampoon* to *Sixteen Candles* and the evolving Hughes Aesthetic
- SCREEN: *The Breakfast Club* (1985)
- READ:
 - DYFM
 - A Slut or Prude: *The Breakfast Club* as a Feminist Primer (15)
 - The Ghost of Ally Sheedy (149)
 - In What Ways Does the Author's Use of a Prison Symbolize... (184)
- ASSIGNMENT: *The Breakfast Club* paper

Week 4: April 18

- LECTURE: *The Breakfast Club* and the Prolific Auteur of a Generation
- SCREEN: *Pretty in Pink* (1986)
- READ:
 - *Awkward Girls Should Never Have Makeovers* (D2L)

- DYFM
 - Can't Help Falling in Love (67)
 - Pretty in Penury (76)
 - That's Not a Name, That a Major Appliance (86)
 - La Vie En Rose: Pretty in Pink (106)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Pretty in Pink* paper. Short screenplay.

Week 5: April 25

- LECTURE: Classism, Feminism, and Duckie's Downfall in *Pretty in Pink*
- WORKSHOP: Pitch Short Scripts + Loglines

Week 6: May 2

- LECTURE: Hughes' Love for Chicago and Music (and his hatred for Hollywood)
- SCREEN: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986)
- READING:
 - *The Impact of Social Class* (D2L)
 - DYFM
 - John Hughes Goes Deep: The Unexpected Heviosity of *Ferris* (5)
 - Ferris Bueller: An Infatuation, A Life Lesson...(116)
 - Real Men Don't Eat Quiche...(129)
 - Deep Ego Identification with Ferris Bueller (184)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* paper

Week 7: May 9

- LECTURE: When Cameron Was in Egypt's Land: The Sidekick Hero
- SCREEN: *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987)
- READING:
 - DYFM
 - You Look Good Wearing My Future (47)
 - My Mary (155)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Some Kind of Wonderful* paper

Week 8: May 16

- LECTURE: *Some Kind of Wonderful* and the Cinematic Mulligan
- SCREEN: *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* (1987)
- READ:
 - *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* (D2L)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* paper

Week 9: May 23

- LECTURE: Hughes takes on Adulthood
- SCREEN: *She's Having a Baby* (1988)
- Read:
 - *Life Moves Pretty Fast + She's Having a Baby* (D2L)
- ASSIGNMENT: *She's Having a Baby* paper. First draft of feature treatment.

Week 10: May 30LECTURE: Flopping *Baby* and the Death of Candy

WORKSHOP: Feature Treatments

Final Exam: June 6, 11:30 AM-1:145 PM.Screen Final Films, Deliver revised feature treatments. **Attendance is required.****Assignments****Papers**

You will write a total of seven short papers throughout the quarter based on the films and readings we cover in class. After each film, a set of discussion questions will be posted under "Submissions" on D2L. Write a minimum one-page (250 words total for ALL questions, and I will check word count) response. Each paper represents 5% of your final grade (35% in total). Please save files as a PDF, and use your last name and the name of the assignment: **YourName.Bueller.Buller.Bueller.pdf**

For Cinema majors and graduate students, **C-** is the minimum passing grade.

A level writing demonstrates 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 thorough comprehension of the material and attempts to provide a creative take or point of view.

C level writing is lacking in depth on the topic, and could be considered superficial. 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.

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.

Short Screenplay

You will submit a short screenplay for the midterm. It may be selected by the students in the Topics in Cinema section for production. Here are some things to keep in mind about the script:

1. This is a low-budget project.
2. No more than eight pages.
3. No more than two locations.
4. The short should not be a remake or spoof, but should be inspired by the Hughes aesthetic/oeuvre in a way that you can clearly define for the class.

Feature Treatment

For your final, you will deliver a feature film treatment that is six-to-eight pages long, and is in some clearly definable way inspired by the Hughes aesthetic/oeuvre, and/or our discussions in class. The story should not be a remake or spoof.

For the short script and the feature treatment you will be graded on:

- Style, grammar, and format.
- The story's relationship to Hughes.
- The viability of the story concept.
- The execution of structure, theme, and character development.

Grading Policy

Short Papers (7): 5 points each

Short Screenplay: 30 Points

Feature Treatment: 35 Points

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. **Late work is rarely accepted.**

Attendance:

One unexcused absence will be allowed without penalty. Every unexcused absence thereafter will result in a 5% deduction of your final grade. Absences may be excused with proper documentation (doctor's note, funeral notice for death in the family, etc.).

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 so long as the work does not glorify hate of any kind. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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.

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.

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