

“What is the robbery of a bank compared to the founding of a bank?” -Bertolt Brecht

THE HEIST FILM

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY | WINTER QUARTER 2022
FILM 390/490-501 ADVANCED TOPICS IN CINEMA
THURSDAYS | 1:30PM | CDM CENTER ROOM 708
Instructor: Eric Marsh | marsh@cdm.depaul.edu
Virtual Office Hours: Fridays, 8AM-2PM, by email appointment only

Course Description - This course explores cinematic robbery. Focusing on the heist (or ‘caper’) film, the class will trace the history and trajectory of this unique and flexible genre from its origins in film noir and gangster films of classic Hollywood to its explosive emergence in the post-WWII era in Europe and beyond. Students will examine the narrative and stylistic conventions of the heist film, its evolving relationship with audiences over time through revision and variation, as well as its function as social commentary. Additionally, students will create their own projects and explore the heist as allegory for the filmmaking process: an imaginative and creative collaboration involving ideas and vision, planning and preparation, action and execution, and, ultimately, the production of an artistic or poetic work.

Course Management System - All course materials will be available to you on [D2L](#).

Required Text – All readings will be provided by the instructor on [D2L](#).

The Heist Film: Stealing With Style by Daryl Lee (2014)

American Film Genres by Stuart Kaminsky (1973)

A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre by Rick Altman (1984)

+ various supplemental readings will be assigned weekly and for group projects

Remote Learning - Classroom meetings and discussions will be held via [ZOOM](#) during **the first two weeks of class**. I will post a link to the video chat on the D2L homepage roughly 10-15 minutes before scheduled start. We will resume class **in-person** on January 20, 2022.

Basis for Evaluation

Crew Projects	60%
Final Project	20%
Attendance & Participation	20%
Total	100%

A = 100 – 94, A- = 93 – 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE & COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1	1/6	Introduction: A Brief History of Cinematic Robbery
WEEK 2	1/13	Birth of a Genre
WEEK 3	1/20	The Art of Failure
WEEK 4	1/27	Heist as Satire
WEEK 5	2/3	The Heist Goes Mainstream
WEEK 6	2/10	The Heist Adapts Its Message
WEEK 7	2/17	Melville & Minimalism
WEEK 8	2/24	Mann & Masculinity
WEEK 9	3/3	Hollywood and The Black Stickup
WEEK 10	3/10	Fin de Siecle: Death & Rebirth
FINALS	3/17	The 21st Century Heist Film (11:30AM-1:45PM)

Content & Schedule Changes – The course schedule is subject to change depending on class progress, time constraints, and material availability. The overall workload, however, will not change. Make sure you pace yourself accordingly. You will be notified of any changes in the syllabus in a timely fashion.

Screenings - All films assigned for the course will be made available to stream on D2L. All of the assigned films are required “texts” for the course, and as such, are *mandatory*.

Here is the (subject-to-change) list of what we will be watching:

The Asphalt Jungle, 1950, Huston, USA, 112 min
The Lavender Hill Mob, 1951, Chrichton, UK, 81 min
Du rififi chez les hommes, 1955, Dassin, France, 115 min
The Killing, 1956, Kubrick, USA, 85 min
Bob le Flambeur, 1956, Melville, France, 102 min
Big Deal on Madonna Street, 1958, Monicelli, Italy, 111 min
Assault on the Pay Train, 1962, Farias, Brazil, 102 min
How To Steal a Million, 1966, Wyler, USA, 123 min
Le Cercle Rouge, 1970, Melville, France, 140 min
Thief, 1981, Mann, USA, 123 min
Heat, 1995, Mann, USA, 170 min
Dead Presidents, 1995, d. Hughes Bros, USA, 119 min
Set it Off, 1996, d. Gray, USA, 123 mins
Ocean’s 11, 2001, Soderbergh, USA, 117 min

(Does not include additional films that will be assigned for projects)

Assignment Breakdown & Due Dates

All projects in this course will be done collaboratively, in groups, aka CREWS. CREWS will randomly be assigned for each group project. Each crew will receive instructions from me (aka things to read, watch, research) and work together to formulate both a paper and video/presentation detailing and synthesizing their findings.

GROUP PROJECT #1: HEISTS IN THE 1950s (25%)

Crews will research and present on a wide variety of heist films from the genre's first decade. Due 2/3.

GROUP PROJECT #2: THE HEIST ADAPTS ITS MESSAGE (25%)

Crews will research and present on a wide variety of heist films from the 1960s and 1970s. Due 2/17.

GROUP PROJECT #3: HEISTS AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY (10%)

Each student will watch, research, and write about a heist film from the 1980s and 1990s, and we will *collectively* discuss them in class. Due 3/10.

FINAL PROJECT (20%)

Students will have the opportunity to form their own crews - or work as a lone wolf - and create a project inspired by our journey through the heist genre. This could be a movie, research paper, video essay, etc. Process and methodology will be up to the student(s). Due 3/17.

Course Policies - In addition to the DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following policies apply to this course:

Weekly Updates – After each class meeting I will post an update on D2L detailing the immediate class “business”: assignments, readings, screenings, etc, anything that you need to *do* before the next class meeting. You may also keep track of this on the D2L content page through the checklist function in the weekly modules. If you want to keep up with the course you *must* read these updates or use the checklist method on D2L and make sure you're on track. No excuses.

Attendance - Whether on Zoom or In-Person, Attendance is mandatory. However: given the extraordinary circumstances of our current situation I understand that this may not always be possible for a variety of reasons. All of the class sessions, on zoom or in-person, will be recorded and available to you on D2L. If you are not able to attend any of our

meetings please reach out to me via email and *let me know ahead of time*. Every situation will be handled according to individual circumstances and the instructor's discretion.

Reading Assignments - Reading assignments are *mandatory*. Lectures may introduce additional material not available in the readings, and the readings may explore concepts not mentioned in class. All readings will be provided on D2L.

Grading - Grades and/or written feedback will be given for each assignment. In order to be accepted for grading, assignments must be turned in on time. *Late work will receive zero points for grading*. Failure to turn in even one assignment has a significant impact on your grade.

Group Evaluations - For group projects, each team member is required to turn in a written evaluation of their experience. If all evaluations are uniformly positive, all group members will share the grades evenly. If evaluations are negative, the grades of the group members will vary (and not in a good way). In other words: don't double cross your crew.

Class Discussion - Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the films and reading assignments. Students must keep up with the readings and films to participate in class discussion. If you come to class without having watched the films, you will be marked absent.

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 issues.

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.

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 here

Academic Integrity - Plagiarism is dishonest behavior and therefore violates collegiality as well as University policy. Any cases of plagiarism will automatically receive a zero and be reported to departmental and University officials for disciplinary action. You should

familiarize yourself with behavior that constitutes plagiarism by reviewing the University's policy regarding academic dishonesty at:

<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/Resources/Students/index.html>

Special Needs - 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.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd. Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296

COVID-19 Health and Safety Precautions - Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the City of Chicago Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

[COVID-19 Updates and Guidance](#)

[DePaul Health and Safety Practices](#)

[Protocol for Reporting Confirmed COVID-19 Cases or Exposure](#)

[More Information for Students](#)