

Course Description

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 Objectives | *Students will be able to...*

- 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.

Required Texts

In this class, films are the essential texts. All additional readings will be posted by the instructor on D2L.

Course Management:

This course is managed on D2L, where both the online and in-class sections are linked. There, you will find each week's recorded lecture (available shortly after 6 PM each day that the in-class section meets), required reading material, 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 D2L.

GRADE PROFILES

A level writing demonstrates clear, relevant, accurate & deep comprehension of key concepts with a specific point of view. It offers independent, creative thought.

B level writing demonstrates mostly clear, relevant, accurate & deep comprehension of key concepts and attempts a creative take or point of view.

C level writing is inconsistently clear, relevant, accurate & comprehensive. May be vague. Does not present a notable creative approach to discussing the material.

D level indicates a serious lack of effort, a total failure to comprehend the material, and no effort toward an original point of view.

F level writing is a failure to make any attempt.

(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.)

Grading Practices

In your analytical work, I grade for *clarity, precision, accuracy*, and whether or not you apply *relevant* ideas/concepts from class to the material you are analyzing.

Grading Scale:

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.

Final grade breakdown (approximate and subject to change):

20% Attendance & Participation (discussions); 40% Assignments; 40% Final Essay

Assignments, Due Dates & Late Assignments

Details for all assignments and readings will be discussed in class and posted on D2L.

Unless otherwise noted, the due date is the start of class on the day an assignment is due and anything after the start of class is late. Because we are in the midst of a global health crisis, I imagine that sometimes it will be difficult to do assignments on time. As long as you stay in communication with me about this, I will be very lenient on this front.

Viewing practices:

Students are expected to stay alert and watch all films in class without distraction. Computers and phones must be put away during screenings. Viewing and being able to discuss the films is part of your overall participation grade.

Reading assignments:

Students are expected to fully complete assigned readings on time so they are prepared for class discussions and writing assignments. Reading matters. When done well, it is the most effective and efficient way to access another's intelligence, experience, and wisdom. Students who manage their time to allow for careful reading will more successfully learn and participate in this course.

Writing assignments:

This course requires students to write analytically (analysis essays) both formally and informally. All formal compositions are expected to be typed, properly formatted, and carefully proofread.

Class discussion practices:

Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. This requires the ability to listen with intention, speak with purpose, and enter class prepared. Students are expected to ask relevant questions, answer questions with clarity & precision, support claims with detailed evidence from films/readings/notes, elaborate on own ideas & those of classmates, make connections between related concepts, acknowledge & respect multiple perspectives, and be on topic.

Course Schedule

Note: for texts labeled “WATCH” or “READ,” please view or read *prior* to the class for which it is listed. For films labeled “Screening,” you can view after the lecture/reading for that week.

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION TO CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE

Class/student introductions. What makes a film? Plot vs. Story.

WATCH: “Plot vs. Story” *video essay*

WEEK 2 – CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT & CONFLICT

Lecture/Discussion: Character, conflict & structure. Direct/Indirect conflict.

READ: Glossary, Screenwriting Tools

WATCH: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Foreman, (1975)

WATCH: “Creating Dramatic Characters” *video essay*

Screening: *Dog Day Afternoon*, Lumet (1975)

WEEK 3 – THREE ACT STRUCTURE

Lecture/Discussion: Three-act structure.

READ: Howard: *Classic Screenplay Structure* | Field: *What is a Screenplay + Plot Points*

WATCH: “The Purpose of Conflict” *video essay*

Screening: *Strangers on a Train*, Hitchcock, (1951)

WEEK 4 – THE HERO’S JOURNEY I

Lecture/Discussion: The Hero’s Journey.

READ: Vogler: *Structure and Character*, Schechter on Character

WATCH: “What Makes a Hero” & “An Anti-Hero of One’s Own” *video essays*

Screening: *Coco*, Unkrich/Molina, (2017)

Assignment #1 due: Character development and Three-Act structure Essay

WEEK 5 – THE HERO’S JOURNEY II

Lecture/Discussion: *Coco* Follow-up + The Hero’s Journey. Focus: Ordinary World/Special World.

READ: Vogler “The Writer’s Journey” & Campbell excerpt

WATCH: “The Hero’s Journey & Monomyth”

Screening: *Arrival*, Villeneuve (2016)

WEEK 6 – ENSEMBLE FILMS

Lecture/Discussion: *Arrival* follow-up + Ensemble films.

READ: *Ensembles & Unity*.

WATCH: Interview with Justin Simien, video

Screening: *Dear White People*, Simien (2014)

WEEK 7 – THE SEQUENCE APPROACH

Lecture/Discussion: Sequence approach

READ: Gulino on Sequences, Howard On Sequences

WATCH: “Planting & Payoff” & “Outline your Screenplay” video essay

Screening: *Get Out*, Peele (2017)

Assignment #2 due: The Hero’s Journey Essay

WEEK 8 – SAVE THE CAT

Lecture/Discussion: Save the Cat approach

READ: *Save the Cat Intro* by Snyder

WATCH: “The Midpoint” - Collateral, video essay

Screening: *The Big Sick*, Showalter (2017)

WEEK 9 - ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES I

Lecture/Discussion: Alternative narratives. You can watch either film, or both for this class.

WATCH: Commentary on STBY, video

Screening: *Sorry to Bother You*, Riley (2018) OR *In the Mood for Love*, Wong (2000)

WEEK 10 – ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES II

Lecture/Discussion: Alternative narratives. You can watch either film, or both for this class.

WATCH: BAFTA Screenwriting Master Class, Celine Sciamma, video

Screening: *Carol*, Haynes (2015) OR *Moonlight*, Jenkins (2016)

WEEK 11 – FINAL ESSAY DUE

Final Assignment due via D2L.

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change (and most likely will) as necessary during the quarter. When things change, I will note it on D2L and via email.

Assignments

There are five required assignments: Two short essays (500 to 750 words each) and a FINAL PAPER (1000 to 1500 words). NOTE: All students must complete weekly class discussions on D2L.

Essay 1: Character development and Three-Act structure Essay

Essay 2: The Hero's Journey Essay

Essay 3: Final Essay

Weekly Discussions

Attendance

~~Students are expected to attend each class, arrive on time, and remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.~~

Online/Remote Students

In my experience students taking courses online can easily fall behind. I strongly suggest you keep a rigid schedule when it comes to viewing films, doing the reading, watching the lectures, and completing the assignments. This is not hard course until you fall behind, at which point it becomes incredibly difficult to succeed. See ONLINE STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

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.

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.

Your Name Preference & Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at <http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332>

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.

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.

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