

## **DC222 – CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD FILM STRUCTURE — SPRING 2015**

DC 222 (601/610): Tuesdays, 1:30-4:45pm in 14 E. Jackson Room 801

Lecture-Discussion | Course Management system: D2L

### **Instructor — Jessica King**

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00-1:30pm in 14 E. Jackson Room 802

email: jking5@cdm.depaul.edu

### **Course Description**

In this course you will be introduced to different aspects of film and filmmaking, with a focus on narrative structure. Critical analysis of successful Hollywood films and their narrative structures. Films of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will learn how to recognize classical three-act structure in finished films and scripts. Students will develop a cinematic language with which to discuss films as well as a toolbox of techniques to use when making films. Key story concepts to be discussed include: protagonist, antagonist, want versus need, elements of the future, poetic justice, planting and payoff, catalyst, climax, and Aristotelian terminology.

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

- describe and analyze the basic elements of film narrative: story, character, conflict, representation, theme, and structure.
- discuss films accurately and critically with a common cinematic vocabulary.
- explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced.
- comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
- assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.
- contextualize a work of art. They will be able to do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre. They will also be able to contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work's reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

### **Learning Domain Description**

DC 222 Classic Hollywood Film Structure is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

### **Required Texts**

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

## D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:

<https://login.depaul.edu/cas/login?service=https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/orgtools/CAS/Default.aspx>  
and enter using your campus connect logon and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

## 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.

In your creative work, I look for the standard requirements for effective screenplay writing (clear characters, precise and revealing visuals, original dialogue, effective structure, etc) as well as that you demonstrate an understanding of the medium you are writing for (especially in terms of concept, audience, and budget). SEE GRADE PROFILE FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Grading Scale:** A = 90%-100% plus/ minus = top/ bottom 3% of grade range; B = 80%-89%, C = 70%-79%, D = 60%-69%, F = 59% and below

## Final grade breakdown (approximate and subject to change):

30% Attendance & Participation; 40% Film/Reading Responses; 30% Final Essay

An incomplete grade may only be assigned to a student if: (1) the student has experienced an extenuating circumstance near the end of the term, (2) the student is in good standing in the class, (3) the request is made in advance. It is solely up to the discretion of the instructor to grant an incomplete.

## The Way Things Work: Assignments, Due Dates & Late Assignments

Details for all assignments and readings will be discussed in class and posted on D2L. This class will focus on practice not on lecture. It will emphasize both individual and collaborative work in understanding visual media through analysis of successful examples. On a typical class day, you will be working either as a class, in small groups, or by yourself practicing disciplined analytical or creative thinking. You will be regularly responsible for assessing your own work and that of your peers using criteria and standards modeled and discussed in class.

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. This is true even if you are absent, in which case the assignment is to be emailed to me by the due date and time. Graded assignments will lose one full letter grade for each week (or partial week) they are late.

## 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 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. (Online students will complete reader-response questions for all readings).

#### *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.

#### *Weekly D2L Discussions (online students only):*

Every TUESDAY you'll be assigned a reading/film to analyze by the following Tuesday.

In the **\*DISCUSSIONS\*** tab on our D2L course page, you must post one discussion question you create from the work you're currently on schedule to complete. Post this on the designated forum **every Friday by 6 p.m.**

**By Tuesday, 6 p.m.** you must choose someone else's discussion question from the list & answer it by submitting the question/answer to the assigned dropbox folder.

You will be graded for completing this every week. If you do not submit a question by the Friday deadline, you cannot select one to answer. No late posts are accepted.

By posting your question on time, you may select someone else's weekly question and submit your answer by Tuesday. You can select any question for that week you like from the list your peers provide for you.

#### **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.

#### **Class Discussion, Participation, and Community**

Over many years of teaching I've found that in addition to careful reading, the best way for students to learn is to process information collaboratively, to ask questions, and to be actively engaged in their own learning. In order for this to happen in the richest way possible, we must

remember to behave in a professional and academic manner at all times. We must be considerate and cooperative, even when we don't agree with one another. Professional academic behavior is expected at all times. Measurable examples of problematic behavior 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 a computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom.

### **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 'News' in D2L, and emailed to you.

### **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 me.

### **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 who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>) and must do so by 9/23/14 with no penalty.

### **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, TTY: (773)325.7296

### **Course Schedule**

## WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION TO CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE

Class/student introductions. What makes a film? Brief history of the development of film narrative. Plot vs. Story

Screening: Clips from early films.

READ: pgs. 21-27 from *Screenwriting Tools* & “Know Your Story, Know Your Plot” from *Emotional Structure*

ASSIGNMENT: Reader-Response Questions (*online students*)

## WEEK 2 – THREE ACT STRUCTURE

Lecture/Discussion: Three-act structure

Screening: *Liar Liar*

READ: 28-29 + 43-54 of *Screenwriting Tools*, “Structure and Character” by McKee

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up

## WEEK 3 – CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Lecture/Discussion: Character, conflict & structure

Screening: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

READ: Excerpt “The Monomyth” from *Hero with a Thousand Faces*

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up + Structure Observation #1

## WEEK 4 – THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Lecture/Discussion: The Hero's Journey - outlined. Take-aways from readings

Screening: *Children of Men*

READ: TBD

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up

## WEEK 5 – ENSEMBLE FILMS

Lecture/Discussion: Ensemble films

Screening: *The Royal Tenenbaums*

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up + mid-terms assignment

## WEEK 6 – THE SEQUENCE APPROACH

Lecture/Discussion: Save the Cat - sequence approach

Screening: *Alien*

READ: “An Introduction to Genre Theory”

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up

## WEEK 7 – GENRE STUDY

Lecture/Discussion: Genre. The Thriller

Screening: *Collateral*

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up + Structure Observation #2

### WEEK 8 - ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

Lecture/Discussion: Alternative Structures

Screening: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up + short comparative analysis

### WEEK 9 – GENREVS. NARRATIVE I

Lecture/Discussion: Genre and narrative

Screening: *North by Northwest*

ASSIGNMENT: Discussion-response + film follow-up + Structure Observation #3

### WEEK 10 – GENREVS. NARRATIVE II

Lecture/Discussion: Genre and narrative

Screening: *Memento*

ASSIGNMENT: Final essay

### WEEK 11 – FINAL ESSAY DUE

Final Assignment due via D2L.

--NOTE: COURSE CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH NOTIFICATION