

DC222 Classic Hollywood Story Structure

Winter Quarter 2016
Monday 5:45 – 9:00
Daley 802

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Office Hours: M/W 4:00-5:00

COLTube: coltube.cdm.depaul.edu
D2L: d2l.depaul.edu

Course Description

This course provides critical analysis of successful films and their narratives structures. Films of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will learn how to recognize classical three-act structure in the 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.

Domain Description

DC222: Classic Hollywood Story 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 while 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, come to better understand the original audience that witnessed a work of art and how its meaning and significance changes over time. These courses focus on works of art or literature, however the process of analysis may include social, cultural, and historical issues. Genres covered in this domain include literature, the visual arts, media arts, the performing arts, music, and theater.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced
 - Articulate and explain the “content” of that work and/or its methodology of production.
- Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
 - How does the 14-line sonnet both enable and inhibit its practitioner, for example?
 - What are the generic expectations of a particular form?
 - How does an artist complicate, enrich, or subvert such expectations?

- 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.
 - Do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre.
 - 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.

Weekly responses to films, a mid-term, and a final will assess and develop student learning across these objectives.

Writing Expectations

A minimum of 5 - 7 pages of writing for courses in the Arts and Literature domain (including studio courses) is required.

Course Management System Assignments will be posted to D2L, films to Coltube.

Textbooks and Printed Resources To be distributed via D2L.

Course Policies

Late work will be penalized by 10% per day past the original due date and time. Work later than 7 days will not be accepted and will be marked as 0.

Cell phone and laptop use in class will not be allowed, unless you have a need for the devices documented by the University's Center for Students with Disabilities (see below for their contact info).

Participation is expected and will be factored into your final grade. Your thoughts and opinions on the subjects we discuss and the films we watch are important, valid, and may be helpful to other students.

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 sent via email.

Grading

Participation: 10% // Screening notes: 20% // Midterm Paper: 20% // Presentation: 25% // Final Paper: 25%

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+= 89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, C+=79-77, C=76-73, C-=72-70,

D+=69-67, D=66-63, D-=62-60, F=59-0. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

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 with your professor.

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.

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.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

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DC222 WQ2017 SCHEDULE

THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

1. 1/2
INTRODUCTION TO COURSE
DEFINING CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD STORY STRUCTURE
FILM: TO BE OR NOT TO BE
Reading Assignments:
 - How to Watch a Movie, Chapter 2 – David Thomson
 - Facing the Music: Art in the Great Depression – Morris Dickstein
 - To Be or Not to Be: The Play's the Thing – Geoffrey O'Brien
2. 1/9
CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD STYLE
VISUAL LANGUAGE OF CINEMA
FILM: ALIEN
Reading Assignments:
 - How to Watch a Movie, Chapter 4
 - Excerpt from Storytelling in the New Hollywood – Kristin Thompson ("Modern Classicism")
3. 1/16
Martin Luther King Jr. Day – UNIVERSITY CLOSED – No Class
4. 1/23
CHARACTER
CONFLICT
FILM: THELMA & LOUISE
Reading Assignment:
 - Excerpt from Story – Robert McKee ("Character and Structure")
5. 1/30
3-ACT PARADIGM
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES
FILM: WITNESS
Written Assignments:
 - 3-Act Worksheet for *Witness*: due 2/6
 - Midterm Paper, see D2L: due 2/13
6. 2/6
MONTAGE
FILM: PSYCHO
Reading Assignments:
 - How to Watch a Movie, Chapter 8
 - Hybrid Plots in Psycho – Peter Wollen

Viewing Assignment: The Killing (1956) dir. Stanley Kubrick.
Response notes due 2/13

Presentations Assigned

7. 2/13

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PARADIGM

FILM: PULP FICTION

Midterm Paper Due

Viewing Assignment:

- Night of the Hunter (1955) dir. Charles Laughton

Reading Assignments:

- What's Wrong with 3-Act Structure – James Bonnet

8. 2/20

MINIMALISM

CINEMA AND TIME

FILM: RUN LOLA RUN

Presentations, Round 1

Viewing Assignment:

- Killer of Sheep (1978) dir. Charles Burnett

9. 2/27

VIGNETTES AND OTHER ODDITIES

FILM: HOLY MOTORS

Presentations, Round 2

10. 3/6

FILM: WEEKEND

Presentations, Round 3 (if needed)

ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION

1. **Weekly Viewing Notes.** As part of this class, you will watch at least one film each week. Your viewing of these films must be active. You will take notes while watching the films, and will turn in those notes to me each week. The notes can be about anything that comes to mind, as long as it is germane to the film. I expect about 1 page of handwritten or bullet-style typed notes for each film, more if you feel inclined.
2. **Midterm Paper.** Please see D2L for more information. You will write a 3- to 5-page paper applying what is learned in the first half of the quarter to an American film made in the past 5 years. The following films are not allowed: *Hateful 8*, *Django Unchained*, *Inglorious Basterds*, *Deadpool*. I'm tired of reading about them, frankly.
3. **Presentations.** You will be assigned a film that is structurally or narratively different from the standard American style. I've watched all of the films – they're good. Trust me. You will make a roughly 5-minute presentation to the class that summarizes the film's plot, what makes it unique or different from the standard paradigm, and what affect that differences makes.

Meanwhile, you will also be required to watch a film on which a classmate is doing a presentation. You will prepare 3 questions for the presenter related to the topics of narrative and structure. You will be called upon to ask these questions of the presenter if he or she does not answer them in the presentation.

4. **Final Paper.** Please see D2L for more information. Using three films of your choosing that have some narrative element in common (director, writer, theme, setting, subject – not cast because Tom Hanks' appearance in *Forrest Gump*, *Big*, and *Saving Private Ryan* is not a narrative connection). You will contrast and compare these films' structural and narrative construction.

If the narrative connection between the films is one of the narrative creative personnel (writer or director), then you will look for how each film is structured to suit its thematic goals, identifying different approaches used for different purposes, and also looking for similarities common across the writer's or director's body of work.

If the narrative connection between the films is theme, subject, or setting, you will develop arguments for how different structural or narrative approaches create different response in the audience or present that common element in different ways.

If the connection is something else, let's talk first.