

DC 221 Film Structure for Majors

DC 221-502 (In-Class) and DC 221-511 (Online)

Winter 2017

Time: W 1330-1645

Campus: Loop

Room: 14EAS LL105

Instructor: Ronald Eltanal (Associate Professor), MFA-University of Southern California

Office: CDM 501

Office Hour: See CDM Website

Phone: (312) 362-7309

Email: reltanal@cim.depaul.edu

Course Description

A 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.

Prerequisites

None

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course:

- 1) Students will have a solid understanding of classic three-act film structure.
- 2) Students will be able to identify effective use of various storytelling elements including characterization, conflict, tension, stakes, and theme.
- 3) Students will examine films from a variety of genres and eras to see the ways in which structure has both remained consistent and evolved throughout the years.

Course Management System – D2L

Software (if required)

None

Textbooks and Printed Resources

Required Texts:

All required texts will be provided online as PDFs. See “Content” on D2L to download.

- Daniel Handout
- Field Handout
- Snyder Handout
- Vogler Handout
- Hard Eight Screenplay
- Coherence Handout

Recommended:

Screenplay by Syd Field

Save the Cat by Blake Snyder

The Writer’s Journey by Christopher Vogler

The Hero With a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell

Grading

Grading Scale

A: 93-100, A-: 90-92, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+: 77-79, C: 73-76, C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 63-66, D-: 60-62

Discussion Response Papers: 40 %

Class Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam: 25%

Final Paper: 25%

Course Policies (Class Attendance, Participation and E-mail)

No Electronics:

As with several writers' rooms in the Industry, no computing or mobile telephony devices may be used in class. Lecture notes and presentations will be posted on D2L. If you wish to take notes, you may use the Luddite tools of pen/pencil and paper/notebook.

E-mail:

I will respond to e-mails on the next business day from which you send the e-mail (if you e-mail on Friday, I will not respond until Monday).

Attendance:

FOR IN-CLASS STUDENTS: Class attendance is mandatory. 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.).

FOR ONLINE STUDENTS: Class "attendance" is mandatory, and verified through posting on the discussion board. If you answer the discussion board question in your paper, but forget to post on the discussion board, I will mark you absent. The point of the discussion board is to allow your classmates to read your answer, and reply to it (their class participation grades depend on it). One absence (missing post) 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.).

Permission to Read Papers:

If you DO NOT want your name displayed while your paper is read in class, e-mail me immediately.

If you do not e-mail me, I will assume that you are granting permission for your paper to be read and discussed in class.

NEVER INCLUDE YOUR ID NUMBER IN YOUR PAPERS.

Comedy:

As Paul Thomas Anderson said, "You have to put on a good show first." In order to increase class engagement, I may employ comedic techniques. As with any attempts at comedy, there is inherent risk of offense. If you are offended by any comedic or other comments made by me, please accept my apology in advance, and talk to me as soon as possible. It will certainly not affect your grade or your esteem in my eyes; in fact, I will think more highly of your pluckiness.

Assignments

LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Discussion Question Response Papers:

After each film, a set of discussion questions will be posted under "Dropbox" on D2L. Write a

minimum one-page (250 words total for ALL questions, and I will check word count) response paper, and upload the .doc or .pdf to D2L. There will be a total of seven of these assignments in the course.

For online students, a “secret phrase” will be given at some point of the lecture or discussion on the class prior to the response paper’s due date. Failure to include the secret phrase will result in a grade deduction for the paper. The point of the secret phrase is to ensure that online students watch and listen to the entire lecture and discussion, as if they were in class. If you cannot find the secret phrase, you may be multitasking and should try focusing on only the class recording. Hence, I will not provide the phrase (as I would not give the answer to a midterm question).

DO NOT SHARE THE SECRET PHRASE WITH YOUR CLASSMATES. Doing so constitutes cheating, and will result in a 0 for the assignment. To discourage cheating, I will give extra credit to any student who forwards me e-mail or any such missive soliciting cheating.

Discussion question responses are due on the class after they are assigned.

FOR ONLINE STUDENTS ONLY: In addition to answering all the questions in your response papers, post answers to designated discussion questions on the Discussion Board on D2L. Only questions designated in each assignment will be required to post.

Discussion question responses are due on the class **AFTER** they are assigned.

Class Participation:

IN CLASS STUDENTS: Students will receive one final class participation grade. The rubric is as follows:

- Makes at least one comment in every class: 10 points
- Makes at least one comment in all but one or two classes: 7-9 points
- Makes at least one comment in about half the classes: 4-6 points
- Makes at least one comment in only two to three classes: 2-3 points
- Makes only one comment or is never heard from during the whole course: 0-1 points

ONLINE STUDENTS: Students will receive one final class participation grade. Participation is counted by **REPLYING** to a classmate’s post on the discussion board (not including the “Class Introductions” topic). Try to spread the wealth in your replies, and operating according to Kant’s categorical imperative (you’ll learn what this phrase means later); it’s a bummer to see no one respond to your post, and see everyone reply to the popular student’s super rad post. The reply only need be a sentence or two long. The rubric is as follows:

- Makes at least one reply in every discussion topic: 10 points
- Makes at least one reply in all but one or two discussion topic: 7-9 points
- Makes at least one reply in about half the discussion topic: 4-6 points
- Makes at least one reply in only two to three discussion topic: 2-3 points
- Makes only one reply or is never heard from during the whole course: 0-1 points

Midterm Exam:

There will be a midterm exam. Online students will have the option of attending the midterm in the regularly scheduled class, or will need to schedule a proctored midterm (an e-mail with details on the midterm for online students will be forthcoming). Please let me know if you need any exam accommodations (for example, if you are working with DePaul’s Center for Students with Disabilities), as soon as possible. Makeups will only be allowed for excused absences.

Analysis Paper:

In lieu of a final, you will write a final analysis paper, 7-10 pages long. The prompt for the final paper will be posted on D2L's Dropbox, and the paper will be discussed thoroughly in class.

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.

Week-by-week Assignments/Readings

Class 1

Jan. 4

Topic: Drama; Dual Protagonists

Screen in class: *About a Boy*

Assignment: *About a Boy* Response Paper

Class 2

Jan. 11

Topic: Structure and Frank Daniel

Screen in class: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

Read: Daniel handout

Assignment: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* Response Paper

Class 3

Jan. 18

Topic: Structure and Syd Field

Screen in class: *Chinatown*

Read: Field handout

Assignment: *Chinatown* Response Paper

Class 4

Jan. 25

Topic: Structure and Joseph Campbell/Christopher Vogler

Screen in class: *Whiplash*

Read: Vogler handout

Assignment: *Whiplash* Response Paper

Class 5

Feb. 1

Topic: Structure and Blake Snyder

Screen in class: *When Harry Met Sally*

Read: Snyder handout

Assignment: *When Harry Met Sally* Response Paper

Class 6

Feb. 8

When Harry Met Sally Discussion

MIDTERM EXAM

Class 7

Feb. 15

Topic: Character and Psychology

Screen in class: *The Babadook*

Assignment: *The Babadook* Response Paper

Class 8

Feb. 22

Topic: Character and Psychology

Screen in class: *The Hustler*

Assignment: *The Hustler* Response Paper

Class 9

Mar. 1

Topic: Multiple Protagonists, Fractured Structure

Screen: *21 Grams*

Assignment: *21 Grams* Response Paper

Class 10

Mar. 8

Topic: Final Analysis

Screen: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

FINAL EXAM:

Mar. 15 (at 11:30 AM – 1:45 PM)

Screen: *Annie Hall*

ATTENDANCE MANDATORY FOR IN-CLASS STUDENTS ONLY (Non-attendance will result in a half-grade deduction on your final paper grade)

Final Paper Due to D2L, before Monday, Mar. 20, at 1:30 PM

Online Instructor Evaluation

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 two weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation.

Email

Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside

of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at <http://campusconnect.depaul.edu> is correct.

Academic Integrity Policy

This course will be subject to the faculty council rules on the [Academic Integrity Policy](#)

Plagiarism

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements, 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 a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other 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.

Incomplete

An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

Resources for 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 contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677

Fax: (773)325.3720

TTY: (773)325.7296