

# DC 221 Film Structure for Majors

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**When:** Thursday 1:30pm – 4:45pm

**Where:** 14 EAS RM 802

**Instructor:** Matt Quinn · [mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:mquinn@cdm.depaul.edu) · 312-362-5807 · RM 509 (CDM Building)

**Office Hours:** Monday 11:00am – 1:30pm, Tuesday 11:00am – 1:30pm and 4:45pm – 5:30pm,  
Thursday 11:00am – 1:30pm

## Summary of Course

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 Outcomes

- 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.

## Textbooks

Assigned readings and handouts provided by the instructor.

## Prerequisites

None

## Grading

Participation	10%
Screening Response Assignments	50%
Final Paper	40%

*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. A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.*

## D2L

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:  
<https://login.depaul.edu/ldap/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fd2l.depaul.edu%2fd2l%2fcustom%2fcas> 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.

## Lecture Discussion Forum

Film is a largely subjective medium that demands conversation and debate. To facilitate this, you will participate in a D2L lecture discussion forum. After every class, you will be required to respond to a topic posted in this online forum. Participation in the lecture discussion forum is mandatory for online students, as this counts towards your participation grade – Minimum of one post per lecture.

## Course Outline

### Class 1 – Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Course Intro, Elements of a Viable Screenplay

Screening: ALIENS

Assignment: Screening Response, ALIEN II Treatment

### Class 2 – Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Character and Conflict

Screening: THE DESCENDANTS

Assignment: THE DESCENDANTS Screening Response, THE DESCENDANTS Screenplay

### Class 3 – Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Poetics, A Hero with a Thousand Faces

Screening: THE GOONIES

Assignment: THE GOONIES Screening Response, THE GOONIES Screenplay

### Class 4 – Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Paradigm of Dramatic Structure

Screening: SICARIO

Assignment: SICARIO Screening Response, SICARIO Screenplay

### Class 5 – Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Save the Cat, Sequence Approach

Screening: GROUNDHOG DAY

Assignment: GROUNDHOG DAY Screening Response, GROUNDHOG DAY Screenplay

### Class 6 – Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Genre Narratives

Screening: IT FOLLOWS

Assignment: IT FOLLOWS Screening Response, IT FOLLOWS Screenplay

**Class 7 – Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Adaptations

Screening: FANTASTIC MR. FOX

Assignment: *FANTASTIC MR. FOX Screening Response, FANTASTIC MR. FOX Novel*

**Class 8 – Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Prequels and Sequels Narrative Conventions

Screening: BLADE RUNNER

Assignment: *BLADE RUNNER Screening Response, BLADE RUNNER DOWN Screenplay*

**Class 9 – Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>**

Lecture: Ordering of Events

Screening: BLUE VALENTINE

Assignment: *BLUE VALENTINE Screening Response, DAZED AND CONFUSED Screenplay*

**Class 10 – Thursday, June 1<sup>st</sup>**

Lecture: Number of Protagonists & Subjectivity, Causality and Self-reference

Screening: DAZED AND CONFUSED

Assignment: *DAZED AND CONFUSED Screening Response*

**Assignments****Screening Response Assignments (50% of final grade)**

The instructor will post a topic for you to write about in regards to the lecture, the film that was screened, and the corresponding screenplay/reading assignment after each class. Your response must be a minimum of 500 words, which is essentially two double spaced typed Word document pages. The document must then be saved as a PDF and submitted to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link by the assigned due date. There is a total of ten Screening Response assignments for the quarter, each work five points.

**Final Paper (40% of final grade)**

Write an analysis using the storytelling conventions we have discussed throughout the quarter on one screenplay of your choosing from a list of screenplays provided by your instructor. The analysis should NOT be a linear retelling of the script's plot. You must discuss the narrative devices employed throughout to build a cohesive and engaging narrative or, depending on your argument, why the current draft of the script will fail to connect with mainstream audiences. You MUST have a definitive opinion on the material and defend it with specific examples from the script that illustrate the conventions we have discussed this quarter – Don't waiver.

The paper is due via the corresponding D2L Dropbox assignment link on Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm. No late assignments will be accepted. A few things to keep in mind:

- Remember, your opinion is not wrong as long as you can support it with specific examples from the film.
- In an effort to present your work objectively, please do not use any personal pronouns when referring to your opinion, such as “I feel this film exhibits poor structure” – It is clear you are saying it because the entire paper is your opinion.
- The paper must be no less than four pages - MLA Formatting Required  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>

### 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 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.

### Changes to the 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.

### Online Course Evaluations

Instructor and course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn’t can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors’ peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don’t miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

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## 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.

## 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. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter
Winter Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter
Spring Quarter:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter
Summer Terms:	Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

## 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

Fax: (773)325.3720

TTY: (773)325.7296