

# **DC 460 Fundamentals of Short Film**

Fall 2018 | Monday 5:45-9:00pm | 243 S. Wabash 701

Instructor: Wendy Roderweiss Office: CDM 513

Email: [wroderwe@depaul.edu](mailto:wroderwe@depaul.edu) (please allow 24 hours for a response)

Office hours: 5:00-5:30, 9:00-10:00pm Mondays

Type of Instruction: Seminar/Lecture

Course Management System: D2L

September 18, 2018 Last day to drop classes without penalty

October 23rd, 2018 Last day to withdraw from SQ2018 classes

This syllabus is subject to change (Document date 8/24/18)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

Students will study well-crafted and/or celebrated short films, the roles these short films have served their respective filmmakers and how “calling card” shorts can be used to represent a filmmaker’s voice. Short film genres and styles that to be screened will include: narrative, experimental, documentary, and animation, ranging from early silent films to contemporary shorts being screened at festivals today.

PREREQUISITE(S): None

## **CLASS GOALS:**

- Expose MFA students to numerous notable short films, in which the vast breadth of the filmic language will be digested, analyzed and discussed.
- Illustrate how a quality short film has benefitted some of the most noteworthy and successful filmmakers from the past 80 years.
- Enable students to grasp the evolution of the short proof-of-concept to a fully-formed feature film.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon successful completion of this course:

- Students will further develop their understanding of film vernacular or the “filmic language”.
- Students will be able to comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.
- Students will develop an understanding of how a completed short film can serve a filmmaker professionally.
- Students will be able to 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 discuss a “work of art” in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political context, discussing how these might shape the work’s reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.

## **TEXTBOOKS AND PRINTED RESOURCES**

Handouts provided by the Instructor

Optional--“Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts”  
Cynthia Felando  
Publisher: Springer  
ISBN: 9781137484369

Possible additional website content provided by instructor via:  
D2L, Panopto, Netflix, Short of the Week, Hulu, Vimeo

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

### **Grading:**

Class attendance and participation 30%  
Paper 1 — 30%  
Paper 2 — 40%

### **Grading Scale:**

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

93-100: A, 90-92: A-, 87-89: B+, 83-86: B, 80- 82: B-, 77-79: C+, 73-76: C, 70-72: C-, 60-66:  
D, 67-69:D+, 65-0: F

## **SOFTWARE**

Word processing software  
PDF software

## **SCREENS**

The use of screens; phones, laptops, tablets etc, are not allowed in class.

## **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

**Attendance**—Each week’s class consists of lectures, discussions and screenings; attendance is critical and mandatory and constitutes 30% of your grade. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or arriving more than 15 minutes late, or missing any 15 minute period during class time. I take attendance every class. If you arrive less than 15 minutes late, and do not hear your name called, make sure you let me know you are present so I do not mark you absent. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade. **Anyone who misses 3 classes will automatically drop a letter grade. Anyone who misses 4 classes will automatically fail.** However, if you are legitimately sick, I mean really sick, please stay home. We don’t want your evil germs. Please email me at BEFORE class if you are going to be absent.

**Class Participation**—Along with showing up, you are expected to join in class discussions. This is a seminar style class, so your participation is required. You also have a weekly reading assignment which is part of your participation.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

### Film Journals:

We will be watching films in class and at home. You will write a response to each film that includes the following:

- Name of the film and Director
- Short Synopsis- 1-2 sentences
- What is this film about?
- Your reaction to the film

For the films we watch at home, please be more detailed in your responses as our class discussion of these films may be more brief.

### Weekly Readings:

For your weekly reading, choose at least one of the films from the at-home viewing list and find an interview with the filmmaker, or an article about the making of the film. Bring that information to class with you to reference in our discussion.

### Paper 1: Due Week 7 10/22

What makes for an “ideal” short film? What’s an example of a short film that we have seen in class that embodies these ideal elements of a short film. This is obviously entirely subjective and most important to me is the articulation and support of your ideas. You should include examples of elements of films that you’ve liked and, as importantly, examples of elements that you haven’t liked from films we’ve seen thus far.

This should be in proper paper form, meaning that you have a thesis statement and supporting ideas, as well as a solid conclusion. This is not a stream of consciousness blog post.

The length of this paper should be no fewer than 1250 words and no longer than 2000 words.

This paper should be submitted into the D2L submissions folder for this topic before the start of class on 10/22.

### Paper 2: Due Week 11 11/19

Having ingested over 100 short films over the course of this quarter, describe a short film of your own design that doesn’t exist yet. What’s the story (in a brief synopsis or beat-by-beat format)? What are films that you’ve seen that embody characteristics that you aspire to employ in your own short film? How do you envision your short film would be shot and/or created? What would you “do” with this short film upon its completion as a script or as a finished film? Would you take it to festivals? Would it serve you as a proof-of-concept? If it’s a calling card film, what would you aspire to parlay it into? Would you want to make a feature film or TV series out of it? Lastly, why would you want to make this movie? (If you can’t find something of your own that you want to write, please describe a short film that you’d like to see.)

The length of this paper should be no fewer than 1000 words and no longer than 1500 words. If you want to attach a look-book or include a page of links and or references, those shouldn't be included in your word count.

This paper should be submitted into the D2L submissions folder for this topic by 5:45 pm on Monday 11/19.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Late assignments are not accepted. In case of illness, please contact me PRIOR to the due date. It shows that you care, and that goes a long way with me.

## **WEEK BY WEEK BREAKDOWN:**

### **Week 1 9/10**

IN CLASS: Overview of syllabus, class, me and you.

Screenings: Miscellaneous Short Films

### **Week 2 9/17**

**DUE: (2) Logline (ALL)**

In the Beginning

### **Week 3 9/24**

International Shorts

### **Week 4 10/1**

Documentary

### **Week 5 10/8**

Omnibus films

### **Week 6 10/15**

Experimental

**Assignment: Paper #1, Due 10/22**

### **Week 7 10/22**

**Due: Paper #1**

Animation

### **Week 8 10/29**

Calling Card Films and Festival Favorites Pt. I

### **Week 9 11/5**

Calling Card Films and Festival Favorites Pt. II, Viral Sensations

### **Week 10 11/12**

Faculty Films

**Assignment: Paper #2 due 11/19**

## Course Policies

### 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.

### 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: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

### 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

Fax: (312)362-6544  
TTY: (773)325.7296

### **Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office:**

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class and to 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: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

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 any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

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.

Cell Phones/On Call: If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.