



**August 2018**

**Course Title:** FTSW 470 Improvisation for Comedic Storytellers

**Instructor:** Rachael Mason

**Email address:** [rmason13@depaul.edu](mailto:rmason13@depaul.edu)

**Office Hours:** Monday 10:00am-1:00pm, Second City 4th Floor SCTC office

**Class Time & Day:** Monday, 5:45pm – 9:00pm, Second City room 208

**FINAL:** Monday 11/19/2018, 5:45pm-9:00pm, Second City room 208

**Course Description:**

This course focuses on building a foundation for comedy improvisation as it pertains to creating cinematic stories. Students will develop the skills to work in a collaborative environment steeped in the tradition of Chicago-style technique and philosophies. Fundamental improvisational concepts such as give-and-take, surrender, support, mirror, explore-and-heighten, environment, object work, scenic structure, character and choices, will be explored in-depth and applied in scenes.

**Course Overview:**

- Based on lecture, experiential exercise, and student-driven discussion;
- Each class will present an introduction to a specific topic of comedic improvisation and then its application to film.
- The shared language of Improv will be introduced and used to discuss film on multiple levels.
- A final project will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their interpretation of different forms of improv comedy.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Collaborate effectively in service of the ensemble.
- Apply a vocabulary of improvisation.
- Demonstrate the ability to start a scene and move it forward.
- Construct characters and premises that evoke truth in the human condition.
- Identify and create scenic structure containing beginning, middle, and end.

**Term Projects:**

1. A 500 word written critical review of a live improv comedy show. (Paper 1 20%)

- Deconstruct the show, talk about acting, structure, patterns. What was successful?  
What was not?
- 2. Two scene pitches. (Pitches 10%)
  - One pitch for 3 Characters for yourself (5%)
  - Three pitches for a 2 Person scene (5%)
- 3. A 3-5 paper on selection of material and creation of RO and reasoning behind it. (Paper 2 20%)
  - Construct a running order for a ½ hour show and provide in depth reasoning for it.
- 4. A performance of self generated material. (Performance 25%)
  - A ½ hour demonstration of short form improv games.

**Required Texts/Viewing:** There is no required text although readings and screenings will be a regular part of class. Copies of these will be provided in class.

### **Grading**

Attendance 10%

Class Participation 15%

Show Performance 25%

Pitches 10%

Paper 1 20%

Paper 2 20%

A 100-93

A- 90-92

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in an EXCELLENT manner.

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a VERY GOOD manner.

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a SATISFACTORY manner.

D 69-60

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a POOR manner. (A grade of D will not fulfill the requirements in a major field of concentration)

F 0-59

The instructor judged the student NOT to have accomplished the stated objectives of the

course.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1:**

IDEA- Philosophy of Improvisation

DAY- Intro, Table Setting, Ensemble

WARM UP- Spolin

PRESENTATION- History of Improv

DEMO- Simple "Yes, And" exercises

### **Week 2:**

IDEA- Characters are the centers of cinematic stories

DAY- Character, Action, Choices

WARM UP- Spines

PRESENTATION- Stanislavski: Playing to the height of your intelligence.

DEMO- 6 Ways to create sustainable characters, Line Drills

ASSIGNMENT- 3 Character pitches for yourself.

### **Week 3:**

IDEA- Setting up cinematic worlds

DAY- Starting Scenes

WARM UP- Initiations

DEMO- Scenic Games

### **Week 4:**

IDEA- Living in worlds

DAY- Object work, behavior

WARM UP- Doing things

DEMO- Scenic Games

ASSIGNMENT- 3 Two-Person Scene Pitches

### **Week 5:**

IDEA- Relationships illuminate character

DAY- Pairing people for discourse and game play

WARM UP- Line Games

DEMO- Tag games, Switch games

ASSIGNMENT- Show Review paper DUE

### **Week 6:**

IDEA- Environment affects relationships

DAY- Locations, activities, conversations

WARM UP- Invent a Game

DEMO- 4 Square, LeRonde

### **Week 7:**

IDEA- Patterns and theatricality  
DAY- Beats, editing, runs  
WARM UP- Big Group Warm-up  
DISCUSSION- Source Material, Reference level  
DEMO- Montage, Armando

**Week 8:**

IDEA- Structure to support scenework  
DAY- heightening,  
WARM UP- OMI  
PRESENTATION- Suggestions, Genre  
DEMO- The Movie, One Shot

**Week 9:**

IDEA- Structuring a Piece  
DAY- Rising Actions, Games  
WARM UP- Invocation  
PRESENTATION- Diagraming a Form, 3 Act Structure  
DEMO-Broken Harold 1 & 2, Harold  
ASSIGNMENT- Reminder Paper 2 DUE

**Week 10:**

IDEA- Structuring a Show  
DAY- Putting it together, Collect RO Papers  
WARM UP- Game Review  
PRESENTATION- How to construct a running order  
DEMO- Hosting, RO, T&Bs, Run Through  
ASSIGNMENT- Memorize RO and Intros

**Week 11:**

**FINAL:** Monday 11/19/2018, 5:45pm-9:00pm, room TBA  
30 Demonstration of Skills learned in class.

**PAPER BREAK DOWN**

Papers will be graded according to the following breakdown:  
Grammar/Style- 5 possible points  
Follows assignment- 5 possible points  
Thesis/Argument- 5 possible points  
Content- 5 possible points

**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. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <https://offices.depaul.edu/oaa/faculty-resources/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

### **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>

### **Incomplete Grades**

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. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx>

### **Students with Disabilities**

DePaul University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational and extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) offers reasonable academic accommodations and services to support our students. We also serve as a resource to the many university departments that have a responsibility to accommodate students.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.

### **Course Policies**

**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.



