



The Second City

April 2019

Course Title: SCWR 380 Comedy Production

Instructor: JJohn Mossman

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Office Hours: Mondays, 5:15-5:45/9:00-10:00 Room 204

Class Time & Day: Monday, 5:45-9:00 pm, Second City room 2044

SCWR 380 Comedy Production

This course introduces students to the collaborative nature of film production. Emphasis is placed on discovering stories and characters with the creation of a short comedic non-fiction film. Building on that, students ideate, pitch, and produce short narrative film concepts to become proficient with current comedic filmmaking techniques.

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Create narrative films in a collaborative process
- Discover skills in developing concepts and stories to realize them cinematically
- Explore and utilize cinema as a medium of personal expression
- Analyze peer work to facilitate the creative process
- Demonstrate the process of the production cycle

Term Projects:

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

In class, the elements of dynamic framing and shot execution will be discussed. In pairs, shoot eight shots that demonstrate these elements. Combine these compositions and add sound to create a short piece that conveys subtext and theme. The entire length of the project should be less than one minute. Due Week 3.

FILMMAKER INFLUENCE EXERCISE

Research and bring clip (or provide link) of early influence of favorite current filmmaker and describe elements that show that influence.

SOUND DESIGN EXERCISE

You will be provided with an edited sequence from a feature film. In pairs, build a soundtrack for this scene. Create a sound design that enhances and compliments the visuals. Don't alter the visual track, but the new audio can reflect whatever mood you think will make the most impact. DUE WEEK 6

IMPROVISED MOVIE

Students will be broken up into three groups and given a prompt. Based on this prompt, the groups will execute a movie that must be shot by end of class and will be shown week 7. This should be a trial by fire for your collaboration and cinematic skills. DUE WEEK 7.

VISUAL STORYTELLING EXERCISE

In assigned groups, shoot a "one-er" where a character is engaged in an activity, becomes aware of something off screen and goes to investigate, whereupon we see what they see and then return to the character. Must be a single, unbroken shot, no dialogue. DUE WEEK 8.

HUMOROUS NONFICTION PROJECT

Every student will create a three to five minute nonfiction project. Find the humor in the real world. It can be a reenactment of a funny story, an examination of an absurd or amusing situation or group, a profile of an entertaining person, or some other format that finds jokes in reality.

The elements you chose to present your work can take a variety of forms including: talking head interviews, narration, found footage, graphics, animation, stylized post effects, personal archival footage, still images, reenactments, b-roll, cinema verite footage, etc.

Shoot during weeks 5-8. ROUGH CUT DUE WEEK 9. FINE CUT DUE WEEK 10.

Suggested viewing (partial list): Crumb, Joan Rivers: A Piece of Work, Grey Gardens, Roger and Me, Gates of Heaven, Looking for Richard, American Movie, Wisconsin Death Trip, The Atomic Café, The Five Obstructions, Supersize Me.

Syllabus may be amended throughout the course of the session.

REQUIRED TEXTS/VIEWING: NONE

Grading SCWR 380

Attendance 20%

Class Participation 10%

Visualization Exercise 10%

Sound Design Exercise 10%

Filmmaker Influence Exercise 5%

Visual Storytelling Exercise/One-er 5%

Improvised Movie Exercise 20%

Non Fiction Project Exercise 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: April 1

COMEDY & CINEMA THEORY

Introduction to course assignments, expectations, and requirements.

The secret formula for successful movie making.

Defining comedy. The science of laughter.

Basic camera and cinematography

The components of three dimensional framing.

Kurosawa and camera movement.

The Rule of Thirds and when to break it.

<https://www.photocrowd.com/blog/10-three-ways-break-rule-third>

Golden Ratio

Exposure and focus.

View comedic clips – what works and why? What is different from stage and sketch work? What is the same?

HOMEWORK:

View tutorial on editing before next class.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hls3Tp7JS8E

www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMeHRRWNGgA

8 shot exercise: In pairs, outside of class, shoot eight shots that demonstrate these elements. Combine these compositions and add sound to create a short piece that conveys subtext and theme. The entire length of the project should be less than one minute. DUE WEEK 3.

Develop an idea for a Non-Fiction Project. DUE WEEK 3. Note: The idea should be written in treatment format. The length of the proposal should be no more than 1 page. Student should be prepared to verbally pitch the idea in class. Visual aids can be used to clarify the pitch. These are for short projects with a duration between 3 and 5 minutes. See assignment for details. Treatments should be uploaded to Canvas.

Week 2: April 8

Sound and Editing.

Cutting comedy. Long takes vs. quick cutting. Rules of defined space and invisible editing.

Aesthetics of editing.

Location and post sound tutorials.

Audio Analysis. Examine acoustics and sound principles. Microphones. Sound design. Screen excerpts from Robocop and The Godfather. In class track building exercise.

HOMEWORK: Edit and export the footage from the Visualization Exercise into a 1 minute piece that conveys a clear message and demonstrates an understanding of composition and includes sound design. 1 minute films should be uploaded to Canvas. DUE WEEK 3

Week 3: April 15

PITCH Humorous Nonfiction Project ideas.

Screen Visualization exercises.

"Shooting for post" discussion.

DUE: Visualization Exercise. Screen in class.

HOMEWORK: Research a favorite filmmaker's influences. Bring 1 minute clip to show class from earlier filmmaker's work reflecting the style, tone or other similarity to favorite filmmaker's work. DUE WEEK 4

Week 4: April 22

DECONSTRUCTING SHORTS/Dissecting the short movie. Examine the components of short films. Structure and character. Pre-production and visualization tools. Mise-en-scene.

DUE: Show clip by filmmaker who influenced favorite filmmaker and describe the elements that reflect that influence.

HOMEWORK: Outside of class Sound Design Exercise: You will be provided with an edited sequence from a feature film. In pairs, build a soundtrack for this scene. Create a sound design that enhances and compliments the visuals. Don't alter the visual track, but the new audio can reflect whatever mood you think will make the most impact. Work will begin in class and continue outside of class with your partner. Screening of works will take place in class on week 6.

Week 5: April 29

Greenlight meetings for non-fiction project.

HOMEWORK: Begin Filming Non-Fiction Project. Rough cut DUE week 9

HOMEWORK: Continue Working with Partner on Sound Design. DUE WEEK 6

Week 6: May 6

SHOOT IMPROVISED MOVIE Students will be broken up into groups and given a prompt. Based on this prompt, the groups will execute a movie that will be shown in week 7. This should be a trial by fire for your collaboration and cinematic skills.

HOMEWORK: Sound Design Exercise. Uploaded to Canvas for in-class review. HOMEWORK: Continue editing non-fiction movie. Rough cut due week 9.

Week 7: May 13

Screen sound design exercises.

Screen Improvised Movie.

Cinema Salon

DUE: Screen Sound Design Exercises.

DUE: Screen improvised movies.

Week 8: May 20

Shooting protocol.

IN CLASS SHOOTING EXERCISE/VISUAL STORYTELLING Divide up into small groups and create one-ers. View and reshoot.

HOMEWORK: Non-fiction rough cut due week 9.

Week 9: June 3

Screen Non-Fiction rough cuts

DUE: Non fiction film rough cut

Week 10: June 10

Screen Non-Fiction fine cuts.

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/oa/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>

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.

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>

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.