DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
School of Cinematic Arts
Comedic Voice | SCRW 376 | 2020 Winter
MON 5:45 – 9:00PM | Second City, Room 202
Instructor: Kat O'Brien | Email: kobrie55@depaul.edu, kobrien@secondcity.com
Office Hours: ***Please email for appointment.*** MON 9AM-10:30AM – SC209; 10:30-1:30PM Daley 200B

SCWR 376 COMEDIC VOICE

Description:
This course teaches students how to find and hone their comedic point of view through exploring how their experiences shape who they are. Through discussions and exercises, students create an abundance of ideas in order to refine their storytelling skills, develop their comedic voice, and pitch stories for a variety of formats. Students will then analyze the vital role of presentation of their original comedy concepts while mastering professional pitching techniques. *Prerequisites: SCWR 370 Comedic Improvisation for Filmmakers*

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

- Create cinematic, comedic content using fundamental storytelling techniques
- Generate content that is inspired by self-experience and perspectives
- Employ a structure in their writing that is organic and thematic
- Analyze and interpret peer's work to generate meaningful feedback
- Create a professional pitch

Texts and Films:
Readings and films (and TV, other media) will be assigned and provided by the instructor throughout the course.

Required Software:
Final Draft or comparable screenwriting software.

D2L:
You will be using D2L in this course. To log on, go to: https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/orgtools/CAS/Default.aspx 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, discussion forums, and weekly assignments.

Grading:
Attendance and Participation (completing the Reading Checklist; Weekly Workshop feedback): 20% of Final Grade
Weekly Workshops and Presentations: 80% of Final Grade

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.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1: January 6 | TOPIC: Course Intro and Expectations, Define Comedic POV
Workshop & Discussion: Explore iconic inspirations, what informs our level of reference, and our "wheelhouse"
Assign: Idea Maps and Loglines due Week 2 (Jan 13) in classs
Read: Choose 2 scripts from "Distinctive Voice and POV"

Week 2: January 13 | TOPIC: Finding Your POV
Workshop & Discussion: Explore how personal experience shapes who we are, and relates to POV, style, and voice
Assign: Vision Statement [Artist POV] due Week 3 ONLINE (Jan 20)
Read: Choose 2 scripts that suit your personal wheelhouse

Week 3: January 20 | TOPIC: From Unique to Universal
Workshop & Discussion: Exploring comedic premise, finding the funny, telling a worthy story through our POV
Assign: Refining Idea Maps and Loglines (1-3) due Week 4 (Jan 28)
Read/Watch: *Moonlight*

Week 4: January 27 | TOPIC: Viable Stories
Workshop & Discussion: Unpacking narrative structure: is there a story here?
Assign: Outline or Treatment (top 1 idea) due Week 5 (Feb 3)
Read: Classics

Week 5: February 3 | TOPIC: Format and Platform Suitability
Workshop & Discussion: Story mapping for feature vs. TV vs. digital short series: where does the story live?
Assign: Outline or Treatment, Revised due Week 6 (Feb 10)
Read: Classics

Week 6: February 10 | TOPIC: Comedic Fundamentals
Workshop & Discussion: Story development for comedy: … why and how is this story funny?
Assign: Story Bible due Week 7 (Feb 17)
Read/Watch: *Bernard & Huey*

Week 7: February 17 | TOPIC: Art of the Pitch: In The Room
Workshop & Discussion: Oral pitching exercises
Assign: Draft One Pager [Pitch Document] due Week 8 (Feb 24)
Read: Oscar Nominees

Week 8: February 24 | TOPIC: Art of the Pitch: On The Page
Workshop & Discussion: Written pitching exercises
Assign: Deliver One Pager due Week 9 (Mar 2)
Read: Oscar Winners

Week 9: March 2 | TOPIC: Pitch Presentation Workshop
Workshop & Discussion: Pitch Decks
Assign: Pitch Deck due Week 10 (Mar 9)

Week 10: March 9 | TOPIC: Pitch Presentation
Workshop & Discussion: Assessment
Assign: Pitch Deck due today for presentation, revisions due next week (March 16)

FINAL: REVISED PITCH PRESENTATIONS **due in D2L by 5:45PM Monday March 16** via the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L for a final evaluation. Late submissions will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENTS
Late assignments will not be accepted.

Attendance and Participation (completing the Reading Checklist; Weekly Workshop feedback): 10% of Final Grade
Weekly Workshops and Presentations: 90% of Final Grade

- Vision Statement – 10%

- Revised Loglines – 10%
- Revised Outline/Treatment – 10%
- Story Bible – 10%
- Revised One Pager – 20%
- Revised Pitch Deck – 30%

Final Pitch Deck:
You are expected to submit the final draft of your completed pitch deck **by 5:45PM on Monday, March 18** via the corresponding Dropbox link on D2L for a final evaluation. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Reading Checklist:
Weeks 1: Choose at least one Pilot and one Feature with a distinctive voice/POV
Suggestions:
- *Pilots: Insecure, Atlanta, Master of None, I'm Sorry, Baskets, Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*
- *Features: Ladybird, Boyhood, Silver Linings Playbook, (500) Days of Summer*

Week 2: Choose 2 scripts in your personal wheelhouse
Week 3: *Moonlight*
Week 4, 5: Classics - *The Apartment, Fargo, Terms of Endearment, Annie Hall*
Week 6: *Bernard and Huey*
Week 7: Oscar Nominees
Week 8: Oscar Winners

Suggested Resources for Screenplays (find more classics and fresh faves here):
https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/10-great-websites-download-movie-scripts/
https://indiefilmhustle.com/free-screenplays-download/
https://indiefilmhustle.com/tv-pilot-scripts/

POLICIES
Attendance
Attendance and participation are mandatory. An absence, which is defined as not showing up for class or arriving more than 10 minutes late to class, constitutes a reduction on your overall grade.

Participation
You may be called upon to discuss various topics on screenwriting and storytelling during class and discussions may develop throughout the course online, with which you are required to participate.

Workshops
Feedback is an essential part of the writing process. To facilitate this, you will be participating in three workshop sessions throughout the course. Please be sure to adhere to the following workshop guidelines.

Workshop Guidelines
- First and foremost, a workshop is about the piece of writing, not the writer. Both the writer and those critiquing the piece need to keep in mind that the goal is to make the writing the best it possibly can be.
- Workshops are never destructive. They are constructive. Writing is never "bad." The writing is addressed so that it can get stronger.
- Always start with something that is working in the piece.
- Then go on to the aspects that are not yet fully developed or that are not quite working yet.
- The writer must stay quiet during the workshopping of her or his piece.
- If the majority of the readers agree on a particular element of the piece that is working or not working, listen. If the readers are completely divided, it simply may just be a matter of opinion.
- The writer should always listen, but ultimately must trust his or her gut. The writer's name will be on the page when all is said and done.
- All people must have time to participate for each writer. No single person should dominate the conversation.
- The writer may speak and ask questions at the end of the workshop.

Additional Policies and Information:

Attitude and Civil Discourse

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.

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!

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 at 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 on my.cdm.depaul.edu/.

- 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
http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx.

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332