

SCWR 479: Comedy, Joke, & Sketch Writing

Students will learn techniques and formulas for joke writing, writing sketch comedy packages, and writing for news driven comedy shows. Students will apply these skills to their existing scripts as well as to developing new material.

Winter 2024 CLASS INFO:

Thursday 5:45 – 9 PM

Classes will take place at the Second City Training Center

1/11/2024 – 3/12/24

COURSE MATERIALS:

- There are no books to buy! I will be presenting worksheet materials in class on a weekly basis.
- **Please stay on top of current events for this class. Check in with Google News.**
- Additionally, check in with The Onion, McSweeney's, John Oliver, Seth Meyers, SNL, Tik Tok, or the most current comedy phenomenon. Your job this term is to be able to observe the world at large and comment on it.

INSTRUCTOR INFO:

Jay Steigmann

(Sometimes listed as Jennifer Steigmann. NOTE: Jay is my preference.)

Email: jsteigma@depaul.edu

* Please give 24-hours to reply to your email.

Office Hours: Wednesdays 5 – 6:30 PM

* All office hours will take place via Zoom.

<https://depaul.zoom.us/j/9846273590>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is designed to enable you to:

- Write a comedic sketch using the 5-point structure.
- Create comedic characters, using point of view, transformations, and objectives.
- Create satirical scenes using observation, current events, and cultural commentary.
- Understand and utilize common joke structures.
- Create packet materials.

GRADES

Your grades will be calculated based on the following work:

- **Attendance and participation (50%)** - Your attendance and participation are essential and makes up a MOST of your grade. DO NOT MISS CLASS. After two absences, each unexcused absence will result in the loss of a full letter grade.
- **Weekly assignments (35%)** – Get your weekly assignments in! There are 7 assignments, each worth 5% of your grade.
- **Final Read Thru (15%)** – The final assignment is a packet for a read-thru.

WEEK BY WEEK

This session, we'll start with basic 2-3 person sketches. Each week we'll build on the week before, using each skill covered to create more complex comedic ideas. Each class, there will be a lecture, in class exercises, and a homework assignment. We will be reading homework in class and instructor feedback will be provided.

Modules:

1. Simple Sketch Structure
2. Comedic Character Development
3. Scenic Location and Activity
4. Games in the Scene
5. Parody
6. Satire and Current Events
7. Blackouts and Joke Structures
8. Packets: SNL, Late Night (Game), Late Night (Satirical)
9. Packets 2: SNL, Late Night (Game), Late Night (Satirical)
10. Read Thru #1
11. Read thru #2

Class One: 1/11/2024

Simple Sketch Structure

- Writing from Abundance
- Premise
- Setup / Payoff
- Heightening
- Turning Points

Homework: Write 3-page MAX scene with 2-3 characters. Due 1/18/2024

479: Homework + Additional Pitch: Bring in an efficient 7-line pitch. Structure should be on display.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Beat 5: Tag

Class Two: 1/18/2024

Comedic Character Development

- Makeup of Comedic Character
- Quirks and Flaws
- Relatability
- Implied Audience
- Monologues
- Desk Pieces

Homework: Write a monologue or Desk Piece. 1 character. 1 ½ pages MAX. Due 1/25/2024

479: Homework + Pitch a response from a character mentioned in the original monologue. 7 lines.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Class Three: 1/25/2024

Scenic Location and Activity

- Dramatic Tension
- Transformation
- Jokes Lanes
- Shifting Alliances
- Exits and Entrances

Homework: Write Shifting Alliances OR Exits / Entrances Scene. 3 Characters. 4 Pages MAX. Due 2/1/2024

479: Homework + Pitch a scene from the style you did not choose. 7 lines.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Beat 5: Tag

Class Four: 2/1/2024

Games in the Scene

- Heightening
- Repetition
- Patterns
- Fish out of Water
- Center and Eccentrics

Homework: Write FoW or C/Ec. 4-6 characters. 5 pages MAX. Due 2/8/2024

479: Homework + Pitch a scene from the style you did not choose. 7 lines.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Beat 5: Tag

Class Five: 2/8/2024

Parody

- Reference
- Recognition
- Context
- Clash of Context

Homework: Write a parody scene. 2-6 characters. 4 pages MAX. Due 2/15/2024

479: Homework + Pitch: Pitch a parody commercial. 7 lines.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Beat 5: Tag

Class Six: 2/15/2024

Satire and Current Events

- Deconstruction
- Political Satire
- Social Satire
- Current Events
- Evergreen Events

Homework: Write a satirical scene based on current events. 2-6 characters. 4 pages MAX. Due 2/22/2024

479: Homework + Pitch: A game show based on current events. 7 lines.

Beat Structure: One sentence per line. 7 sentences total.

Beat 1: Who/Where/What

Beat 2: First Turning Pt

Beat 3: The game of the scene. Write 3 lines that heighten.

Beat 4: Resolution (2nd Turning Point)

Beat 5: Tag

Class Seven: Due 2/22/2024

Blackouts and Joke Structures

- Transformations
- Twists
- Reveals
- Reframes
- Expected / Unexpected
- Joke Wall

Write: 10 Blackouts or a Joke Wall. Due 2/29/2024

479: Write 10 Blackout + 10 joke wall jokes.

Class Eight: 2/29/2024

Packets Part 1: SNL, Late Night (Game), Late Night (Satirical)

- Breakdown of Packets

Homework: Prepare your read-thru elements. Due 3/14/2024

Class Nine: 3/7/2024

Packets Part 2: SNL, Late Night (Game), Late Night (Satirical)

- Writer's Room / In Class Prep for Read Thru

Homework: Prepare your read-thru elements. Due 3/14/2024

Class Ten: READ THRU: 3/14/2024

- Read Thru #1

IN CLASS: Table Read of Packets.

Class Eleven: READ THRU: 3/21/2024

- Read Thru #2

IN CLASS: Table Read of Packets.

COURSE POLICIES ATTENDANCE:

- Attendance is mandatory.
- If you know you'll be missing a class in advance, please email me and let me know.
- If you miss due to an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible after the emergency has been resolved.
- **After two absences, each unexcused absence will result in the loss of a full letter grade. Two tardies (later than ten minutes) or leaving early will count as one absence.**

PARTICIPATION

- Your participation is essential to the success of the course.
- We will be working in class – often in groups.
- Please show up ready to work.

COMMUNICATION

- Please email right away if there is an issue. jsteigma@depaul.edu
- When group assignments are in play, please communicate in a timely manner with your group.

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.

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore “what must be done” in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions Winter Quarter 2020-2021 4 and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include diverse authors, perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and I will strive to create an inclusive classroom that values all perspectives. If at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

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 continuing 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/onlineteaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

More information can be found at <https://resources.depaul.edu/teachingcommons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

Posting work on online sites, such as Hero

All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework. Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who Winter Quarter 2020-2021 5 access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

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>

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>

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations: • Loop Campus (312) 362-8002 • Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677 • Email: csd@depaul.edu Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible. Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.