

# DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS



*The Second City*

**January 10 - March 20, 2024**

**Course Title:** SCWR 372/472 Improvisational Scene Construction

**Instructor:** Catharine Savage

**Email address:** [csavag11@depaul.edu](mailto:csavag11@depaul.edu)

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 11am-12:30pm (on zoom)

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

## **Description:**

This advanced course focuses on the mechanics of the various forms that an improvised scene can take. Students learn to build off character and premise to develop a fully fleshed out scene with a strong comedic arc. Emphasis will be placed on breaking down the aesthetic devices that comprise a cinematic scene.

## **Prerequisites:**

SCWR 371/471 Creating Comedic Characters

## **Learning Objectives:**

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

- Demonstrate the ability to create scenes based on relatable circumstances
- Recognize the underlying structure of a comedic scene
- Navigate the rising action of an improvised scene
- Create scenes with a rich environment that informs the characters and action
- Identify scene types, forms, and games and the mechanics of how they can be successful

**Textbooks:** There is no required textbook needed for this course. Some assignments will require access to use YouTube and streaming services like Hulu, Netflix, HBO, etc.

## **D2L**

You will be using D2L extensively in this course. To log on, go to:

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home/650286> 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, weekly assignments, etc.

## **Grading:**

Attendance and Participation - 30%

Assignments- 40%

Final- 30%

A 100-93  
A- 90-92  
B+ 87-89  
B 83-86  
B- 80-82  
C+ 77-79  
C 73-76  
C- 70-72  
D 69-60  
F 0-59

### Attendance

Attendance and participation are mandatory for this class. This a “do stuff” class, so to learn the themes of comedy you have to participate in discussion and be willing to participate in in-class activities. An unexcused absence, arriving late, or leaving early will result in a reduction in the overall grade. If you are ill or need a wellness day, notify the instructor prior to the class in order for that absence to be excused. You get one of those, if needed, without impacting your participation grade. If you have longer term health issues, please reach out to the Dean of Students office to discuss options.

### Homework

All assignments for this course must be submitted on D2L **before** the start of the next class. No late work is accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with me. If stuff comes up, reach out, but let's strive to meet deadlines.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week 1: Building a scene

Introductions and table setting

Improv diagnostics and ensemble focus

Scene structure, improvised scene work

### Week 2: Sketch

Discuss 5-point sketch structure and beat sheets

Develop and improvise through several premises

**Homework: Write three scene premises**

### Week 3: Second City process

Improvise through beat sheets

Discuss Second City Process

Create material using the Second City Process

**Homework: Write a beat sheet using 5-point structure**

### Week 4: Improv to script

Improvise through beat sheets

Re-improvise scenes after feedback

In groups, create a premise and beat sheet for an original sketch

**Week 5:** Group collaboration

Work with your group to film your sketch during class

**Homework:** Finish your your filmed sketch + watch an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*

**Week 6:** Improv in TV

Watch filmed sketches

Discuss *Curb*

Develop ideas for *Curb* and improvise through them

**Homework:** Write an improv outline for an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*

**Week 7:** Improv in TV (cont'd)

Improvise through scenes from outlines

Discuss improv as a collaborative tool

**Homework:** Watch 6 Days to Air + prepare an original sketch/show/short film idea

**Week 8:** Writers' Room

Use improv to develop ideas for your original pitch presentation

**Week 9:** Writers' Room

Use improv to develop ideas for your original pitch presentation

**Homework:** Watch SNL documentary + prepare your final script

**Week 10:**

Improv Demo

**Homework:** prepare final

**FINAL:**

Your final will consist of three parts:

1. Improv demo (to be outlined by the professor the week before)
2. A 3-5 page script/outline/show bible for the original idea you developed during class time
3. A reflection paper detailing how you used improv to develop your original script/outline/show bible

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **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.

### **Content Warning**

This course recognizes that to engage with media is to engage with historic and ongoing problematic representation, as well as the ways that harmful representation impacts students in different ways. Therefore, any course content displaying racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and otherwise violent or socially violent material will be made known in writing prior to the viewings, so that students may make informed decisions about their mental and emotional health and well-being. Students may inform the professor of any material that they cannot engage with to find a suitable alternative.

### **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 on D2L, and sent via email.

### **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 Students/Pages/ PoliciesandProcedures.aspx](http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx)

### **Respecting Diversity and Inclusion**

At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions, 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 creators, 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.

### **DePaul University's Land Acknowledgement**

At DePaul University, we acknowledge that we live and work on traditional Native lands that are home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. We extend our respect to all of them, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa nations, who signed the Treaty of Chicago in 1821 and 1833. We also recognize the Ho-Chunk, Myaamia, Menominee, Illinois Confederacy, and Peoria people who also maintained relationships with this land.

We acknowledge that these sacred homelands were ruptured by the European invasion of the Americas. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI promulgated the Doctrine of Discovery, which seized Native lands and resources with impunity. This doctrine has been used by countries throughout the Americas, including the U.S., to legitimize colonial policies of displacement and genocide toward Native peoples and to justify colonial legacies of white superiority and global capitalism.

We appreciate that today Chicago is home to the sixth-largest urban Native population in the United States. We further recognize and support the enduring presence of Native peoples among our faculty, staff, and student body. And in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, we reaffirm our commitment, both as an institution and as individuals, to help make our community and our society a more equitable, welcoming, and just place for all.

### **Name & 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 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>

### **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 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](mailto: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 [click here](#) for Services and Contact Information.