

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

DC 222-513: Hollywood Film Structures

December Intercession, 2017

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Office Hours: by appointment

Learning Domain Description

This course is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Arts and Literature domain. Courses in the Arts and Literature domain ask students to extend their knowledge and experience of the arts by developing their critical and reflective abilities. In these courses, students interpret and analyze particular creative works, investigate the relations of form and meaning and through critical and/or creative activity to come to experience art with greater openness, insight, and enjoyment. These courses focus on works of literature, art, theatre, or music as such, though the process of analysis may also include social and cultural issues. Students who take course in this domain choose three courses from such choices as literature, the visual arts, media arts, music, and theater. No more than two courses can be chosen from one department or program.

Course Description

Critical analysis of successful Hollywood films and their narrative structures. Films of various genres and eras will be examined. Students will learn how to recognize classical three-act structure in finished films and scripts. Students will develop a cinematic language with which to discuss films as well as a toolbox of techniques to use when making films. Key story concepts to be discussed include: protagonist, antagonist, want versus need, elements of the future, poetic justice, planting and payoff, catalyst, climax, and Aristotelian terminology. **No Prerequisites**

Learning Objectives

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

- identify the relationship between character development and story structure
- apply *Three Act Structure*, *Hero's Journey*, and *Sequence Approach* paradigms
- analyze the manner in which story structure is influenced by genre
- discuss nontraditional narratives as a counterpoint to "classic" structure
- employ a vocabulary of cinematic terms

Outcomes:

One paper and four quizzes will assess and develop student learning across the objectives above. Assignments will be drawn from the films screened in and out of class, course lectures, and the reading material posted online.

Course Management:

This course is managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked. There, you will find each week's recorded lecture (available shortly after 6 PM each day that the in-class section meets), required reading material, and all of your assignments. Also posted on D2L will be a weekly discussion forum for questions and thoughts concerning the films, the lectures, and assignments. The films screened in class, as well as those which require individual viewing, are available on **ColTube** – an online DePaul video player available for Mac and PC. There is a ColTube link on D2L.

Schedule

Character and Three-Act Structure

CLASS 1T, 11/28: Course intro. Three-Act Structure overview. Direct/Indirect Conflict. Screen: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (in class)

CLASS 2W, 11/29: Focus on character intros and development across three acts.
Read: *Glossary, Screenwriting Tools, What is a Screenplay, Classic Screenplay Structure*
Watch: *Lars and the Real Girl* (in class) and *Mean Girls* (independently)

The Hero's Journey

CLASS 3R, 11/30: The Hero's Journey Part I, plus discussion of exposition.
Read: *Structure and Character, Schechter on Character*
Watch: *The Silence of the Lambs* (in class)

CLASS 4T, 12/5: The Hero's Journey Part II, plus dramatic irony, suspense, mystery.
Read: *Vogler: The Writer's Journey, J. Campbell*
Watch: *Arrival* (in class) and *Gladiator* (independently)

Ensemble Films

Class 5W, 12/6: Ensemble Films, plus plant and payoff.
Read: *Willis and LoBrutto on DTRT*
Watch: *Do the Right Thing* (in class) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (independently)

The Sequence Approach and Save the Cat

Class 6R, 12/7: Introduction to Sequences and Save the Cat, plus theme.
Read: *Gulino on Sequences, Howard On Sequences, and Save the Cat Intro* by Snyder
Watch: *Thelma and Louise* (in class)

Alternative Narrative

Class 7T, 12/12: Alternative Narrative Part I.
Read: Ghislotti on *Memento, Memento Mori* (short story)
Watch: *Memento* (in class)

Class 8W, 12/13: Alternative Narrative Part II.
Watch: *Moonlight* (in class)

Class 9R, 12/14: Work Day: FINISH **ALL** ASSIGNMENTS BY MIDNIGHT and submit online!

Assignments

There are five required assignments. The four required quizzes can be found under “Quizzes” in D2L. The required essay will be delivered using “Submissions.” I **highly recommend** that you not wait until the last minutes of the term to do this work. Four of the assignments require that you watch a movie outside of class. It is too much work to be done at once, and you will likely not be happy with your grade if you try.

Under “**Checklists**” on D2L you will find a checklist of requirements for each class session that will help you to keep up with the workload. I can monitor your progress according to the checklist. Keep up with the lists and you will be fine.

Assignment 1: Terms, Character development, three-act structure quiz: 100 points

Assignment 2: *Mean Girls* three-act structure analysis quiz: 100 points

Assignment 3: The Hero’s Journey and *Gladiator* quiz: 100 points

Assignment 4: *Little Miss Sunshine* essay in Submissions: 100 points

Assignment 5: Comprehensive Review Quiz: 100 points

Readings and lecture slides can be downloaded from “Content” on D2L. You are expected to have done the reading **before** watching the lecture.

Grading:

Late work will not be accepted. 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 level writing demonstrates accurate, thorough comprehension of the material but also provides a unique take and excellent point of view. It offers clear, creative thought.

B level writing demonstrates mostly accurate, mostly thorough comprehension of the material and attempts to provide a creative take or point of view.

C level writing is not entirely accurate nor is it comprehensive. It does not present a notable creative approach to discussing the material.

D level indicates a serious lack of effort, a total failure to comprehend the material, and no effort toward an original point of view.

F level writing is a failure to make any attempt.

Work that contains grammatical errors, misspellings, or generally poor and unclear construction will rarely if ever achieve a grade of **A** or **B** no matter how good the actual thinking presented might be.

Online Students

In my experience students taking courses online, especially in compressed schedules such as the December intersession, can easily fall behind. I strongly suggest you keep a rigid schedule when it comes to viewing films, doing the reading, watching the lectures, and completing the assignments. This is not hard course until you fall behind, at which point it becomes incredibly difficult to succeed.

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: cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment.

Decorum and 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.

Creative Subject Matter

As this is a creative writing class, controversial subject matter may make its way into the conversation. Students have every right to express themselves artistically in their writing and address challenging issues. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Obvious inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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 students will be notified 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 (<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 in MyCDM. 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