



Fall 2019: Special Topics in Comedy - Before They Were Stars

Instructor: Matt Hovde

Email address: mhovde@depaul.edu

Class Time & Day: Tuesdays, 1:30pm - 4:45pm, Screening Room at Second City

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12pm - 1:30pm (Second City Training Center, 4th floor)

Course Description and Overview:

It is no coincidence that artists who succeed at The Second City make a profound impact on the entertainment industry. The skills, tools, characters, and point of view they hone on our stage lay the groundwork for their careers in television and film as writers, directors, producers and performers. This class is a study of the artistry of several prominent Second City alumni, from Harold Ramis and Adam McKay, to Aidy Bryant and Tim Robinson, exploring the underlying craft of scenes they did while on stage here and the work they've done since. Through screenings, discussion, and writing assignments, students will develop a deeper understanding of how the philosophies of Second City continue to inspire comedy, and how they can develop their own comedic voice.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Recognize the contribution of several Second City alumni to the current comedy landscape in Film and TV.
- Identify the craft and techniques that these Second City artists used to create their most successful work
- Develop an ear for how different types of artists create comedy through tone, point of view, and character energy
- Articulate the insider language and context around some of Second City's greatest scenes and characters
- Apply knowledge of these SC artists to hone the point of view and style of their own work

Textbooks: There is no required textbook needed for this course.

D2L

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

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home/650286> and enter using your campus connect login and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, weekly assignments, etc.

Grading:

Class Attendance/In class Participation	20 points
Online Discussion Participation:	10 points
Assignments:	50 points
Final Project or Paper	20 points

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:

In class attendance and participation is mandatory for this class. An unexcused absence will result in a reduction in the overall grade. Two instances of tardiness (arriving more than 15 minutes late or departing before class is finished) will count as one absence. If you are ill and contagious, please do not come to class, but you must notify the instructor prior to the class in order for that absence to be excused. You get one of those, if needed. If you have longer term health issues, please reach out to the Dean of Students office to discuss options. Excuses provided after the fact will not be accepted.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Fundamentals of the Second City philosophy. Sampling the work of many alumns.

Exploration of:

Story Structure

Second City material generation process

Elements of a Character

Comedic POV

Screenings: Many scenes!

ASSIGNMENT 1: Second City Rabbit Hole Take Home Quiz (15 points)

Week 2: Harold Ramis

Reading Sketches from Harold's time at SC.
Overview of career, style

Screenings:
Groundhog Day (101 min)

Week 3: Adam McKay part 1

Satire and POV
The character of Adam
Setting up other people in comedy
Discussion of Comedy 1

Screenings:
Pinata Full of Bees (Second City revue)
TV Fun House
Succession
Select Scenes from McKay films

Week 4: McKay part 2

Character analysis breakdown

Screenings:
The Big Short

ASSIGNMENT 2: Character Analysis (10 pts)

Week 5: Tina Fey Part 1

Tina's Ensembles
POV

Screenings
Scenes from Tina's revues at SC
SNL/Weekend Update
30 Rock

Week 6: Tina Fey Part 2

Discussion of Comedy 2

Screenings:
Mean Girls

Week 7: Keegan Michael Key

Sketch Structure
Character review

Screenings:
Scenes from Keegan's shows at SC
Key & Peele
Obama
Scenes from Don't Think Twice

ASSIGNMENT 3: Sketch Analysis. (15 pts)

Week 8: Tim Robinson

Modern Anti-comedy
Bits

Screenings:
Scenes from Tim at SC
Detroit
I Think You Should Leave

ASSIGNMENT 4: Scene Transcription and analysis (10 points)

Week 9: Aidy Bryant

Modern Identity Comedy
Explanation of Final Project

Screenings:
Scenes from Aidy at SC
SNL
Shrill

Week 10: Flex Week

Discussion of Comedy 3

Going deeper on someone we've covered, or covering an alum we haven't covered yet

Assignments (50% of final grade)

There are four assignments that must be completed, each worth 10 or 15 points. They must be turned in before the next class begins. Late submissions will not be accepted. Documents must then be saved as a PDF and submitted to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link. If there is a communication or problem with D2L, please inform instructor immediately to rectify.

Attendance and Participation (30% of final grade)

Attendance has been covered. Participation in class means willingly engaging in discussion about the themes and techniques covered. Sharing your voice by asking questions and supporting your peers during discussion creates a healthy incubator for developing your own perspective as an artist. Negative, destructive, or disrespectful behavior toward the class or individuals will result in a lowered grade.

Final Term Project (20% of final grade)

Your final project will consist of choosing one of the following projects:

- A. A filmed scene that you write and produce yourself on a topic to be provided by the instructor late in the quarter
or
- B. A scripted scene on that same topic.

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

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/oaafaculty-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>

Original Work

All assignments are to be completed by students in their own words and voice. You may not copy from the internet or any other source. Plagiarism is never acceptable, and in the world of comedy it is especially egregious, as the whole point is to develop your own comedic voice. If your work is found to be taken from someone else, you will earn a zero for that assignment and must meet with the instructor before continuing the class.

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

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.