

DePaul University School of Cinematic Arts

SCWR 390/490: Topics in Screenwriting

The John Hughes Experience

Spring, 2019

Wednesday, 1:30-4:45 PM CST, Online

Instructor: Brad Riddell: brad.riddell@depaul.edu

Office Hours: Via Zoom M/W/Th 11AM - 1PM, and by appointment.

Description:

Advanced study in screenwriting focusing on a specific genre each quarter such as: Science Fiction, Film Noir, Comedy, Action-Adventure, Nonfiction, etc. May be repeated for credit.

Prerequisites:

DC 101 or DC 201 (for undergraduates)

Course Outcomes:

In addition to completing analytical writing assignments, students will write one short screenplay and a treatment for a feature screenplay.

Learning Objectives:

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

- define the common themes and aesthetics of the John Hughes' filmography
- discuss the evolution of Hughes' voice and his influence on American cinema
- analyze Hughes' work critically and debate its viability in a modern context
- apply a Hughesian aesthetic to the creation of original screenwriting projects
- evaluate the writing of their peers and formulate helpful feedback

Textbooks

Don't You Forget About Me: Contemporary Writers on the Films of John Hughes Ed. by Jaime Clarke (Required). Additional readings provided by instructor.

Screenwriting Software:

You will be required to use screenwriting software. Final Draft, Fade In, Writer's Duet, Highland, and Celtx are popular options. **All assignments are to be delivered in PDF.**

Course Management:

This course is housed and managed on D2L. There you will find course news, reading materials, and discussion boards for posting assignments and holding conversations.

The class will meet each week via Zoom, using this link: <https://bit.ly/3dDuOBQ>

Course Schedule:

Week 1: April 1 – April 8

- ZOOM LECTURE: Course introduction, Sarris and Auteur Theory, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
- WATCH: *Sixteen Candles* (1984)
- READ:
 - *Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962* by Andrew Sarris (D2L)
 - *Nothing Compares to Hughes* (D2L)
 - *Don't You Forget About Me* (DYFM):
 - Forward/Introduction
 - Which John Hughes Character are You? (96)
 - How John Hughes Altered My Life (192)
 - Enchanted Night: The Magic of Sixteen Candles (25)
 - Blowing It: My Sixteen Candles (59)
 - I Dated Molly Ringwald, Sort Of (139)
 - The Scream, With Lip Gloss (162)
 - Make a Wish: The First Kiss Lasts Forever (173)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Sixteen Candles* paper

Week 2: April 8 - 15

- ZOOM LECTURE: When You Grow Up, Your Heart Dies, Will You Walk On By? + What About the Breakfast Club?
- WATCH: *The Breakfast Club*
- READ:
 - *Molly Ringwald: What About the Breakfast Club?*
 - DYFM
 - A Slut or Prude: *The Breakfast Club* as a Feminist Primer (15)
 - The Ghost of Ally Sheedy (149)
 - In What Ways Does the Author's Use of a Prison Symbolize... (184)
- ASSIGNMENT: *The Breakfast Club* paper

Week 3: April 15 - 22

- ZOOM LECTURE: What It Means to Be Prolific, Everything Changes.
- WATCH: *Pretty in Pink* (1986)
- READ:
 - *Awkward Girls Should Never Have Makeovers* (D2L)
 - DYFM
 - Can't Help Falling in Love (67)
 - Pretty in Penury (76)
 - That's Not a Name, That a Major Appliance (86)
 - La Vie En Rose: *Pretty in Pink* (106)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Pretty in Pink* paper. Short screenplay.

Week 4: April 22 - 29

- ZOOM PITCHES: Short Scripts + Loglines
- READ: *Hughes* Screenplay
- ASSIGNMENT: *Hughes* Screenplay paper.

Week 5: April 29 – May 6

- ZOOM LECTURE: One Man's Struggle to Take it Easy, I Weep for the Future
- WATCH: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) + *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* Director's Commentary
- READING:
 - *The Impact of Social Class* (D2L)
 - *DYFM*
 - John Hughes Goes Deep: The Unexpected Heviosity of *Ferris* (5)
 - Ferris Bueller: An Infatuation, A Life Lesson...(116)
 - Real Men Don't Eat Quiche...(129)
 - Deep Ego Identification with Ferris Bueller (184)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* paper

Week 6: May 6 – 13

- ZOOM LECTURE: I Want Candy
- WATCH: *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* (1987)
- READ: *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* (D2L)
- ASSIGNMENT: *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* paper

Week 7: May 13 - 20

- ZOOM LECTURE: Adulting Chapter 2
- WATCH: *She's Having a Baby* (1988)
- Read:
 - *Life Moves Pretty Fast*
 - *She's Having a Baby* (D2L)
- ASSIGNMENT: *She's Having a Baby* paper. First half of feature treatment

Week 8: May 20 -27

ZOOM LECTURE: SHAB Discussion, Intro *Uncle Buck*

ZOOM WORKSHOP: First half of feature treatment

WATCH: *Uncle Buck*

ASSIGNMENT: *Uncle Buck* paper, Finish Feature Treatment

Week 9: May 27 – June 3

ZOOM LECTURE: *Uncle Buck* Discussion, Intro *Home Alone*

ZOOM WORKSHOP: Second half of feature Treatment

WATCH: *Home Alone* + Netflix's *The Movies That Made Us: Home Alone*

READ: David Kamp on John Hughes (D2L)

ASSIGNMENT: Revise Feature Treatment

Week 10: June 3 – June 10

ZOOM LECTURE: *Home Alone* and Hughes' Legacy

June 10

FINAL: Filmmakers present projects. Writers deliver revised feature treatments in submissions. **Attendance is required at 11:30 AM on Zoom.**

Assignments**Papers**

You will write a total of eight short papers throughout the quarter based on the films and readings we cover in class. After each film, a set of discussion questions will be posted under "Submissions" on D2L. Write a minimum one-page (250 words total for ALL questions, and I will check word count) response. Each paper represents 5% of your final grade (35% in total). Please save files as a PDF, and use your last name and the name of the assignment: **YourName.Bueller.Bueller.Bueller.pdf**

For SCA majors and graduate students, **C-** is the minimum passing grade.

A level writing demonstrates 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 thorough comprehension of the material and attempts to provide a creative take or point of view.

C level writing is lacking in depth on the topic, and could be considered superficial. It does not present a notable creative approach to discussing the material.

D level writing may as well be an **F**. It indicates a serious lack of effort, a total failure to comprehend the material, and no effort toward an original point of view.

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.

Short Screenplay

You will submit a short screenplay for the midterm. It may be selected by the Cinema students for pre-production. Here are some things to keep in mind about the script:

1. This is a low-budget project.
2. No more than eight pages.
3. No more than two locations.
4. The short should not be a remake or spoof, but should be inspired by the Hughes aesthetic/oeuvre in a way that you can clearly define for the class.

Feature Treatment

For your final, you will deliver a feature film treatment that is six-to-eight pages long, and is in some clearly definable way inspired by the Hughes aesthetic/oeuvre, and/or our discussions in class. The story should not be a remake or spoof.

For the short script and the feature treatment you will be graded on:

- Style, grammar, and format.
- The story's relationship to Hughes.
- The viability of the story concept.
- The execution of structure, theme, and character development.

Grading Policy

Short Papers (8): 5 points each

Short Screenplay: 30 Points

Feature Treatment: 30 Points

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, F is substantially unsatisfactory. **Late work is rarely accepted.**

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend the course via Zoom on the dates and times proscribed in this syllabus. This class depends on engaged discussion, which, for as long as the technology allows us, we intend to conduct "face to face." Should you be forced to miss a class, you will be expected to watch the Zoom recording and post your thoughts on the discussion in that week's discussion board.

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 so long as the work does not glorify hate of any kind. If you become uncomfortable with a conversation for personal reasons, you may be excused from the remainder of that class without penalty. Inclusion of individuals from the class will not be tolerated in submitted material.

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.

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