



The Second City

Autumn 2020-2021

Course Title: SCWR 210 101 1060 Fundamentals of Comedy

Instructor: Rachael Mason

Email address: rmason13@depaul.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Class Time & Day: Monday, 1:30pm – 4:45pm, Virtual

FINAL: 11th Week of class, 2:30pm-4:45pm, Virtual

Course Description:

This course explores how Chicago became the cultural hub for comedy in America and the vital role The Second City has played in the modern style of improvisation. Through lectures and screenings, students will explore the history of comedy theory and where the form is headed next.

Course Overview:

- Based on lecture and student-driven discussion.
- Each class will present an introduction to specific topics related to Second City supported by screenings of clips, reading of archives, review of materials made by Second City alum or that inspired them.
- A final project will give students the opportunity to expand their interpretation of The Second City and its impact on comedy.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Describe how satire has evolved throughout history into the form we recognize today.
- Analyze the elements of comedy that define the form and storytelling techniques that produce laughter.
- Classify the processes and forms of the key comedy theaters in Chicago.
- Explore the relationship between comedy and culture over the last 60 years in America.
- Examine how comedy adapts to different media.

Required Texts/Viewing: There is no required text although readings and screenings will be a regular part of class. Copies of these will be provided in class

Term Projects:

1. A 500 word written critical review of a virtual comedy show. (Paper 1 20%)
-Deconstruct the show, talk about acting, structure, patterns. What was successful?
What was not?
2. Written submission of scripts selected for performance. (Paper 2 20%)
-Properly formatted Second City style script and 250 word reasoning behind construction.
3. A performance of self generated material. (Show 25%)
-A 30 minute demonstration of sketches generated in class.

Grading

Attendance 10%

Class Participation 25%

Show Performance 25%

Paper 1 20%

Paper 2 20%

A 100-93

A- 90-92

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in an EXCELLENT manner.

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a VERY GOOD manner.

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a SATISFACTORY manner.

D 69-60

The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a POOR manner. (A grade of D will not fulfill the requirements in a major field of concentration)

F 0-59

The instructor judged the student NOT to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1:

Intro- Table Setting

Lecture- History of Improv and Second City

Warm Up- Spolin Games

Demo- Simple listening and agreement exercises

Assignment- You must see a virtual comedy show and write a 2 page critical review before Class 5.

Week 2:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- The Satire Salon

Video- Burns and Allen, Cabaret

Demo- Simple Vaudeville, Burlesque games

Week 3:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- The Satire Salon

Video- Monty Python, Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor

Demo- Instant Farce, Stand Up exercises

Week 4:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- Storytelling and The Shapes of Stories

Warm Up- 1,3,5,7,S Stories

Video- Vonnegut, Campbell

Discussion- Comedy tropes we love

Assignment- Two page show review paper due next week.

Week 5:

Review- Concepts from last week, Collect papers

Lecture- The Second City Archive

Video- CatDV

Demo- Cold Reads of SC Scenes

Discussion- How are jokes constructed, how does the zeitgeist change, universality of funny

Week 6:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- Creating comedy from nothing. How the SC process works. Structure, theory, shapes, styles, and genres of scenes.

Warm Up- Simple improv games

Video- CatDV, [BO link](#)

Demo- Writing Clinic: BO, 2 Person, Group Scenes

Assignment- Write 3 Bos for next week AND One 2 Person Scene or Group Scene by week 9

Week 7:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- The Running Order and the structures of different types of shows.

Demo- Using class generated material to populate a running order

Week 8:

Review- Concepts from last week

Lecture- Adapting Media- How do stories change in different formats?

Demo- Adapting material for a different media

Discussion- Stage v Video, SF v LF, Book v Tablet

Assignment- 2 person scene or group scene is due next week

Week 9:

Review- Concepts from last week, Collect scenes

Lecture- Chicago as hub of revolution, art, revolutionary art

Discussion: Why did it start here, how did it travel, how did travel change it

Demo- UCB, Groundlings, ComedySportz, The Nursery,

Assignment- Consider scenes for final RO

Week 10:

Review- Concepts from session, Bring in Scripts and explanatory paragraph.

Discussion- Where is this art form, where is Satire going next?

Lecture- Being a performer, Writer, Artist

Demo- Assemble RO, Run through, Ts&Bs

Assignment- Memorize scene, bring final script of scene to performance

Week 11:

FINAL- Performance of self generated RO and material. Submission of final scripts for scenes.

PAPER BREAK DOWN

Papers will be graded according to the following breakdown:

Grammar/Style- 5 possible points

Follows assignment- 5 possible points

Thesis/Argument- 5 possible points

Content- 5 possible points

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.

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/oaa/faculty-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>

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 exceptional 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 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.

Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

Class Discussion: Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

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.

Cell Phones/On Call: Cell phones must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must mute/turn off video in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.