



Autumn 2022: SCWR 210-101 Fundamentals of Comedy

Instructor: Catharine Savage

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Class Time & Day: Mondays 1:30pm–4:45pm, Second City room 207

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

Course Description and Overview:

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.

Upon successful completion of this course 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 the 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

Since this course focuses on studying television and film, it's very important for students to have access to Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime and/or an ability to purchase episodes. The subscription to these sites should be considered your "books" for this course. Please do not pirate materials 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 logon and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, course outline, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

Grading

Attendance and Participation: 24 points

Homework: 36 points

Discussion Board Questions: 10 points
Final Presentation: 15 points
Final Paper: 15 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 and Participation

Attendance and participation are mandatory for this class. This a discussion and “do stuff” class, so to learn the themes of comedy you have to participate in discussion and be willing to try your hand at the different evolutions of comedy we explore. An unexcused absence will result in a reduction in the overall grade. Three instances of tardiness (arriving more than 15 minutes late or departing before class is finished) will count as one absence. 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.

Student participation in class discussions is a significant portion of class. Students are expected to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day’s topic. The development of analytical skills and historical appreciation of subjective material will be a focus of the class and students will actively utilize those skills through class discussions.

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 SCHEDULE

Week 1: History of Improv

Introductions

History of Comedy

Cultural Significance

Commedia dell’Arte

Improv Exercises

Homework: Watch Vaudeville documentary and contribute to discussion board question on D2L

Week 2: Vaudeville

The history and importance of Vaudeville in modern comedy

Develop and perform Vaudeville acts

Homework: Watch silent films and answer discussion board question on D2L

Week 3: Silent Film

Lecture: the history and evolution of silent film and the roots of the early Chicago film scene

Group meetings to pitch silent film ideas

Homework: Make a silent film

Week 4: Chicago Radio

Screen silent films

Discuss the historical evolution of Chicago radio and its influences on comedy, improv, and theater

Sample radio shows

Develop radio show ideas

Homework: Create a radio show

Week 5: Chicago Talkies and the Hays Code

Present radio shows

Talkies styles of comedy

Hays Code and its influence

Homework: watch Inventing Improv and answer discussion board question in D2L

Week 6: The Second City

The history of Second City from the Compass Players to the current incarnation of the theater

Second City improv crash course

Homework: Improv discussion board question in D2L

Week 7: Second City Writing

Discussion board

The Second City approach to writing and creating comedy: "process"

Homework: Write Second City-style scenes

Week 8: Satire

Present scenes

Explore the evolution and effect of satire in modern comedy

Homework: Create a satire piece

Week 9: Chicago + Second City in comedy today

Present Satire piece

Chicago's history in tv and film

The Second City's influence on TV and film today

Homework: Final Presentation

Week 10: Final Presentations

Deliver a 5-8 minute presentation about a Second City alum and analyze their body of work using the language and tools we've used this term

Final Paper: Write a 1-2 page paper about the Second City alum you chose and identify at least two characteristics from previous iterations of comedy we've discussed (Commedia Dell'Arte, Vaudeville, Silent Films, Slapstick, Screwball, Radio, Satire, etc.) that are present in their work. Due November 21, 2022.

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.

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.

Preferred Name & Gender 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 preference 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

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.