



*The Second City*

**Autumn 2020-2021**

**Course Title:** SCWR 210 101 1060 Fundamentals of Comedy

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Instructor:** Jeff Griggs

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**Class Time & Day:** Monday, 1:30pm – 9:00pm, Second City RM #210

**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 scripts, reviews of Second City alumni materials, and clips and/or the screening of Television and feature films.
- The shared language of comedy will be introduced and used to discuss multiple levels of comedies and their content each week.
- 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:

- Understand the language of mainstream American comedy
- Describe how satire has evolved throughout the history into the form we recognize today.
- Identify what makes comedy function on a creative level
- Analyze the elements of comedy that define the form and storytelling techniques that produce laughter.
- Demonstrate the ability to speak about comedy using a shared language.
- Explore the relationship between comedy and culture over the last 60 years.
- Examine how comedy adapts to different media.

**Term Project:**

Choose a former member of The Second City Theater Company and provide a presentation on how that person is influential/innovative/important to modern history of comedy.

You should analyze the person in light of comedic roots, comic sensibility, and how their work influenced the comedians who followed them. Use at least two sources (one of which should not be from the internet).

Some things to think about:

- 1) Feel free to provide some background but this is not primarily a research paper, think about why we as modern day comic artists should study the work of this comedian or group? Form a thesis, support it with evidence from their work.
- 2) How does the work that you chose embody what is most important about this comedian? Which were their most important movies, routines, characters, or bits and why? Specifically. Use examples from those films etc. in addition to your chosen piece to support your thinking.
- 3) Where did their comedy work come from? What specific comedians or styles of comedy from the past helped shape what they created.
- 4) Where do you see their influence in television, standup, movies, etc. today? Who does what they do? Be specific and give examples.
- 5) One of your sources may be to watch or listen to some of the comedian's original work in addition to the piece that you chose. But do your research before you do so, you want to be watching or listening to work that is important or significant. The movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is a good film but it is not the movie that showcases why Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn were thought of as a comic team.

Create 5-8 minute presentation where you make the case to your classmates. Why is the work of this comedian important to the study of modern comedy? You should also include an example of your chosen artists work. Take the class through your analysis of the piece and how this piece is specifically a good example of this comedian's work. Power point is not required. Feel free to be creative in your presentation.

Grading:

Presentations are worth 50 points.

Presentations will be evaluated on:

1. Did it fulfill the requirements of the assignment?
2. Focus and organization
3. Content and specifics
4. Presentation
5. Style

**D2L**

You will be using D2L extensively in 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, video lectures, discussion forums, weekly assignments, etc.

### **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 on Amazon or iTunes. The subscription to these sites should be considered your "books" for this course. Please do not pirate materials for this course.

### **Grading:**

Class Discussion attendance and Participation 50 points

Discussion Board Questions 15 points

Homework Projects 85 points

Final Project 50 points

A= 200-193 points, A-=192-190 points,  
B+=189-188 points, B=187-183 points, B-=182-180 points,  
C+=179-178 points, C=177-173 points, C-=172-170,  
D+=169-168 points, D=167-163 points, D-=162-160 points,  
F=159-0 points.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work.

### **Homework:**

All assignments for this course must be submitted on D2L. Homework is due at the start of class. No late work is accepted. Homework is not accepted via email unless there is a malfunction with D2L. Please do not send me assignments via email unless I ask for them first.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE: *(Viewing selections are subject to change. You will be alerted in advance of all changes)***

#### **Week 1: History of Improv**

Introduction to:

- Comedy and Humor Theory
- History of Comedy
- Cultural Significance
- Improv Exercises
- Commedia

### **Homework:**

1 - Create a Commedia piece with partners.

## **Week 2: Vaudeville**

**Review:** Present Commedia piece.

**Lecture:**

The history and importance of Vaudeville in modern comedy.

**Homework::**

1 - Create Vaudeville piece.

## **Week 3: Silent Film**

**Review:** Present Vaudeville piece.

**Lectures:**

Chronicle the history and evolution of Silent Film and dissect the roots of the early Chicago film scene.

**Homework:**

1 - Make a silent film.

## **Week 4: Chicago Radio**

**Review:** Screen silent piece.

**Lectures:**

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

**Homework:**

1 - Create a radio show.

## **Week 5: Improv/Mockumentary**

**Review:** Listen to radio piece.

**Lecture:**

Talkies and the Hays Code era of films.

**Homework::**

1 - Discussion question assignment in D2L.

## **Week 6: The Second City**

### **Lecture:**

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

### **Homework:**

1 - The Second City scavenger hunt.

## **Week 7: Second City Writing**

**Review:** Present Scavenger Hunt results..

### **Lecture:**

The Second City approach to writing and creating comedy.

### **Homework:**

1 - Write 5 BO's and 1 scene.

## **Week 8: Satire**

**Review:** Present BO's and scenes.

### **Lecture:**

Explore the nuances and importance of satire in modern society.

### **Homework:**

1 - Create a Satire piece.

## **Week 9: Chicago and TV & Films**

**Review:** Present Satire piece.

### **Lecture:**

Explore Chicago's rich history in modern film and television.

### **Homework:**

1 - Discussion question assignment in D2L.

## **Week 10: Second City in TV & Film**

**Lecture:**

Second City's direct influence on TV & Film.

**Homework:**

1 - Discussion question assignment in D2L.

**Week 11: Final****Influential Second City Performer Presentation**

Prepare a presentation about an alumni of the Second City Theater Company. Should be 5 - 8 minutes long. Should be on Powerpoint/Prezi/Numbers or some other presentation medium. Should also include clips and analysis of the performer's catalogue.

**COURSE POLICIES:****Attendance**

If a student misses two classes, the final grade will be reduced by one full letter. A third absence will result in a failing grade. The accumulation of two or more tardy arrivals to class (more than 20 minutes after the start of class) or two or more departures before class is formally dismissed may count as a full absence. Attendance is taken very seriously in this class.

**COVID and Safety Precautions**

Keeping our DePaul community safe is of utmost importance in the pandemic. Students, faculty and staff are expected to (1) wear a mask as required at all times while indoors on campus; (2) refrain from eating and drinking in classrooms; (3) keep current with their COVID-19 vaccinations or exemptions; (4) stay home if sick; (5) participate in any required COVID-19 testing; (6) complete the online Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus training; and (7) abide by the City of Chicago Emergency Travel Advisory. By doing these things, we are Taking Care of DePaul, Together. The recommendations may change as local, state, and federal guidelines evolve. Students who do not abide by the mask requirement may be subject to the student conduct process and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have a medical reason for not complying with any requirements should register with DePaul's Center for Student with Disabilities (CSD).

**Late Work**

Assignments and exercises must be completed by the due date provided. Late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

**Class Discussion**

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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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. 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)

### **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**

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: <mailto:csd@depaul.edu>.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

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