Course ID
JOUR-UA 202.002

Albert Course Number
5396

New York University
Summer Journalism

Class Schedule
Tues. & Thurs: 5:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
May 22 to June 29, 2017

Instructor
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Office hours: Tuesdays: 11 a.m. to noon & 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Course Description
This course is designed for students who have a serious interest in writing about movies for newspapers, magazines or online news outlets. Students will learn and practice various forms of film journalism while completing close readings of some of the best and most important film writing of the recent decades.
We will introduce key concepts in film as well as study individual movies and movements, with guest speakers offering specific guidance on topics. Classwork will include screenings, group discussions, news quizzes and workshops. Planned class trips include a New York City film event and movie set visit.

Homework will help students master some of the following: original news reporting, festival coverage, criticism and profile writing. The final will be long-form piece involving expert analysis.

By the end of the course, students will have built up their historical knowledge of film and mastered fundamental reporting and writing skills. Their goal is to have their work posted on the class website or featured in a professional publication.

**Grading System**

This class uses letter grades, which will be based on the following criteria:

- 60% Papers and assignments
- 20% Class participation
- 20% Readings and homework

Grades can be lowered for any of the following reasons: unmet deadlines, lateness or absence from class. Plagiarism, invented sources and other ethical breaches can result in an automatic F.

The following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

- **A** (100% to 94%) -- Outstanding work, publishable as is
- **A-** (93% to 90%)
- **B+** (89% to 87%)
- **B** (86% to 83%) -- Good work, in need of minor revision
- **B-** (82% to 80%)
- **C+** (79% to 77%)
- **C** (76% to 73%) -- Ordinary work, needs significant revision
- **C-** (72% to 70%)
- **D** (69% to 67%) -- Major problems with facts, reporting, writing
- **D-** (66% to 65%)
- **F** (64% to 0%) -- Issues with plagiarism, etc.
**Week 1: Meet Cute**

**Class 1: Introduction to the course.**

Instructor goals and recommendations followed by a class discussion on film writing. Getting to know one another through an in-class writing exercise. Syllabus review and assign final paper: a film commentary piece in which each student interviews an expert whose knowledge of a particular aspect of the movie is used as a guide to the film. (Students should come to this first class prepared with two ideas for their film/expert.)

Homework: Read chapter on film history from “Looking at Movies.” Read “How to Take It All Seriously (From Antonioni to Andy).” Write a 400-word pocket reference to one major film period.

**Class 2: How to Think & Write About Movies**

Film movement student presentations followed by a short discussion on the movie industry and how it is covered in the media. A presentation on resources for film journalists. Learning the difference between hard news and feature writing through an in-class exercise. Read and discuss handouts on reporting.

Homework: Read selections of news stories from The Hollywood Reporter, The New York Times and Vulture. Read selections of box office reports and write one based on that weekend’s results.

**Week 2: Establishing Shot**

**Class 3: Getting to Know Film Publications**

Student presentations on box office reports and a breakdown of various film outlets. Learning specific film writing through an in-class exercise. Screening: TBD. Read and discuss movie obituaries and appraisal writing.

Homework: Write an obituary or appraisal. Read selections of film festival coverage, including the 2017 Cannes Film Festival (running from May 17 to May 28). Conduct research for a story on the upcoming Brooklyn Film Festival. Prepare questions for guest speaker: Ashley Lee.
Class 4: Sparking a Dialogue


Homework: Read selections of film criticism by Pauline Kael, Roger Ebert and others. Attend and cover the Brooklyn Film Festival on Saturday, June 3.

Week 3: Now Playing

Class 5: What is Criticism?

Student presentations on the Brooklyn Film Festival. Read and discuss “The Power of the Times critic,” “Roger’s Little Rule Book” and “What is a Movie Critic’s Job in the Summer of Comic Books?” Complete in-class exercise on film reviews.


Class 6: Writing the Movie Review

Student presentations on “The Devil Finds Work.” Guest speaker: Time magazine film critic Stephanie Zacharek. Read and discuss a selection of articles about diversity in Hollywood, including coverage of #OscarSoWhite. Screen I’m Not Your Negro.

Week 4: The Close Up

Class 7: How to Pitch Stories

*I’m Not Your Negro* student presentations. A brief history of the celebrity interview. Read query samples and discuss pitching strategies. Complete in-class writing exercise on movie profile writing.

Homework: Read selections of movie profiles and reverse pitch one story. Students brainstorm two ideas for their own movie profiles, choosing subjects who are likely to cooperate with them. Write a 200-word pitch for each aimed at a particular magazine. Prepare questions for guest speaker: Barry Johnson.

Class 8: Profile Writing

Student presentations on reverse pitches. Perfecting the interview request through an in-class exercise. Guest speaker: Barry Johnson, VP of National Publicity at Fox Studios and member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences. Workshop: profile ideas.

Homework: Report and interview subjects for profile, transcribe interviews, outline story and write first draft.

Week 5: We’ll Fix It in Post

Class 9: Profile Writing: The Sequel

Profile student presentations. Read selections of descriptive writing and complete an in-class exercise. Class discussion on common movie profile mistakes. Workshop: profiles. Screening: TBD.

Homework: Revise profile. Read selections of Criterion Collection essays, “The Day the Movies Died” and other writing for the final paper. Prepare questions for guest speaker: TBD.
Class 10: Film Essays & Commentaries

More profile student presentations. Guest speaker: TBD. Read “Who Makes the Movies?” and selections of film commentaries, including pieces on Super 8 and Inception. Class discussion on film essays and commentaries.

Homework: Research and watch film for final paper. Interview expert and write first draft of film commentary.

Week 6: It’s a Wrap

Class 11: Film Essays & Commentary: The Reboot

Film commentary student presentations. Read “You’ll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again.” Workshop: commentaries. Screening: TBD.

Homework: Revise film commentary.

Class 12: The Wrap Party

More film commentary student presentations. Post writing on website. Celebrate!