Course ID
JOUR-UA 202.002

Albert Course Number
3078

New York University
Summer Journalism

Class Schedule
Tuesdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
May 21 to June 25, 2019

Instructor
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Office hours: Thursdays: 11 a.m. to noon & 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Course Description
This intensive, once-a-week course is designed for students with a serious interest in writing about movies for print and digital media. Students practice various forms of film journalism while developing a deeper understanding of the art form through screenings and close readings of works by Brooks Barnes, Pauline Kael, Peter Bogdanovich, Ellen Willis, James Baldwin and Francois Truffaut. Planned class trips include a major film festival and a tour of the Criterion Collection, a film company specializing in art-house cinema. In addition to discussing individual films and film movements, we will cover essential journalism skills, with guest speakers offering guidance on specific topics like reporting and interviewing techniques. Classwork will include writing exercises, presentations and workshops. By the end of the course, students will have raised their cinema I.Q. and written a variety of film articles that inform and engage.

Learning Objectives
- Gather, evaluate and verify facts through skillful research and reporting
- Demonstrate an understanding of the film industry and how it is covered by the press
- Analyze the elements and techniques of both filmmaking and journalism
- Develop sources and learn effective interviewing methods
- Report from and about a film festival

Reading List
“Movies, the Desperate Art” (pgs. 189-209), by Pauline Kael
“Get Out Breaks Out” (pg. 16), by Joey Nolfi
“The Devil Finds Work” (pgs. 80-85 ), by James Baldwin
“A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” (pgs. 1-13), by Francois Truffaut
“It’s High Tide for Black New Wave” (pgs. 1-7), by Roger Ebert
“The Art of the Interview” (pgs. 124-194), by Lawrence Grobel
“Bogie in Excelsis” (pgs. 92-103), by Peter Bogdanovich
“Confidence Woman” (pgs. 28-33 ), by Christine Smallwood
“Looking at Movies” (pgs. 411-433, 447-452), by Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan
“See America First” (pgs. 1-7), by Ellen Willis
“Cannes Opens with a Middling Movie But a Killer Jury” (pgs. 1-4), by Stephanie Zacharek

Grading System
This class uses letter grades, which will be based on the following criteria:
- 30% final project
- 40% papers and assignments
- 20% class participation and in-class assignments
- 10% familiarity with the assigned readings

Grades can be lowered for unmet deadlines, lateness or absence from class. Plagiarism, invented sources or 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%)
Class 1
Introduction to the class. Getting to know each other through a writing exercise. We will screen and analyze a clip from the documentary *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* then go deep on the movie moments everyone was talking about this year, with a focus on the state of diversity and inclusion in Hollywood. A primer on film writing, from *The Great Train Robbery* to Me Too, and story forms in journalism. (What’s the difference between features and news stories? How do you gather details and render a portrait of the subject?) Film organizations, websites and other useful resources. Students will create and maintain a Twitter feed of the latest film stories, which will be discussed at the start of each class.

*Homework: Read and update class Twitter feed. Read Pauline Kael’s essay “Movies, the Desperate Art” (pgs. 189-209) as well as “Get Out Breaks Out,” by Joey Nolfi, and a collection of recent box-office reports by Brooks Barnes. Research and write a 350-word box-office report based on this weekend’s results. Your piece should include background facts on the top three films and a quote from an authorial source that provides context for the reader.*

Class 2
A brief class discussion of the latest film news. Student presentations of their box-office reports. An overview of the article writing process, from the research stage to final draft. A screening and analyses of a clip from *Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography* will be followed by a survey of the Hollywood ecosystem, as it applies to sourcing. (Who knows who’s being hired, or who’s being fired, and how much films cost? What are the major talent agencies and guilds? How do you handle story tips?) Lecture on the nuts and bolts of film beat reporting, including handouts and examples on interviewing techniques and event coverage. Think and plan coverage of the “KidsFilmFestival” section of the 2019 Brooklyn Film Festival.

*Homework: Read chapter on talking to stars and experts from “The Art of the Interview” (pgs. 124-194) as well as a collection of film festival coverage, including “Cannes Opens with a Middling Movie But a Killer Jury” (pgs. 1-4), by Stephanie Zacharek and “It’s High Tide for Black New Wave” (pgs. 1-7), by Roger Ebert. Attend and cover the Brooklyn Film Festival in a 500-word story. Stories must be written for a particular audience (mainstream media, fan site, film journal or trade publication), and include at least two sources and why this event is newsworthy.*
Class 3
Compare notes on covering festivals and how to make your story stand out in a cluttered media landscape with guest speaker Ashley Lee from the Hollywood Reporter. Discuss the day’s film news. Student presentations of film festival assignment. Screen and analyze a scene from the comedy Trainwreck, with Amy Schumer as a men’s magazine writer, then discuss pitching strategies. (How do you choose people and topics that can lead to memorable stories? How do you negotiate access to a star? When’s the best time to pitch?) An A-to-Z guide to film publications and an in-class writing exercise on reverse pitching.

Homework: Read Francois Truffaut’s “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” (pgs. 1-13), “The Devil Finds Work” (pgs. 80-85), by James Baldwin, “See America First” (pgs. 1-7), by Ellen Willis, and the chapter on film history from "Looking at Movies" (pgs. 411-433, 447-452). Write a 300-word pocket guide to a film movement of your choice. Plus, pitch two ideas—each no more than 200-words—for your final profile of a film personality. Include the focus of your piece (What’s the larger idea, or how are you using this person as a vehicle for what you are trying to say?), any pegs, potential sources and where you hope to publish the finished article.

Class 4
Field trip to the offices of art-house film distributor Janus Films and its sister company, Criterion Films, a source for important classic and contemporary films on DVD and Blu-ray. (How are films acquired and distributed? What does the digital restoration process look like? How has the home entertainment market changed since the video age?) Brief class discussion of the day’s film news. Student presentations of profile pitches. Workshop profile pitches

Homework: Report and write draft of final paper, a 1,000-word profile of a film personality of your choice that includes quotations, at least one scene, carefully observed details about the subject and appropriate context.

Class 5
Brief class discussion of the day’s film news. Student presentations of their pocket guides. Screen and analyze a clip from Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing then discuss the editing process for articles. (What does your editor expect from you? How do you respond to negative feedback? What do freelancers earn for an assignment?) Workshop profiles. Lecture/discussion on fact checking.

Read a collection of film profiles, including “Bogie in Excelsis” (pgs. 92-103), by Peter Bogdanovich, and “Confidence Woman” (pgs. 28-33), by Christine Smallwood. Revise final profile paper.

Class 6
Brief class discussion of the day’s film news followed by a review of the work we produced and lessons learned in class. Student presentations of final paper. Workshop profiles. Screen and analyze a clip from All the President’s Men, director Alan J. Pakula’s paean to investigative journalism.

Homework: Write final draft of profile.