Course Number
SS1: JOUR-UA 202.002

Albert Course Number
2698

New York University
Summer Journalism

Class Schedule
Tuesdays/Thursdays: 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.
May 24 to June 30, 2022

Instructor
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Office hours: Wednesdays: 11 a.m. to noon & 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Course Description
This course is designed for students with a serious interest in writing about movies for print and digital media. A capacity to laugh at deadline pressure—or at quips and witty retorts coming from the back row of the movie theater—is also required. Students collaborate with peers on key projects, pitch in to shape stories and come up with ideas for their own articles, reporting on a variety of film topics. Beyond screening contemporary and essential films, students will be asked to engage in close readings of important critical works by François Truffaut, Pauline Kael, Donald Bogle, Molly Haskell, Stephanie Zacharek and Wesley Morris that will deepen their understanding of cinema as an art form. This course equips students with a working knowledge of the film industry they will report on, as well as the ability to identify and describe major movements and pioneering artists. Students attend and cover the 2022 Brooklyn Film Festival. Other planned class trips include the Film Foundation, an organization founded by director Martin Scorsese that is dedicated to protecting and preserving motion picture history. We do topic-inspired lessons, presentations and pop-up workshops on journalism skills and ethics. Guest speakers will offer guidance on reporting techniques, the forces transforming modern film and the purpose of criticism. By the time the course credits roll, students will have raised their cinema I.Q. and completed several publishable, well-sourced articles.

Learning Objectives
☐ Demonstrate an understanding of the film industry and how it is covered by the press
☐ Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
☐ Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
☐ Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
☐ Report from and about a film festival

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:

Outstanding work, publishable as is
A (100% to 94%)
A- (93% to 90%)
B+ (89% to 87%)

Good work, in need of minor revision
B (86% to 83%)
B- (82% to 80%)
C+ (79% to 77%)

Ordinary work, needs significant revision
C (76% to 73%)
C- (72% to 70%)

Major problems with facts, reporting, writing
D (69% to 65%)

Issues with plagiarism, etc.
F (64% to 0%)

Disability Disclosure Statement
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Diversity Statement
The Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute is committed to creating an anti-racist learning environment that embraces diversity, complexity, and honesty. We are an intellectual community enriched by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, sex, gender identity, class, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, religion, and culture. Our student body is excitingly international. We welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. We acknowledge that listening to other perspectives on some of these issues may be personally challenging, and we accept that challenge. We further acknowledge that our profession, journalism, and our home, New York University, have participated in the systemic racism that underpins U.S. history. We are committed to teaching and practicing fair, rigorous, and engaged journalism that helps all our communities move toward justice and equality.
Scene 1/Rehearsals
Introduction to the class and syllabus review. Getting to know each other through a writing exercise. Screen and analyze a clip from a film classic about a newspaper baron then discuss media coverage of Hollywood, from spotlights on emerging talent to obits and tributes.

Homework — Read + Response: Packet on film writing, and viewing assignment TBD. Write brief in memoriam tribute (approximately 200 words).

Scene 2/Establishing Shot
An in-person “cameo” by The New York Times Film Editor Stephanie Goodman, who will provide tips on everything from navigating the movie industry to working with editors. Homework discussion and student presentations. An A to Z guide to film coverage and resources. (What’s the difference between Cineaste and Comscore? How do I track down a contact for the costume designer on the new big-screen version of West Side Story?) An in-class writing exercise on journalism elements and story formats, including the hard news story.

Homework — Research and write a box-office report (350 words) based on this weekend’s results, using at least two sources. Viewing assignment TBD. Compose a sample celebrity interview request.

Scene 3/What’s the Pitch?
A cameo by Kelly Bush Novak, CEO and founder of ID, one of the entertainment industry’s leading public relations firms, who will offer a guide to access in Hollywood. We will screen and analyze a clip from a comedy about a magazine writer with commitment issues and talk story pitching, as well as the nuts and bolts of interviewing. (How do I negotiate and conduct fruitful interviews? Who are good secondary sources? How do I ask the tough questions?) Devices and other ways to frame a story to make it relevant to the intended reader.

Homework — Read + Response: chapter from the book “The Art of the Interview,” and viewing assignment TBD.

Scene 4/Ext: The Gotham — Day
A reporting class trip to the Gotham Film & Media Institute, a nonprofit organization for indie filmmakers that will provide a primer on the New York market. Group exercise on descriptive writing.

Homework — Attend and cover the 2022 Brooklyn Film Festival (600 words). Press passes will be provided.
Scene 5/The Big Picture
Festival discussion and presentations followed by a peer edit workshop. A review of story basics and an examination of the writing process. (How do I organize my material? What are some ways to add variety and texture to writing? Where do I go to fact-check my story?) Screen and discuss a documentary on Black stereotypes in cinema “from a man who knows his subject inside out.”

Homework — Revise festival coverage. Viewing assignment TBD.

Scene 6/The Birth of the Film Generation
A primer on the golden age of movie writing in the 1960s and 1970s, when it seemed just about every comment on a movie sparked wider discussion. An overview of major critics. Cameo from journalist and author Mark Harris, who will break down the standards and essential skills of film journalists and talk about how he picks subjects.

Homework — Read + Response: Packet of writing from and about the “Film Generation,” which began in the 1950’s with the rise of campus film societies and included the writings of François Truffaut, Peter Bogdanovich and Pauline Kael, whose work helped change the way we think about movies. Viewing assignment TBD.

Scene 7/The Film Generation II: On Location
Class trip to the Union Square headquarters of Janus Films, the great arthouse distributor whose recent successes include the Oscar-winning film Drive My Car, and the Criterion Collection, the producer of a revered series of important classic and contemporary films on DVD and Blu-ray. A brief history of film viewing and an in-class exercise on how to infuse your writing with a sense of place and mood to bring characters and situations to life. Workshop on developing and researching the profile.

Homework — Research and pitch two possible subjects for your final (300 words each). Read + Response packet.

Scene 8/Serious About Movies
A look at how writing about movies has evolved, from the first piece ever done in 1903 to the present. In-class assignment on film reviews. Screen and analyze a movie clip from a cynical drama about a corrupt reporter followed by a discussion of journalism ethics. (Can I accept freebies? What constitutes a conflict of interest?) How to pursue truth, accuracy, fairness and a diversity of perspectives in your work.

Homework — Screen and review a recent movie release (500 words).
Scene 9/New 4K Restoration
A tour of one of the world’s top film preservation labs by Margaret Bodde, executive director of The Film Foundation, whose founders include Martin Scorsese. We will hear about how the nonprofit organization is protecting motion picture history and screen before-and-afters of their work.

Homework — Read + Response: packet of clips on the contemporary film, including passages from the book “She Said,” about the sexual harassment story from The Times that helped ignite the #MeToo movement.

Scene 10/Everyone’s A Critic
Cameo by Time magazine film critic Stephanie Zacharek, who will provide feedback on student-written reviews and talk about the role of reviewers. (How do you capture the quality of an actor’s performance? How did movie reviewing change between Bonnie and Clyde and Happening? As a critic, how much should political sympathies or being a woman or person of color shape my work?) A lesson on nailing the personality profile.

Homework — Report and write draft of final profile (2,000 words). Viewing assignment TBD.

Scene 11/The Magic of Movies
Screen and analyze a clip from the CNN docu-series The Movies and discuss what the globalization of Hollywood means for the artform. Cameo by Industrial Light & Magic’s John Knoll, the company’s senior visual effects supervisor who will give us a peek behind the curtain at ILM’s groundbreaking creations that have redefined the limits of moviegoer’s imaginations for four decades. Workshop on final project, along with a review of grammar, syntax and punctuation.

Homework — Revise profile. Viewing assignment TBD.

Scene 12/Wrap Party
Closing statement. A review of the work we produced and lessons learned in class. Student presentations: advance obits. Screen a clip from the holy grail of journalism films and discuss how the craft of filmmaking gels with the act of reporting.

Homework — Final draft of profile.