SYLLABUS: AMERICAN FILM COMEDY
Spring 2012

FIL 4830H
Prof. Jay Boyar
407.657.7947
jay.boyar@ucf.edu

COMM 145
Class hours: Mondays, 6 to 8:50 p.m.
Office hours: TBA
Credit hours: 3

Format:
The basic format will be to watch a film and then discuss it as a film, as comedy and as a subversive gesture.

Objectives:
The main objective of this seminar is to explore subversive American film comedies from the silent era to the present. Along the way, we will look at film history and American history, as well as cultural trends and other related topics.

Texts:
This text will be available at the campus bookstore: The New York Times Guide to the Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made. It’s an anthology of essays on film by such authors as Vincent Canby, Janet Maslin, Stanley Kauffman and Renata Adler. The assigned essays are required and you may either read them in the book or print them out from the New York Times website and read them. (Throughout the semester, other supplemental readings may be assigned.) You must bring your book (or the printouts) to class with you.

Films:
In class, we will view these films:
- Easy Street (1917, Charlie Chaplin, 19 min.)
- Cops (1922, Edward F. Cline & Buster Keaton, 18 min.)
- A Night at the Opera (1935, the Marx Brothers, 92 min.)
- The Miracle of Morgan’s Creek (1944, Preston Sturges, 99 min.)
- His Girl Friday (1940, Howard Hawks, 92 min.)
- Some Like It Hot (1959, Billy Wilder, 119 min.)
- Dr. Strangelove (1964, Stanley Kubrick, 93 min.)
- Sleeper (1973, Woody Allen, 88 min.)
- Beetlejuice (1988, Tim Burton, 93 min.)
- Election (1999, Alexander Payne, 103 min.)
- Burn After Reading (2008, Joel and Ethan Coen, 96 min.)

Websites & blog:
Useful websites include imdb.com and cinemaspot.com. My blog, which you should check each week, is movie-centric.blogspot.com.
Grades:
Your final grade will be based on five short papers (50 percent of the grade), a final paper (25 percent) and class participation (25 percent). Plus and minus grades are part of the grading system for this class. The first paper must be turned in no later than Feb. 11.
2. Final paper: One six-to-eight-page, double-spaced essay that compares and analyzes three films.
3. Class participation: In-class writing assignments, participation in discussions and attendance.
All work must be written by you for this class. Most work must be submitted as a paper "hard copy." Work submitted late must be sent by e-mail and will lose one letter grade for each day late.
If you miss a class session, you are still responsible to complete the reading, viewing and writing assignments for that session. If you miss more than two sessions, your class participation grade for this semester will be a full letter grade lower than it otherwise would have been for each absence after those first two.

Sensitivity:
Some films and texts used in this class may be offensive to you. Nevertheless, watching and reading them is required. Students with any questions about this should speak with the professor after the first class to determine whether to remain in the class.