Arts & Humanities

14 Classic Rom-Coms with Columbia Connections

Stream these romantic tales of fateful encounters, love triangles, and happily-ever-afters.

By
Julia Joy
|
Feb. 07, 2024

Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger in *10 Things I Hate About You.* (©1999 Touchstone Pictures / IMDb)

10 Things I Hate About You

In this 1999 teen rom-com inspired by Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Columbia College alumna Julia Stiles '05CC plays Katarina "Kat" Stratford, a high-

school outcast who falls for a dreamy bad boy played by Heath Ledger. Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who went on to attend Columbia at the same time as Stiles but didn't graduate, stars as Cameron James, a shy transfer student trying to woo Kat's younger sister.

Glenda Jackson and George Segal in *A Touch of Class*. (Allstar Picture Library Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo)

A Touch of Class

This 1973 British comedy, about an American married man and an English divorcée who meet in a taxi and embark on a casual fling — only to fall madly in love — stars George Segal '55CC and Glenda Jackson. Segal, who was awarded a Golden Globe for his performance, later found success in television series like *Just Shoot Me!* and *The Goldbergs*.

Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft in *The Graduate.* (©Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Inc., all rights reserved / IMDb)

The Graduate

The soundtrack of Mike Nichols' iconic 1967 dramady, about a recent college graduate who begins an affair with a seductive older woman, features five songs by folk duo Simon & Garfunkel, including the mega-hits "Mrs. Robinson" and "The Sound of Silence." Singer Art Garfunkel '65CC, who earned a bachelor's degree in art history at Columbia two years before *The Graduate*'s release, later appeared as an actor in Nichols' 1971 romantic drama *Carnal Knowledge*.

Robinne Lee and Will Smith in *Hitch*. (Columbia Pictures / Overbrook Entertainment)

Hitch

This 2005 rom-com stars Will Smith as Alex “Hitch” Hitchens, a professional dating coach who struggles with his own romantic life. A flashback scene of Hitch’s college years takes place outside Low Library and features Columbia Law School alumna Robinne Lee ’00LAW as a former love interest.

Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn in *Holiday.* (©1938, renewed 1966, Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc., all rights reserved / IMDb)

Holiday

Sidney Buchman 1923CC cowrote the screenplay for *Holiday*, a 1938 screwball comedy about a man who meets the wealthy family of his fiancé — and ends up falling for her sister. Buchman, who worked on dozens of Hollywood scripts throughout his decades-long career and once served as president of the Screen Writers Guild of America, later won a 1942 Oscar for cowriting the rom-com *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*.

Meg Ryan and Hugh Jackman in *Kate & Leopold.* (© 2001 Miramax Films, all rights reserved / IMDb)

Kate & Leopold

In this romantic fantasy film cowritten and directed by James Mangold ’99SOA, Hugh Jackman plays Leopold, a fallen aristocrat from nineteenth-century England. After accidentally time-traveling to the year 2001, he begins an unlikely romance with his neighbor, an advertising professional played by Meg Ryan. *Kate & Leopold* marked the first and last frothy rom-com by Mangold, who went on to focus on weightier fare like *Walk the Line*, *3:10 to Yuma*, and *Ford v Ferrari*.

James Rebhorn (second from left) in *Meet the Parents*. (TriBeCa Productions / Nancy Tenenbaum Productions / IMDb)

Meet the Parents

Prolific character actor James Rebhorn ’72SOA costarred in *Meet the Parents*, a 2000 comedy about a nurse who gets caught up in a marathon of humiliating events while visiting his girlfriend’s family. Rebhorn, who received his acting training at Columbia, plays Larry Banks, a family friend and plastic surgeon.

Jeff Bridges and Barbra Streisand in *The Mirror Has Two Faces*. (TriStar Pictures)

The Mirror Has Two Faces

Barbra Streisand directed, produced, and starred in *The Mirror Has Two Faces*, a 1996 romantic dramady about two middle-aged Columbia professors who meet via a personals ad. The movie, which was filmed on campus, features a supporting performance from George Segal ’55CC, who had previously starred opposite Streisand in the 1970 rom-com *The Owl and the Pussycat*.

Shirley Jones and Gordon MacRae in *Oklahoma!* (Magna Theatre Corporation / IMDb)

Oklahoma!

Oklahoma!, the first musical from composer-songwriter duo Richard Rodgers ’54HON and Oscar Hammerstein 1916CC, ’54HON, was adapted into a 1955 film with a screenplay cowritten by William Ludwig ’32CC, ’34LAW. The film, set in pre-statehood Oklahoma, stars Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones as a cowboy and country girl who find love among prairies and cornfields.

Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, and James Stewart in *The Philadelphia Story.* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer / IMDb)

The Philadelphia Story

Before turning to directing, Joseph Mankiewicz ’28CC produced a number of Hollywood films including *The Philadelphia Story*, the classic 1940 rom-com about a socialite who finds herself in an awkward love triangle with her ex-husband and a tabloid reporter.

Cary Elwes and Robin Wright in *The Princess Bride.* (Act III Communications / IMDb)

The Princess Bride

Best known for his Oscar-winning screenplays for *All the President's Men* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, William Goldman '56GSAS also wrote the 1987 cult classic *The Princess Bride*. The romantic fantasy comedy, adapted from Goldman's 1973 novel of the same name, follows the adventures of a swashbuckling hero as he rescues and reunites with a doomed princess.

Tony Curtis and Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot.* (©Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Inc., all rights reserved / IMDb)

Some Like It Hot

Screenwriter I.A.L. Diamond ’41CC collaborated with filmmaker Billy Wilder on a string of classic comedies, including *The Apartment* and *Love in the Afternoon*. Their 1959 rom-com *Some Like It Hot*, set during Prohibition, stars Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon as jazz musicians who disguise themselves as women to hide from the mob. Marilyn Monroe plays a sultry singer and ukulele player who captures the attention of both men.

Amanda Peet and Jack Nicholson *Something's Gotta Give.* (Maximum Film / Alamy Stock Photo)

Something's Gotta Give

In this 2003 rom-com about the struggles of romantic age gaps, former Columbia College history major Amanda Peet '94CC costars as Marin Klein, an art auctioneer dating a much older man. (Spoiler: they don't end up together.)

Ben Stiller and Cameron Diaz in *There's Something About Mary.* (Twentieth Century Fox / IMDb)

There's Something About Mary

One of the most popular comedies of the 1990s, *There's Something About Mary* follows a love triangle between a magazine writer, his former high-school crush, and the private investigator he hires to find her. Peter Farrelly '86SOA cowrote and codirected the film with his brother, Bobby Farrelly, four years after the duo released their breakthrough 1994 comedy *Dumb and Dumber*.

Read more from ***Julia Joy***

Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >

Read more from ***Julia Joy***