

VFX200 Introduction to Visual Effects Syllabus

DePaul University

Course Information

Course Code: VFX200

Course Title: Introduction to Visual Effects

Prerequisites: None

Term: Winter 2021

Section: 801

Class Hours: Wednesdays 5:45pm - 9:00pm

Location: online.

Faculty Information

Travis Chandler

tchandle@cdm.depaul.edu or travischandler@mac.com

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9pm - 10:30pm

Office Hours Location: Via video chat.

Email me to set up a one-on-one zoom.

Course Description

Introduction to the use, history, and production methodologies of visual effects. Fundamental techniques will be explored through compositing exercises and projects.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Discuss the structure and business practices of the visual effects industry.

- Analyze historical and contemporary uses of visual effects in film.
- Critique visual effects content.
- Compose shots for visual effects.
- Navigate a compositing software application.
- Produce simple composited shots to established specifications.

Software

Adobe AfterEffects CC

Textbook

None

Readings

The VES Handbook of Visual Effects, Chapter 1 “Introduction”

The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 2 “Learning to See”

The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 2 “Digital Effects: The 15 Minute Version”

The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 3 “Who You Gonna Call: The VFX Team”

The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 3 “The Digital Representation of Visual Information”

Assignments & Grading

VFX Exercises: 30%

VFX Exercise 1 - Forced Perspective

VFX Exercise 2 - Animation

VFX Exercise 3 - Effects

VFX Exercise 4 - Rotoscoping

VFX Exercise 5 - Chroma Keying

VFX Exercise 6 - Motion Tracking

Visual Effects Sequence Presentation: 20%

Final Project: 50%

Pitch: 10%

Project Review: 10%

Final Project Sequence: 30%

Course Outline

Week 1

Topics: Course overview, What are a Visual Effects?, Photographic Principles.

Readings: The VES Handbook of Visual Effects, Chapter 1 "Introduction"; The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 2 "Learning to See".

Assignments: VFX Exercise- Forced Perspective

Week 2

Topics: Forced Perspective Exercise Dailies, Introduction to AfterEffects, Animation in AE.

Assignments: VFX Exercise 2 - Animation

Due: VFX Exercise- Forced Perspective

Week 3

Topics: Animation Exercise Dailies; The Visual Effects Pipeline, AfterEffects Workflows, Effects in AE.

Readings: The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 2 "Digital Effects: The 15 Minute Version",

Assignments: VFX Exercise 3 - Effects

Due: VFX Exercise 2 - Animation

Week 4

Topics: Effects Exercise Dailies; Lecture- History of VFX, Part 1: Pre-Digital; Masking and Rotoscoping

Reading: VES Handbook Chapter 1; "Confessions of a Roto Artist"

Assignments: Watch any of the films mentioned in lecture; VFX Exercise 4 - Rotoscoping

Due: VFX Exercise 3 - Effects

Week 5

Topics: Rotoscoping Exercise Dailies; History of VFX, Part 2: Digital - Today, Basic Chromakeying

Assignments: Visual Effects Sequence Presentations, VFX Exercise 5 - Chromakeying

Due: VFX Exercise 4 - Rotoscoping

Week 6

Topics: Chromakeying Exercise Dailies; Structure of the VFX Industry (or How a VFX Film Gets Made, and Who Makes It.); 2D Motion Tracking

Readings: The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 3 "Who You Gonna Call: The VFX Team"

Assignments: Read the credits of one of your favorite VFX driven films, VFX Exercise 6 - Motion Tracking

Due: VFX Exercise 5 - Chromakeying

Week 7

Topics: Visual Effects Sequence Presentations

Week 8

Topics: Motion Tracking Exercise Dailies, Digital Color Theory, Color Matching; Assign Final Project

Readings: The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 3 "The Digital Representation of Visual Information"

Assignments: Final Project Pitch

Due: VFX Exercise 6 - Motion Tracking

Week 9

Topics: Effects Techniques, Final Project Pitch

Assignments: Compositing Project Production Review

Due: Compositing Project Footage Review

Week 10

Topics: Light & Shadow Techniques, Noise & Grain, Final Project Dailies; Final Project Studio

Assignments: Compositing Project Final Delivery

Due: Compositing Project Production Review

Week 11

Topics: Final Project Critique

Due: Final Project Delivery, All project resubmissions due.

Course Policies

Focus: Do your best to avoid distraction while working on your projects and viewing our lectures. It's hard, but you can do it!

Professionalism: Turn your work in on time, in the correct format, titled correctly. This is half the battle.

Resubmissions: Visual effects are a highly iterative process. I highly encourage revisions and resubmission of work based off of feedback.

Resubmitted files should be submitted to the original submission folder on D2L. Resubmissions will be accepted until the beginning of the final class of the course. Project reviews are time based and therefore not eligible for resubmissions. Late work penalties cannot be made up by resubmissions.

Late work: Assignments submitted late will have their grades reduced by 15% per class day the assignment is late. Late assignments are not eligible for resubmissions.

Contact: I make every effort to respond to email within 24 hours, with the exception of Sundays and holidays. If you have an issue or emergency, please contact me as soon as possible before the next class date.

Have fun: While making film and VFX can be challenging and stressful, don't forget to have fun and enjoy the process. We are all artists, and our art thrives when we put all of our passion and enthusiasm into our work.

University Policies

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>. If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: csd@depaul.edu.

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