

# Syllabus for VFX-474 – Digital Compositing I

## Course Information

**Name:** DIGITAL COMPOSITING I  
**Course #:** VFX-474-501  
**Quarter:** Winter 2015  
**Time:** Tuesday 13:30 - 16:45  
**Campus:** LOOP  
**Room:** CDM 632  
**System:** D2L

## Instructor Information



**Instructor:** Savvas Paritsis (Assistant Professor)  
MFA-NYU-Tisch School of the Arts  
**Office:** CDM 463  
**Phone:** 312-362-5857  
**e-mail:** savvas@cdm.depaul.edu  
**Office hours:** Monday 17:00 - 20:00  
**Advising hours:** Tuesday 18:00 - 21:00

## Course Summary

Compositing is the art of combining all the elements of a Visual Effect in one frame, making it look like it was all shot at the same time, under the same lights, with the same camera.

This class introduces the fundamental techniques of digital compositing, using Adobe After Effects. It also introduces students to the design, planning and production workflows of a modern VFX project, through a VFX story written, planned and produced in class.

## Learning goals

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be expected to:

- apply the fundamental techniques of compositing: transparency, keying, tracking.
- research and analyze current Hollywood movies in order to learn the most recent techniques used in VFX.
- fully plan and execute a Visual Effects production, from conception to final execution and compositing.
- build and lead a VFX team in a project.

## Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, but some familiarity with Photoshop and Adobe Premiere Pro would be very useful.

## Grading

Please note that late assignments will not be accepted. You must submit on time, even if you are not able to come to class on that particular day. There are many ways to submit material online. Make sure to read and understand the notes provided in class.

- Assignments: 50%
- Final Project: 25%
- Attendance: 25%

## Textbooks

After Effects Apprentice - Real World Skills for the Aspiring Motion Graphics Artist

- Publisher: Focal Press; 3rd edition (August 23, 2012)
- ISBN-10: 0240817362
- ISBN-13: 978-0240817361
- Link: [After Effects Apprentice](#)

In addition, students have access to **Lynda.com**, where you can find all the lessons and materials contained in the book. To connect to Lynda.com, follow the link and log in with your Campus Connect ID: [Lynda.com Login](#)

## Required Supplies: External Hard Drive

All our class exercises and home assignments deal with projects and media. It is the responsibility of the student to back up all projects & media. Do not leave your projects on the lab computer and always make sure to back up your portable drive to another drive back home. Please note: hardware problems are not acceptable as an excuse for late submissions.

## Week-by-week

### Week 1 - Introduction

Introduction to Compositing and After Effects: Fundamental concepts of Compositing, Introduction to the AE Interface & Tools

### Week 2 - Basic Animation

Basic Animation: Fundamentals of animation, keyframes & Transform properties, Anchor Point, Keyframe types, Motion Sketch, Smoother, Project Settings & Parameters

### Week 3 - Layer Control & Blending

Layer Control & Blending: Layer Editing, Stacking, Work Area, Effects & Presets

### Week 4 - Transparency A

Transparency - Part A: Mask & Pen tool, Bezier curves

### Week 5 - Transparency B

Transparency - Part B: Track Matte, Luma Matte, Stencils

### Week 6 – Keying

Keying: Import Issues, Footage Interpretation, Keylight basics

### Week 7 – Tracking & Output

Tracking: Stabilization, 1-point tracking, 4-point tracking

### Week 8 – Additional Keying & Tracking tools

Color Correction, Alpha painting, Mocha Demo

### Week 9 – Group Project Review

Group presentations & Notes

### Week 10 - Recap & Final Project Review

Recap & Final Project: Wish list, Questions, Final project

## Course 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: [CDM Enrollment](#).

### 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](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.  
Phone number: (312)362-8002  
Fax: (312)362-6544  
TTY: (773)325.7296

## Course Policies as Suggested by the Dean of Students Office

### Attendance:

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

### Class Discussion:

Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

### Attitude:

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout this course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise a student may be asked to leave the classroom. The professor will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

### Civil Discourse:

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be [Socially Responsible Leaders](#). It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

### Cell Phones/On Call:

If you bring a cell phone to class, it must be off or set to a silent mode. Should you need to answer a call during class, students must leave the room in an undistruptive manner. Out of respect to fellow students and the professor, texting is never allowable in class. If you are required to be on call as part of your job, please advise me at the start of the course.