

## **VFX 374/474 - Digital Compositing I - Syllabus - Spring 2016 - Brian Mellen**

**bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu**

**Office hours: Tu 12:00pm to 1:30pm DePaul Center C106A By Appt. Only**

### **Summary of Course:**

VFX 374/474 expands on the concepts covered in VFX 200. Using After Effects, students will delve in deeper to the art of digital compositing. Students will create and assemble their own digital composites through a series of projects throughout the quarter. Some of the topics covered during the quarter will include but are not limited to advanced animation, motion-tracking, and chroma-keying among other concepts.

Students will also be able to apply some of the knowledge gained in class to their own personal projects and move to the more intermediate/advanced concepts presented in VFX 378/478 in a future quarter. These are the objectives of the course.

*\* Syllabus is subject to change*

### **Learning Outcomes:**

In **VFX 374/474**, students will:

1. Develop an understanding of the basics of Digital Compositing as well as intermediate concepts.
2. Learn more advanced techniques in After Effects such advanced animation, motion-tracking, and chroma-keying among other concepts.
3. Create their own digital composites through a series of projects throughout the quarter.
4. Gain knowledge of the post-production workflow as it applies to Visual Effects.
5. Work with a group to create a one to two minute short that features Visual/Special Effects prominently and tells a complete story.

### **Textbooks and printed resources:**

After Effects Apprentice, Third Edition, Meyer & Meyer, Focal Press/Taylor & Francis Group, 2012. ISBN: 978-0240817361

### **Or Lynda.com course:**

After Effects Apprentice with Chris Meyer

**Required Supplies:**

DC majors should have their own external drive (USB 3.0 or Thunderbolt) for their project work for this and other VFX/DC classes. The University cannot guarantee that media or projects left on lab computers will be safely maintained. Non-majors should at least have some sort of other external or flash drive big enough to store their work.

**Drop Dates:**

Sunday, April 3: Last day to add (or swap) classes

Sunday, April 10: Last day to drop classes with no penalty

Monday, April 11: Grades of "W" assigned for classes dropped on or after this day

**Grading:**

Attendance & Participation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Assignments	25%
Script/Treatment	2.5%
Storyboards	2.5%
Final Project RAW Footage	5%
Final Project Rough Cut	5%
Final Project	25%
VFX Breakdown	10%

**LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.****Grading Scale:**

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82- 80, C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70, D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D work is unsatisfactory in some respect, F is substantially unsatisfactory work

**Student responsibilities:**

Each student is responsible for their time management and for meeting the expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines in class. In the event of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for an assignment sheet detailing any homework. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus, you are still responsible for completing the assignment on time.

**Also, all hard drives fail and one point or another. Make sure you backup your projects at least twice for this class and all future projects.** If your hard drive fails and you didn't backup your project, no extensions will be given. No accommodations are typically made in the real world for lack of preparation and in order to prepare you for the job market, no accommodations will be made in this course for lost data.

### **Deadlines:**

Video production requires strict adherence to deadlines, therefore late assignments will not be accepted for grading and written feedback will be given at the instructors discretion. You will not be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

### **Attendance & Participation:**

This course demands class participation - attendance is mandatory. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late, or leaving before class is dismissed will be considered absent. You are allowed one (1) unexcused absence. After that, a one letter deduction for each absence will be taken from your final course grade. Missing three (3) or more classes will result in a failing grade. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized. If you are sick, documentation may be provided if you're sick in order to be excused from class. Other excused absences will be evaluated case-by-case. Addressing these issues weeks after the absence occurred will still result in an unexcused absence.

### **Quizzes:**

Quizzes spread throughout the quarter will be given to students to test their knowledge of what they retained from coming to class and from the readings.

### **VFX Breakdown:**

Each student will be expected to present a 2-3 minute scene from a movie (one that features special effects and/or visual effect prominently) of their choosing at some point during the quarter. Students will give their very best attempt at breaking down the effects used in the scene in a presentation for the class. **Keynote or PowerPoint presentation required for graduate students as well as a one-page summary of their presentation. HARD COPY of the summary required which will be turned in on the day of the presentation in class.** Points will be deducted for not following instructions.

## **Final Project:**

In your groups you will plan a minute long visual effects piece that you will turn in at the end of the quarter. **Graduate students are required to submit a two-minute short.** The group will turn in one polished product. The final short should combine at least two to three techniques we've covered in class this quarter. The project must tell a complete story. You must light your project. You must find a DP to shoot your project.

## **Group Evaluations:**

At the end of the quarter, each group member is required to turn in a written evaluation of their team members for the final project. If all evaluations are uniformly positive, all group members will share the grades; if evaluations are negative, the grades of the group member in question will be docked for the final project.

## **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.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/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

## **Content Changes:**

Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

*\* Syllabus schedule is subject to change*

### **Week One 03/29**

Pre-Roll, Editing in After Effects, Basic Animation, Rendering

**FINAL PROJECT (06/07 DUE):** In your groups you will plan a minute long visual effects piece that you will turn in at the end of the quarter. **Graduate students are required to submit a two-minute short.** The group will turn in one polished product. The final short should combine at least two to three techniques we've covered in class this quarter. Attention to story-telling is a must. Script/Treatment **DUE 04/12**. Storyboards are **DUE 04/19**.

**Readings:** *Pre-Roll, Lesson - 1 Basic Animation, Lesson 2 - Advanced Animation, Appendix - Rendering*

**Lynda.com:** *01: Pre-Roll, 02: Basic Animation, 03: Advanced Animation*

## **Week Two 04/05**

Advanced Animation, Motion Sketch, Graph Editor, Bouncing Ball Animation

**Bouncing Balls (04/12 DUE):** Using the bouncy ball file provided to you on D2L, animate three versions of the balls bouncing on screen and off (**Hint: Lesson - 2 in the book covers this topic, 03: Advanced Animation on Lynda.com**). Bonus points if you get them to interact with each other. At the very least, each ball should bounce at varying heights and speeds. Render at 1280 x 720 in **H.264** and upload the video to D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX374 or 474\_BouncingBalls**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

**Readings:** Lesson 7 - Expressions and Time Games pp.182-189, Lesson 3 - Layer Control

**Lynda.com:** 04: Layer Control, 10: Time Games

## **Week Three 04/12**

### **TREATMENT/SCRIPT DUE**

Time Remapping, Layer Control, Blending Modes, Track Mattes

**Time Remapping (04/26 DUE):** Shoot footage with a moving subject that you would like to speed up or slow down in After Effects (Hint: Shoot using a high shutter speed and a higher frame rate). It needs to be at least ten seconds in length. Render at whatever resolution your camera uses and upload the video to D2L as **H.264**.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX374 or 474\_TimeRemapping**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

**Readings:** Lesson 4 - Creating Transparency pp.88-113

**Lynda.com:** 05: Creating Transparency

## **Week Four 04/19**

Particle Effects

### **STORYBOARDS DUE**

**Readings:** Lesson 9 - Track and Key pp.244-269

**Lynda.com:** 12: Tracking and Keying (Up until the Keying Portion)

## **Week Five 04/26**

### Motion-Tracking, Stabilization

**Motion-Tracking (05/10 DUE):** Shoot some footage that has a clear point to motion track. Track an effect to a particular point in the footage. Add additional elements to blend the effect into the shot so that it looks photorealistic. It needs to be at least ten seconds in length. Render as **H.264** and upload the video to D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX374 or 474\_MotionTracking**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

**Readings:** Lesson 9 - Track and Key pp. 270-277

**Lynda.com:** 12: Tracking and Keying (Only the Keying Portion)

## **Week Six 05/03**

### Keying

**Keying (05/17 DUE):** Composite yourself or a friend into a movie scene using Green Screen. It needs to be at least ten seconds in length. Consider Lighting, Perspective, Depth of Field, Motion Blur, and Color within the original movie. Match your Green Screen footage to the movie plate as best you can. Render the movie in **H.264** and upload the video to D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX374 or 474\_Keying**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

## **Week Seven 05/10**

### Mocha

**Readings:** Lesson 8 - 3D Space

**Lynda.com:** 11: 3D Space

## **Week Eight 05/17**

### **FINAL PROJECT RAW FOOTAGE DUE**

### 2.5D, After Effects Camera

**AE Camera (05/31 DUE):** Using Google Images or footage you've shot yourself, assemble a scene in 2.5D and animate a camera move through the scene. It needs

to be at least ten seconds in length. Render at whatever resolution your camera uses and upload the video to D2L as **H.264**.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX374 or 474\_Camera**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

***Readings: Lesson 10 - Paint and Puppet***

***Lynda.com: 13: Paint, Roto, and Puppet***

**Week Nine 05/24**

**FINAL PROJECT ROUGH CUT DUE - SOME EFFECTS PROCESSED**

Paint

***Readings: Lesson 11 - Shape Layers***

***Lynda.com: 14: Shape Layers***

**Class 10 05/31**

Shape Layers

**FINAL PROJECT DUE June 7, 2016 at 2:30pm**