

# Syllabus for VFX-200 – Introduction to Visual Effects

## Course Information

**Name:** Introduction to Visual Effects  
**Course #:** VFX-200-402  
**Quarter:** Fall 2016  
**Time:** Monday-Wednesday 11:50 - 13:20  
**Campus:** LOOP  
**Room:** C106C  
**System:** D2L

## Instructor Information



**Instructor:** Savvas Paritsis (Assistant Professor)  
MFA-NYU-Tisch School of the Arts  
**Office:** CDM 404  
**Phone:** 312-362-5857  
**e-mail:** savvas@cdm.depaul.edu  
**Office hours:** Wednesday 14:00 - 17:00  
**Advising hours:** Monday 14:00 - 17:00

## Course Summary

Visual effects have become a mainstay in modern filmmaking. The tools are new, but the principles have been the same since the dawn of cinema. In this course we will cover all the important principles and tools of modern visual effects and we will recapitulate the history and development of modern techniques.

This class will teach the fundamentals of After Effects. The students will become familiar with the interface and the basic concepts of the software and will gain some insight in the compositing tools and how they apply to the creation of visual effects.

## Learning goals

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

- create an animation in After Effects
- create compositions through the use of transparency
- analyze complex visual effects in movies
- create workflows for the creation of basic visual effects

## 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%
- Mid-term: 10%
- Final: 20%
- Attendance: 20%

## Textbooks

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

- Publisher: Focal Press; 3rd edition (August 23, 2012)
- 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.

Ideally, your drive should run at 7200 rpm, have a capacity of at least 500 GB (1 TB preferred) and have Thunderball, USB 3 or FW 800 connections. USB2 is NOT acceptable.

## Week-by-week

The class takes place in two parts. In general, on Monday there will be a lecture on visual effects and you will receive assignments (which are also due on Monday the following week). On Wednesday we will learn After Effects and do practical exercises.

### Week 1b - Introduction

Introduction to the class. What are Visual Effects?

### Week 2

#### **Monday – Photographic principles**

Photographic principles. Forced perspective: theory. Assignment #1.

#### **Wednesday – Intro to After Effects**

Introduction to the Interface. Basic Animation. Basic Rendering.

### Week 3

#### **Monday – Basic tools**

Rear Projection, Stop Motion Animation, Matte Paintings. Assignment #1 is due. Assignment #2.

#### **Wednesday – Advanced Animation**

Anchor point, Keyframes, Motion Sketch

### Week 4

#### **Monday – Special vs Visual Effects**

Stunts, explosions, water, fire - safety. Assignment #2 is due. Assignment #3.

#### **Wednesday – Transparency**

Masks and the Pen tool.

### Week 5

#### **Monday – Planning a visual effect**

Storyboards, pre-viz, planning workflows. Assignment #3 is due.

#### **Wednesday – MID-TERMS**

In-class animation exercise.

## Week 6

### **Monday – Modern tools**

Models, Miniatures, Green Screen, Motion Control. Assignment #4.

### **Wednesday – Time & Layer control**

More on transparency. Editing in After Effects. Layer control.

## Week 7

### **Monday – The VFX Pipeline**

Planning & Management. Job specialization. Assignment #4 is due. Assignment #5.

### **Wednesday – Painting & Puppet**

Introducing two more tools.

## Week 8

### **Monday – Motion Capture, Intro to CGI**

Old ideas - new technology. Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings. Assignment #5 is due.

### **Wednesday – Parenting & Nesting**

Creating more complex animations through layer control.

## Week 9

### **Monday – Computer-generated Images. Performance capture.**

Advanced visual effect techniques: Avatar.

### **Wednesday – Track & Key Demo**

Introducing the tools in After Effects for advanced compositing.

## Week 10

### **Monday – Class summary**

Recapitulation, questions, the future of VFX

### **Wednesday – FINAL PROJECT**

Final exercise, re-dos, final AE questions.

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

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