

# **VFX 200 SYLLABUS**

Meeting time: T/TH 11:50 am – 1:20 pm  
Location: DPC CI06C

Instructor: Meghann Artes  
Office: CDM 518 (5<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30pm-3:00pm  
Thursday 1:30pm-3:00pm  
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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

VFX 200 is an introductory course to visual effects. Using Adobe Photoshop and After Effects, students will gain an understanding of what goes into creating a digital composite. Beginning with still images in Photoshop and transitioning to video in After Effects, students will learn how to create and assemble their own digital composites through a series of projects throughout the quarter.

The class is an introductory course, but by the end of the quarter, students will have a solid foundation in Photoshop and After Effects. Students will also be able to apply some of the knowledge gained in class to their own personal projects and transition to the more intermediate/advanced concepts presented in **VFX 278** and **VFX 378/478** in future quarters.

## **FORMAT**

Through a combination of lectures, demonstrations, critiques and assignments students will begin to learn the basic tools needed to become a visual effects artist.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

After Effects Apprentice, Real World Skills for the Aspiring Motion Graphics Artist  
Third Edition, by Chris and Trish Meyer (For CS6)

## **REQUIRED SUPPLIES**

DC majors should have their own external firewire drive for their project work in 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.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

More than two absences will automatically result in a one-letter grade reduction for the course. Any student missing four or more classes will receive an "F" for the quarter. Contact me before class if you are unable to attend. Being late to class two times counts as one absence.

You are responsible for any missed lectures and assignments. If you miss a class, it is still your responsibility to turn in the assignment on time.

No incompletes will be given without documented proof of circumstances beyond your control.

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

If you have not been tardy or missed a class during the quarter **AND** you actively participate in critiques and discussions you will receive extra credit points on your final overall grade for the quarter.

## **GRADING BREAKDOWN**

Participation	5
Forced Perspective	5
Sky Replacement	5
Clone Yourself Still	10
Parallax	10
Character Walk	10
Clone Yourself Video	10
Green Screen Composite	10
Kinetic Typography	15
Midterm	10
Final	10

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 RESONSABILITIES**

Each student is responsible for their own 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.

## **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 instructor's discretion. You will NOT be eligible for an A in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

## **MIDTERM**

The Midterm will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions based on material covered in class lectures, and readings. Student will be allowed one sheet of notes (front side only) for the Midterm.

## **FINAL EXAM**

The Final Exam will test students on their proficiency in Photoshop and After Effects.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

In addition to DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following special policies will apply to this course:

**Class/Workshop Rules** - there will be **NO** net surfing, phone calls, email checking, text messaging, or IMing during class at any time, except when I give you permission to do so.

**Assignments and Exercises** – must be completed by the due date as indicated in the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

With certain exceptions, assignments in this class will be submitted digitally via COL WEB

All assignments submitted in digital format online, are **DUE** a minimum of 2 hours prior to class. Assignments may be submitted earlier, however.

**Class Participation** - is encouraged and students will be graded on the extent to which they are involved throughout the quarter. Participation is an amazing tool for learning and should be done in a constructive way, especially when giving or receiving project critiques.

**Final Class Exam** - Attendance is mandatory. Students who do not show up will get their final grade reduced by 2 letter grades. If for some reason you cannot attend, contact the instructor before the final class. Excuses after the class will not be accepted.

**Changes to the Schedule** – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

## Course Schedule

### **Week ONE – T 1/8 and TH 1/10**

Introductions

Review syllabus

Learning to See, Forced Perspective, Introduction to Photoshop

**ASSIGNMENT #1 - Forced Perspective (DUE 01/17):** Using the principles of forced perspective, take a still photo and make something (person or object) look bigger or smaller than it actually is. This is an in-camera trick. Upload a **JPEG** to COL web.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn1**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

### **Week TWO – T 1/15 and TH 1/17**

Image Generation, Photoshop Masking and Selections, Photography Basics

**ASSIGNMENT #2 - Sky Replacement (DUE 01/22):** Take a picture of a landscape. Replace the sky with the sky from another picture you've taken. Make a cloudy day appear sunny or give a clear day some clouds. You must take your own pictures. Upload a **JPEG** of the two composited images as well as the two separate images (**JPEGS too**) to COL web.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn2**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

### **Week THREE – T 1/22 and TH 1/24**

Video Compression, Photoshop Demo (Clones), Filters

**ASSIGNMENT #3 - Clone Yourself Still (DUE 1/29):** Take four different pictures of the same shot. One should be a blank plate and the other three should be pictures of yourself positioned in different parts of the frame. Splice all four together in Photoshop to make it look like there are three different versions of yourself in the same shot. Upload a **JPEG** to COL web.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn3**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

### **Week FOUR – T 1/29 and TH 1/31**

Film formats: Media, Resolution, and Aspect Ratios, Introduction to After Effects, Basic Animation, Parallax Demo, Rendering

**ASSIGNMENT #4 - Parallax (Due 2/5):** Find a picture on Google images that has a definite foreground, middle ground, and background and cut it apart using Photoshop. Separate it into three layers so that there's a foreground, middle ground, and background. Save as a .psd file. Import the .psd file into After Effects and use the transform properties to give the illusion that a camera is dollyng parallel to the still image. The animation should be five seconds in length. Render as 720 x 480 in **H.264** and upload the video to COL web.

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Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn4**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

*Readings: Pre-Roll, Lesson 1 - Basic Animation*

### **Week FIVE- T 2/5 and TH 2/7**

#### **MIDTERM –TH 2/7**

*Readings: Lesson 3 - Layer Control*

### **Week SIX – T 2/12 and TH 2/14**

Layer Control, Animation Continued, Cut-Out Character

**ASSIGNMENT #5 – Character Walk (Due 2/21):** Import the provided Photoshop file from COL web into After Effects and animate the cut-out character walking completely across the screen. The character should enter frame and exit frame. Render as 1280 x 720 in **H.264** and upload the video to COL web.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn5**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

*Readings: Lesson 4 - Creating Transparency*

### **Week SEVEN – T 2/19 and TH 2/21**

Puppet Tool, Masks and Transparency, Effects

**ASSIGNMENT #6 – Clone Yourself Video (DUE 2/28):** Using Masks, create clones of yourself with video instead of stills this time. The clones must interact with each other in some way. Use whatever video camera you can get your hands on. Render at whatever resolution your camera uses and upload the video to COL web as **H.264**.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn6**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

*Readings: Lesson 5 - Type and Music*

### **Week EIGHT- T 2/26 and TH 2/28**

Green Screen, Keylight, compositing

**ASSIGNMENT #7 – Green Screen Composite (DUE 3/7):** Using the green screen footage we captured during class, create a story by compositing foreground and background elements into your scene. You can find additional images on goggle or take pictures yourself. Render as 720 x 480 in **H.264** and upload the video to COL web.

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn7**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression

### **Week NINE - T 3/5 and TH 3/7**

Type and Music, Motion Graphics, Basic 2.5D

**ASSIGNMENT #8 – Kinetic Typography (DUE 3/14):** Pick lyrics from a song, dialogue from a movie, or words from a standup performance. Animate text in After Effects to the spoken word using the original audio track. The animation should be 20 seconds in length. Render as **H.264** (1280 x 720) and upload the video to COL

Use the naming convention **Lastname\_VFX200\_assn8**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

**Week TEN – T 3/12 and TH 3/14**

Continue Type and Music and Screen Kinetic Typography assignment

**FINALS WEEK – T 3/19 - FINAL EXAM 11:45am-2:00pm**

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

**\*\*\*Schedule subject to change\*\***