

DePaul University
School of Cinematic Arts

DC 304-501 / 405-501: Pixar: Craft of Storytelling

Winter 2017

Wednesday 1:30 – 4:45PM, CDM 708 and Online

Professor Scott Myers: smyers15@depaul.edu
312-362-1120

Office Hours: (CDM 403) WED 5:00-6:00PM, THU 3:00-4:00PM

Description

Through screenings, detailed analysis, and discussions, students will learn key narrative dynamics found in Pixar's 17 movies which they can use in writing their own scripts and stories, as well as enjoy movies, television, and novels with more depth and understanding throughout the rest of their lives.

Readings

Screenplays for some of the Pixar movies and supplemental resource material to be provided by the instructor on the D2L course site.

Objectives

- Learn eight key narrative dynamics present in Pixar movies
- See how story structure derives from the story's characters
- Become familiar with the Hero's Journey and Three-Act Structure
- Understand the role of metamorphosis in the Protagonist's journey
- Gain an awareness of the Pixar story-crafting and filmmaking process
- Develop story analysis skills and a greater appreciation of movies

Outcomes

- Four 4-5 page papers exploring key narrative dynamics in Pixar films
- One 8-10 page final paper analyzing two non-Pixar movies
- Graduate students will be assigned a Pixar movie script to read and provide a scene-by-scene breakdown (an example will be provided)

Course Management

This course is housed and managed on **D2L**, where both the online and in-class sections are linked together. There students will find course news, assignments and additional reading materials.

Each week's recorded lecture and discussion (available shortly after 5PM each Wednesday) will be available here: <https://col.cdm.depaul.edu>.

Should students have problems accessing lectures, request assistance:

<http://colsupport.cdm.depaul.edu/ErrorReport.aspx>

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 4

A History of Pixar: The Company, Business, Movies, and Filmmaking Process

Movie Assignment for Week 2:

Watch Monsters, Inc. and Cars

Read script for Toy Story

Week 2 – January 11

Story Dynamic: Special Subculture – Monsters, Inc., Cars, Toy Story

Movie Assignment for Week 3:

Watch Brave and The Good Dinosaur

Read script for The Incredibles

Writing Assignment 1 – Group A: Special Subculture in A Bug's Life and Ratatouille

Week 3 – January 18

Story Dynamic: Sires and Siblings – Brave, The Good Dinosaur, The Incredibles

Movie Assignment for Week 4:

Watch Toy Story 2 and Inside Out

Read script for Finding Nemo

Writing Assignment 1 – Group B: Sires and Siblings in Up and Finding Dory

Week 4 – January 25

Story Dynamic: Separation - Toy Story 2, Inside Out, Finding Nemo

Movie Assignment for Week 5:

Watch Ratatouille and Wall-E

Read script for Up

Writing Assignment 2 – Group A: Separation in The Incredibles and The Good Dinosaur

Week 5 – February 1

Story Dynamic: Strange Sojourners – Ratatouille, Wall-E, Up

Movie Assignment for Week 6:

Watch A Bugs Life and Cars 2

Read script for Wall-E

Writing Assignment 2 – Group B: Strange Sojourners in Toy Story and Inside Out

Week 6 – February 8

Story Dynamic: Substantial Saga / Small Story - A Bugs Life, Cars 2, Wall-E

Movie Assignment for Week 7:

Watch Finding Dory and The Incredibles

Read script for Inside Out

Writing Assignment 3 – Group A: Substantial Saga / Small Story in Finding Nemo and Brave

Week 7 – February 15

Story Dynamic: Stumbles and Switches - Finding Dory, The Incredibles, Inside Out

Watch Monsters University and Up

Read Ratatouille

Writing Assignment 3 – Group B: Stumbles and Switches in Monsters, Inc. and Cars

Week 8 – February 22

Story Dynamic: Sentimentality - Monsters University, Up, Ratatouille

Watch Finding Nemo and Toy Story 3

Read Brave

Writing Assignment 4 – Group A: Sentimentality in Toy Story 2 and Wall-E

Week 9 – March 1

Story Dynamic: Surprise - Finding Nemo, Toy Story 3, Brave

Watch Toy Story

Writing Assignment 4 – Group B: Surprise in Cars 2 and Monsters University

Week 10 – March 8

Eight Story Dynamics: Considering Them in Some Non-Pixar Movies

Final Paper – Group A and Group B: Analyze two non-Pixar movies using at least three of the eight narrative dynamics as explored in Pixar movies

The bi-weekly papers are due by **1:30PM Wednesday** the week after they are assigned.

Final Paper due: **Wednesday, March 15 at 5PM**

Grading

Each bi-weekly is worth 15% of your final grade.

The final paper is worth 30% of your final grade.

Class participation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Late work will not be accepted without a legitimate excuse communicated to the instructor in a timely fashion.

These values are minimums for each grade:

A	= 95	C+	= 78
A-	= 92	C	= 75
B+	= 88	C-	= 70
B	= 85	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

Participation

While this is a lecture class, I will involve students often in each group session by asking questions. In addition, during Weeks 2 through 9, while I will provide detailed analysis of two Pixar movies per week, the third movie will be a more discussion-based analysis. Be prepared to provide your thoughts, observations, and insights. Pixar movies have multiple layers of meaning and our discussions will help us to dig into each story to depth.

Attendance

Missing 2 classes or more without a legitimate excuse will result in a reduction of your final grade. If you do have a legitimate reason for missing class, you must email me in advance of the class for it to be considered an excused absence. We begin class right on the half-hour. A pattern of tardiness will result in a grade reduction.

Office Hours

WED 5:00-6:00PM, THU 3:00-4:00PM in CDM 403. Drop by or schedule a meeting. I am happy to talk with you about the course content or anything related to the movie and TV business, screenwriting, writing in general, career considerations, etc.

Decorum

During class discussions, be respectful of everyone's opinion. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated.

Laptops/Cell Phones

If your computer and the mind attached to it drift away from class, and I so much as suspect you of online activities not related to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire quarter. In addition, during the screening of video clips, laptops must be closed. Phones must be silenced and stowed.

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 the professor. Plagiarism will earn you an immediate F in this course.

Alterations

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.

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.

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.

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

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](#) or via a mobile device in class during the Week 9 session.