

VFX 200 - Introduction to Visual Effects - Spring 2019

Brian Mellen

bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu

Office hours: W 4:45pm to 5:45pm - By Appt. Only

W 9:00pm to 9:30pm

Office Hours Location: DePaul Center C106C

Course Information:

Course Code: VFX200

Course Title: Introduction to Visual Effects

Prerequisites: None

Term: Winter 2018

Section: 901

Class Hours: Wednesdays 5:45pm to 9:00pm

Location of Class: DePaul Center C106C

Summary of Course:

VFX 200 is an introductory course to the the use, history, and production methodologies of visual effects. Fundamental techniques will be explored through compositing exercises and projects.

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 as well as the basics of Digital Compositing. 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 374/474** and **VFX 378/478** in future quarters. These are the objectives of the course.

** Syllabus is subject to change*

Learning Outcomes:

In **VFX 200**, students will:

1. Discuss the structure and business practices of the visual effects industry.
2. Analyze historical and contemporary uses of visual effects in film.
3. Critique visual effects content.
4. Compose shots for visual effects.
5. Navigate a compositing software application.
6. Produce simple composited shots to established specifications.

Required 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

Readings:

1. The VES Handbook of Visual Effects, Chapter 1 “Introduction
2. The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 2 “Learning to See.”
3. The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 2 “Digital Effects: The 15 Minute Version.”
4. The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 3 “Who You Gonna Call: The VFX Team.”
5. The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 3 “The Digital Representation of Visual Information.”

Software:

Adobe After Effects CC

Required Supplies:

DC majors should have their own external drive 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:

Friday, April 5: Last day to add (or swap) classes
Friday, April 12: Last day to drop classes with no penalty
Sat, April 13: Grades of "W" assigned for classes dropped on or after this day
Friday, May 17: Last day to withdraw from class

Grading:

Attendance & Participation	15%
Quizzes	10%
Assignments	30%
VFX Sequence Paper	10%
Midterm	15%
Final Project	20%

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

Focus:

Class time requires your complete attention. All students are expected to participate in all class activities. This means no distractions, such as cell phone use, web browsing, texting/chatting, or working on other projects in class.

Professionalism:

Students are expected to act according to the professional environment of the classroom. This includes but is not limited to:

- Maintaining a positive and open-minded attitude while participating in class discussions.
- Progressively achieving the highest standards of quality of artwork to be submitted for grading.
- Being able to accept constructive feedback in stride, realizing the class and instructor are trying to help.
- Demonstrating neat, self-disciplined, and timely work habits.
- Attending class on time and stay throughout the whole class period.

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 instructor's 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. If you have more than one unexcused absences, a one letter deduction for each absence after the first two absences will be taken from your final course grade. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized.

Quizzes:

Quizzes spread throughout the quarter will be given to students to test their knowledge of what they retained from coming to class. Some will be multiple choice and T/F while others will test your abilities in the software we use.

Visual Effects Sequence Breakdown:

Choose a visual effects shot or sequence from commercially released feature film, and discuss the role the sequence plays in the film in a two page paper. Break down how they accomplished the Visual Effects as well. You should watch the entire film and research the sequence production in detail. Research materials can include texts, publications, interviews, dvd commentary, and documentaries. Upload your paper as a .PDF to D2L. Please cite your sources.

Midterm:

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

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 - 04/03

Course overview, What are Visual Effects, Photographic Principles, Forced Perspective, Intro to Photoshop

ASSIGNMENT #1 (04/10 DUE): Using the principles of forced perspective, take a still photo and make something (person or object) look bigger or smaller than it

actually is. You can use whatever camera you can get your hands on. This is an in-camera trick. Upload a JPEG to D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname_VFX200_assn1**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or not using the correct compression.

Readings: *The VES Handbook of Visual Effects, Chapter 1 "Introduction"; The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 2 "Learning to See"*

Week Two - 04/10

Image Generation, Photoshop Masking and Selections, Photoshop Demo (Clones), Photography Basics, Basic After Effects Overview

ASSIGNMENT #2 (04/17 DUE): Take four different pictures of the same shot (use MANUAL mode). 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 D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname_VFX200_assn2**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

Week Three - 04/17

Video Compression The VFX Pipeline, Intro to After Effects, After Effect Animation

ASSIGNMENT #3 (05/01 DUE): Find a **LARGE** 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 dollying 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 D2L.

Use the naming convention **Lastname_VFX200_assn3**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

Readings: *The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 2 "Digital Effects: The 15 Minute Version"*

Lynda.com: 01: Pre-Roll, 02: Basic Animation (Book Chapters: Pre-Roll, Lesson 1 - Basic Animation)

Week Four - 04/24

Film formats: Media, Resolution, and Aspect Ratios, Parallax Demo, Rendering, Intro Masks, and Layer Control

Week Five - 05/01

Effects

ASSIGNMENT #5 (05/08 DUE): Effects exercise. Details will be discussed in class.

Use the naming convention **Lastname_VFX200_assn5**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

Lynda.com: 04: Layer Control, 05: Creating Transparency (Book Chapters: Lesson 3 - Layer Control, Lesson 4 - Creating Transparency)

Readings: *"Confessions of a Roto Artist"*

Week Six - 05/08

MIDTERM - Multiple Choice and T/F, Photoshop Practical

Rotoscoping, Roto-Masking

ASSIGNMENT #5 (05/15 DUE): Using a video camera, shoot a 5-10 second clip of a moving object that you plan on roto-masking in After Effects. Roto-mask the point of interest in your shot and apply an interesting effect to your footage. The results should be seamless. Upload the video to D2L as **H.264**.

Use the naming convention **Lastname_VFX200_assn6**. Points will be deducted for not following the correct naming convention or using the correct compression.

Readings: *The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 3 "Who You Gonna Call: The VFX Team"*

Week Seven - 05/15

Motion-Tracking

ASSIGNMENT #6 (05/29 DUE): Motion-Tracking Exercise. Details will be discussed in class.

Visual Effects Sequence Breakdown (05/22): Choose a visual effects shot or sequence from commercially released feature film, and discuss the role the sequence plays in the film in a two page paper. Break down how they accomplished the Visual Effects as well. You should watch the entire film and research the sequence production in detail. Research materials can include texts, publications, interviews, dvd commentary, and documentaries. Upload your paper as a .PDF to D2L. Please cite your sources.

Week Eight - 05/22

Digital Color Theory, Color Matching

Readings: *The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 3 "The Digital Representation of Visual Information"*

Week Nine - 05/29

Motion Graphics, Illustrator, Additional Integration Techniques, Post-Production Workflows, Working in Post-Production in Chicago

FINAL PROJECT (06/16 DUE): Students will composite together elements given to students by instructor. More details will be given as the quarter progresses.

Week Ten - 06/05

Work in Progress of Final Projects Due 06/05 by 5:45pm

FINAL PROJECT DUE JUNE 16 by 5:45PM