

# **VFX200 - Introduction to Visual Effects - Syllabus**

DePaul University

## **Course Information**

**Course Number/Title:** VFX200 - Introduction to Visual Effects

**Description:** Introduction to the use, history, and production methodologies of visual effects. Fundamental techniques will be explored through compositing exercises and projects.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Term:** SPRING 2020

**Section:** 601

**Meeting Day/Time:** Thursdays 1:30pm-4:45pm CST (Chicago Time) beginning 4/2/2020

**Location:** ONLINE via Zoom Live Stream: <https://depaul.zoom.us/j/623818647>

**Instruction Type:** Lecture-discussion

**Drop Dates:** Can be found at <https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx>

**Course Management and Materials:** D2L:

**Tech Support:** [scaavsupport@depaul.edu](mailto:scaavsupport@depaul.edu)

## **Faculty Information**

**Christopher Olsen** ([Colsen11@depaul.edu](mailto:Colsen11@depaul.edu)) 312-415-9095

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays Noon-1:30pm ST (Chicago Time)

**Office Hours Location:** ONLINE via Zoom Live Stream: <https://depaul.zoom.us/j/753170617>

## **Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

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

## **Software**

Adobe AfterEffects CC

## **Textbook**

None

## **Electronic Readings (Links in D2L)**

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

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## Assignments & Grading

VFX Exercises: 30%

VFX Exercise 1 – In Camera (Forced Perspective)

VFX Exercise 2 – Asset Prep and Animation

VFX Exercise 3 – Image Effects

VFX Exercise 4 – Rotoscopy

VFX Exercise 5 – Motion Tracking

VFX Exercise 6 – ChromaKey

Visual Effects Sequence Presentation: 20%

Final VFX Project: 50%

Pitch: 10%

Work-In-Progress VFX Project Review: 10%

Final VFX Project Completion: 30%

## Course Outline

### **Week 1**

Topics: Course overview, What are a Visual Effects?, Photographic Principles.

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

Assignments: VFX Exercise 1 – In Camera Effects

### **Week 2**

Topics: VFX 1 Dailies, Introduction to AfterEffects, Animation in AE.

Assignments: VFX Exercise 2 - Animation

Due: VFX Exercise 1 - Forced Perspective

### **Week 3**

Topics: VFX 2 Dailies; The Visual Effects Pipeline, AfterEffects Workflows, Effects in AE.

Readings: The Visual Effects Producer, Ch. 2 “Digital Effects: The 15 Minute Version”

Assignments: VFX Exercise 3 - Effects

Due: VFX Exercise 2 - Animation

### **Week 4**

Topics: VFX 3 Dailies; Masking & Rotoscopy

Reading: VES Handbook Chapter 1; “Confessions of a Roto Artist”

Assignments: Watch any of the films mentioned in lecture; VFX Exercise 4 - Rotoscoping

Due: VFX Exercise 3 - Effects

### **Week 5**

Topics: VFX 4 Dailies, 2D Motion Tracking

Assignments: VFX Exercise 5 – Motion Tracking & Street Art Design

Due: VFX Exercise 4 - Rotoscoping

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## **Week 6**

Topics: VFX 5 Dailies; Lecture-Structure of the VFX Industry; Basic Chromakeying  
Readings: The Visual Effects Producer, Chapter 3 “Who You Gonna Call: The VFX Team”  
Assignments: VFX Exercise 6 – ChromaKey; **Assign Final Project**  
Due: VFX Exercise 5 – Motion Tracking & Street Art Design

## **Week 7**

Topics: VFX 6 Dailies; Final Project A: Previs; Digital Color Theory, Color Matching  
Readings: The Art and Science of Digital Compositing, Chapter 3 “The Digital Representation of Visual Information”  
Assignments: **Final VFX Project B: Work In Progress**  
Due: VFX Exercise 6 - Motion Tracking

## **Week 8**

Topics: Atmospherics, Light & Shadow, Noise & Grain; Final Project B: Work In Progress; Studio Time  
Assignments: **Final VFX Project Completion**  
Due: Final VFX Project B: Work In Progress

## **Week 9**

Topics: Final Project Review & Critique  
Assignments: **Student VFX Presentations**  
Due: **Final VFX Project Completion/Delivery, All project resubmissions due.**

## **Week 10**

Topics: Lecture-History of VFX, Part 1: Pre-Digital; **Student VFX Presentations – Group 1**  
Due: **Student VFX Presentations**

## **Week 11**

Topics: History of VFX, Part 2: Digital – Today; **Student VFX Presentations – Group 2**

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## Course Policies

- 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, food, 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.
  - Defending their artwork in an articulate manner that demonstrates critical and analytical thinking.
  - Demonstrating neat, self-disciplined, and timely work habits.
  - Attending class on time and stay throughout the whole class period.
- Resubmissions: Visual effects are a highly iterative process. In the spirit of this, any of the initial six VFX exercise assignments that are turned in ON TIME are able to be revised and resubmitted. Revised files should be uploaded to the original submission folder on D2L. Resubmissions will be accepted until the beginning of the final class of the course. Neither the Student Presentation nor Final Project assignments are eligible for resubmissions. **Late work penalties cannot be made up by resubmissions.**
- Late work: Assignments submitted late will have their grades reduced by 20% per class the assignment is late. **Late assignments are not eligible for resubmissions.**
- Attendance: Attendance is key to success in this course. Student who miss three days of class will have their final grade lowered by 20%. Students who miss four days of class will automatically fail the course. Missing more than 15 minutes of class counts as an absence.
- Contact: Please make time during my office hours to ask questions in person, as this is often the fastest way to answer a complex question. I also can be available outside of office hours by appointment. I make every effort to respond to email within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. If you have an issue or emergency, please contact me as soon as possible before the next class date.
- Have fun: Making film and VFX can be challenging and stressful; don't forget to have fun and enjoy the process. We are all artists, and our art thrives when we put all of our passion and enthusiasm into our work.

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University 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)

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312)362-8002

Fax: (312)362-6544

TTY: (773)325.7296