

VFX200 - Introduction to Visual Effects - Spring 2021 (601)

Instructor Contact Information

- **Instructor:** Chris Olsen
- **Email:** colsen11@depaul.edu
- **Office Hours:** Thursdays noon-1:30PM
- **Office Hours Zoom Link:** (available on D2L)
- **Phone:** +1 (312) 415-9095
- **Preferred Contact:** via email first
- **Tech Support:** scaavsupport@depaul.edu

I am generally able to respond to your emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday.

I generally DO NOT respond to emails on the weekends or holidays. As such, please don't wait until the weekend to ask class related questions.

Course Information

- **Description:** Introduction to the fundamental techniques, use, history, and methodologies of visual effects production, explored through a variety of compositing and effects-based projects.
- **Topics will include:** Photographic principles, Green Screen, Compositing, Rotoscope, Basic Animation and more.
- **Meeting Day/Time:** Thursdays 1:30am - 4:45PM
- **Location:** ONLINE via Live Stream Zoom Link (available on D2L)
- **Instruction Type:** Remote Lecture-Discussion

Course Prerequisites

There are NO course prerequisites. However, this is an online course, and you will need at a minimum:

- Frequent access to a Mac or Windows computer that connects to the Internet, with the following suggested technical specifications: Intel® 7thGen CPU or equivalent, 16 GB of RAM, Graphics card with 4GB+ VRAM, 1920 x 1080 or greater monitor resolution, 30GB disk space for installation. (*Specifications lower than this should be tested in advance of class to ensure a good experience.* Instructions to find out the specifications of your system are available here: [Finding Out Your Technical Specifications](#))
- A working e-mail account that you check regularly (and is updated in Campus Connect)
- [Adobe Creative Cloud software](#) (and more specifically: After Effects, Premiere, Photoshop and Media Encoder.)

- Access to a software suite such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Power Point). DePaul students are eligible to receive Office 365 ProPlus for installation on their home computer and personal mobile devices. See [Office 365 Education Plus](#) for instructions.
- Administrator access to a computer to install software.
- The ability to view video files.

Required Materials (all are available via 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”

Learning Outcomes

- 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.

Assessment

- VFX Exercises: 30%
 - VFX Exercise 1 – FORCED PERSPECTIVE: Playing with Scale
 - VFX Exercise 2 – ASSET DESIGN & ANIMATION: Playing with Action and Timing
 - VFX Exercise 3 – EFFECT: Visually Interpreting the idea of Magic
 - VFX Exercise 4 – ROTOSCOPY: Masking the Goose!
 - VFX Exercise 5 – MOTION TRACKING: Creating a piece of Virtual Street Art
 - VFX Exercise 6 – CHROMAKEY: Intro to Green Screen
- Final VFX Project: 50%
 - Pitch: 10%
 - Work-In-Progress VFX Project Review: 10%
 - Final VFX Project Completion: 30%
- Visual Effects Sequence Presentation: 20%

PLEASE NOTE: ALL COURSE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE TURNED IN/SUBMITTED WITHIN D2L.

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

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**

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.
- **Dailies:** Each week we will spend the first portion of class reviewing your assignments together as a group. **IN ORDER TO BE INCLUDED IN DAILIES, YOUR ASSIGNMENT MUST BE TURNED IN BY NOON ON THE DAY BEFORE CLASS.** Please do not wait until the last moment to work on your VFX assignment.
- **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 **BY THE ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED DEADLINE** 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:** Assignments submitted late will have their grades reduced by 20% per class the assignment is late. **Late assignments are not eligible for resubmissions.**

- **Grading:** I am generally able to grade assignments within 7-10 days of submission, and assign grades according to the following: **A**=93-100, **A-**=90-92, **B+**=88-89, **B**=83-87, **B-**=80-82, **C+**=78-79, **C**=73-77, **C-**=70-72, **D+**=67-69, **D**=63-66, **D-**=60-62, **F**=0-59.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is key to success in this course. Students who miss three days of class without prior instructor approval (in writing) will have their final grade lowered by 20%. Students who miss four days of class automatically fail the course. Missing more than 15 minutes of class (again without prior instructor approval) 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 our individual ideas, passion and enthusiasm into our work.
- **Syllabus Changes:** This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class, and posted here in D2L.
- **Drop Dates:** Can be found at <https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx>

University policies

Accommodations and Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations that can provide you with enrollment information, or inquire via email at csd@depaul.edu.

- Loop Campus - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002
- Lincoln Park Campus - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss your challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use during this course. This is best done early in the term and our conversation will remain confidential.

Additional Accommodations

This course may include instructional content delivered via audio and video. If you have any concerns about your ability to access and/or understand this material in its default format, please notify me within the first week of the course so accommodations can be made.

Assistance with Writing – The Writing Center

Consider contacting or visiting the [Writing Center](#) to discuss your writing. Writing Center tutors are undergrad and graduate students across disciplines who would love to help you at any stage

of the writing process with any kind of writing you're working on. In each appointment, tutors collaborate with you to set an agenda focused on one, two, or three specific topics for revision. Online appointments are available through audio and video or text-based chat or through written feedback where you upload a draft and a tutor provides feedback that is emailed to you. All writing center services are free.

Schedule your appointments on a weekly or as-needed basis, and bring your assignment sheets and other relevant materials to your appointments.

Student Evaluations

At the end of this course, you will be provided with the opportunity to evaluate this course. Course evaluations provide valuable feedback that can improve teaching and learning. The greater the level of participation, the more useful the results. As students, you are in the unique position to view the instructor over time. Your comments about what works and what doesn't can help faculty build on the elements of the course that are strong and improve those that are weak. Isolated comments from students and instructors' peers may also be helpful, but evaluation results based on high response rates may be statistically reliable (believable). As you experience this course and material, think about how your learning is impacted. Your honest opinions about your experience in and commitment to the course and your learning may help improve some components of the course for the next group of students. Positive comments also show the department chairs and college deans the commitment of instructors to the university and teaching evaluation results are one component used in annual performance reviews (including salary raises and promotion/tenure). The evaluation of the instructor and course provides you an opportunity to make your voice heard on an important issue – the quality of teaching at DePaul. Don't miss this opportunity to provide feedback!

Academic Integrity

Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Student Handbook or by visiting [Academic Integrity](#) at DePaul University.