

## **VFX 200 Syllabus - Winter 2013 - Brian Mellen**

[bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu](mailto:bmellen@cdm.depaul.edu)

**Office hours:** M 1:00 to 1:30pm and 4:45 to 5:45pm **CDM 632**

### **Summary of Course:**

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. These are the objectives of the course.

*\* Syllabus is subject to change*

### **Textbooks and printed resources:**

After Effects Apprentice, Second Edition, by Chris and Trish Meyer (For CS6)

### **Recommended Text:**

Adobe Photoshop CS6: Classroom in a Book

### **Required Supplies:**

DC majors should have their own external firewire 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.

### **Grading:**

Attendance & Participation	10%
Assignments	35%
Quizzes	10%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	25%

**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

**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.

**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 instructors 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. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences. After that, a one letter deduction for each absence 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.

**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.

## Final Exam:

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

## 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 01/07

Learning to See, Forced Perspective, Introduction to Photoshop

**ASSIGNMENT #1 (01/14 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 using the correct compression.

### Week Two 01/14

Image Generation, Photoshop Masking and Selections, Photoshop Demo (Clones), Photography Basics

**ASSIGNMENT #2 (01/21 DUE):** 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 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 01/21

Video Compression, Advanced Photoshop Masking and Selections, Filters

**ASSIGNMENT #3 (01/28 DUE):** Think of an interesting way to integrate elements in a shot that weren't there in the initial plate. Composite at least two elements into your original plate. You must shoot the initial plate yourself, but the other elements can be taken from anywhere. Try to match perspective, exposure, color correction, and grain as best you possibly can. Upload a **JPEG** 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.

#### **Week Four 01/28**

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

**ASSIGNMENT #4 (02/04 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 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 D2L.

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

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

#### **Week Five 02/04**

MIDTERM

*Readings: Lesson 3 - Layer Control*

#### **Week Six 02/11**

Layer Control, Animation Continued, Cut-Out Character

**ASSIGNMENT #5 (02/18 DUE):** Import the provided Photoshop file from D2L 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 D2L.

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

*Readings: Lesson 4 - Creating Transparency*

## **Week Seven 02/18**

Puppet Tool, Masks and Transparency, Effects

**ASSIGNMENT #6 (02/25 DUE):** 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 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: Lesson 5 - Type and Music*

## **Week Eight 02/25**

Type and Music, Motion Graphics, Illustrator, Basic 2.5D

**ASSIGNMENT #7 (03/11 DUE):** 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 one-minute in length. Render as **H.264** (1920 x 1080) and upload the video to D2L.

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

## **Week Nine 03/04**

Additional Integration Techniques, Post-Production Workflows, Working in Post-Production in Chicago

## **Week Ten 03/11**

Assignment #7 Screening, Final Exam