

**DePaul University**  
**School of Cinematic Arts**

**DC 304-801 / 405-801: Pixar: Craft of Storytelling**

Interession 2017

Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday 5:15-9:00PM, 14 E. Jackson 214 and Online  
11/28 – 12/14/2017

Professor Scott Myers: [smyers15@depaul.edu](mailto:smyers15@depaul.edu)  
312-362-1120

Office Hours: (CDM 403) WED 2:00-4:00PM, THU 12:00-1:00PM

**Description**

Through screenings, detailed analysis, and discussions, students will learn key narrative dynamics found in Pixar's 18 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**

- Two 3-4 page papers exploring key narrative dynamics in Pixar films
- One 6-8 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 9PM each class session) 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**

#### **Day 1 – November 28**

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

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

Movie Assignment for Week 1:

Watch Brave and The Good Dinosaur

Read script for The Incredibles

#### **Day 2 – November 29**

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

Movie Assignment for Week 1:

Watch Toy Story 2 and Inside Out

Read script for Finding Nemo

#### **Day 3 – November 30**

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

Movie Assignment for Week 1:

Watch Ratatouille and Wall-E

Read script for Up

*Writing Assignment 1:* A 3-4 page paper on either of these topics:

- Special Subculture in A Bug's Life and Ratatouille
- Sires and Siblings in Up and Finding Dory
- Separation in The Incredibles and The Good Dinosaur
  - DUE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2017

### **WEEK 2**

#### **Day 4 – December 5**

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

Movie Assignment for Week 2:

Watch A Bugs Life and Cars 2

Read script for Wall-E

Day 5 – December 6

Story Dynamic: Substantial Saga / Small Story - A Bug's Life, Cars 2, Wall-E

Movie Assignment for Week 2:

Watch Finding Dory and The Incredibles

Read script for Inside Out

Day 6 – December 7

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

Movie Assignment for Week 2:

Watch Monsters University and Up

Read Ratatouille

*Writing Assignment:* A 3-4 page paper on either of these topics:

- Strange Sojourners in Toy Story and Inside Out
- Substantial Saga / Small Story in Finding Nemo and Brave
- Stumbles and Switches in Monsters, Inc. and Cars
  - DUE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2017

WEEK 3Day 7 – December 12

Story Dynamic: Sentimentality - Monsters University, Up, Ratatouille

Movie Assignment for Week 3:

Watch Finding Nemo and Brave

Read Toy Story 3

Day 8 – December 13

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

Watch [in class]: Toy Story

Read Toy Story

Day 9 – December 14

Eight Story Dynamics: Considering Them in Non-Pixar Movies

*Final Paper:* A 6-8 page paper analyzing two non-Pixar movies using at least three of the eight narrative dynamics as explored in Pixar movies. Draw from these movies:

The Shawshank Redemption

Forrest Gump

The Matrix

The Silence of the Lambs

Groundhog Day

Final Paper due: Sunday, December 17 at Midnight.

**Grading**

Writing Assignment 1 and 2 are worth 20% each for your grade.

The final paper is worth 40% of your grade.

Class participation is worth 20% of your 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	= 93	C+	= 77
A-	= 90	C	= 74
B+	= 87	C-	= 70
B	= 84	D+	= 69
B-	= 80	D	= 65

**Participation**

While this is a lecture class, I will involve students often in each class session by asking questions. In addition, while I will provide detailed analysis of two Pixar movies per class, 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 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 2:00-4:00PM, THU 12:00-1:00PM 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. **We will have two breaks each class for you to be able to dive into social media, voice mail, etc.**

### **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](http://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](mailto: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 Day 8 session.