

WALT DISNEY
Topic in the Director's Cinema
Film Studies (FILM) 403.15 L01
Winter 2013
Mo 1600-1850 and We 1600-1750

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Nelson
Office Location: SS336
Office Phone: TBA
E-Mail: apnelson@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: Tu 1600-1700 and by appointment

Additional Information

Prerequisite: FILM 201: Introduction to Film Studies

Course Description

A study of the life, work and legacy of famed American animator, film producer and entrepreneur Walt Disney.

Objectives of the Course

The life of Walter Elias Disney (1901-1966) is the quintessential American success story. From his humble origins in the American mid-West, Disney ascended through the ranks of the American film industry in the 1930s and 1940s, created a self-contained fantasyland for children of all ages in the 1950s, and, through his avuncular presence on television in the 1960s, ultimately achieved the kind of transcendental fame reserved for the select few. Like Thomas Edison or Henry Ford, Disney was, and still is, regarded as a genius whose products and personality fundamentally transformed American life. At the same time, both Disney and his company have been subject to criticism on a number of fronts, from the representation of gender and racial "others" in Disney films to the commercialization of the company's characters through merchandise and theme parks.

Proceeding roughly chronologically, the course will examine Disney's role in the establishment and growth of the Walt Disney Studios and his broader influence on American popular culture, including animation, film, television, leisure and technology. This will include an ongoing consideration of Disney's complicated status as "author" of his company's diverse productions. Though Disney's stylized moniker appeared on each and every film produced by the company he founded, his duties as animator and director ended shortly after the debut of Mickey Mouse in the late 1920s. A focal point of the course will be Disney's animated shorts and features and the changing contexts of their production. Building on critical concepts learned in FILM 201, students will be introduced to key concepts in the production and analysis of animation, including modified theories of authorship.

Students will have the opportunity to consider and debate key ideas in cinema and popular culture studies, including those centered around questions of authorship, industry, medium and audience. Through

informed classroom participation and a series of written assignments, students will demonstrate their ability to mobilize these ideas in the perceptive and critical analysis of the life and work of Walt Disney.

In order to achieve these objectives, it is imperative that students come to class *prepared*, having completed the assigned readings or other preparatory tasks and willing to discuss pertinent issues with both the instructor and their peers in an informed, thoughtful and respectful manner. Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Mobile phones must be turned off during class. Students may use laptops or tablets during lectures and discussions for note-taking purposes *only*. No electronic devices whatsoever may be used during screenings.

Textbooks and Readings

Steven Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001)

Eric Smoodin, ed., *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994)

Chris Pallant, *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation* (New York: Continuum, 2011)

NB: *The Magic Kingdom* and *Disney Discourse* are available in the University of Calgary bookstore. A link to purchase a digital version of *Demystifying Disney* can be found on the course Blackboard site.

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard and are designated [BB] in the schedule of readings.

Assignments and Evaluation

Detailed information about assignments, the mid-term test, and the final exam will be available on Blackboard.

- 15% 1,500-word essay, due Feb 11. Students will argue whether Walt Disney should, or should not, be credited as the "author" of the films which bear his name.
- 10% Final essay proposal, due March 13. Outline, filmography, and annotated bibliography of five sources. A list of suggested essay topics will be provided, but students may elect to develop their own topic in consultation with the instructor.
- 35% 2,500-word final essay, due April 15.
- 30% Take-home exam, due April 22 (one week after last day of class). Three, 750-word responses to questions covering material from lectures, screenings and readings. Questions will be available on Blackboard on April 15.
- 10% Informed participation. Be advised that simply being physically present in the classroom *does not* constitute participation.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Written assignments must be composed in formal, error-free, academic English, and formatted according to either MLA or Chicago documentation and presentation standards. Your name and student number must appear on each page. Please staple all work – no paper clips or folders. Writing support resources, including citation and style guides, can be found on Blackboard under "External Links."

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-schedule Final Exam: No.

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.** For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources. Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program – 403-220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 403-220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics> or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreh>

Schedule of Readings and Screenings
Available on Blackboard