

CIMS 3203.401 THE ANIMATION OF DISNEY **NOT FINAL**

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ARTH TBD | ENGL TBD | FNAR TBD

Fall 2022 Monday 3:30 - 6:29pm Location TBD

Please note: If you have any questions about this course, please feel free to contact me.

Office hours: 209A Fisher-Bennett Hall, Mondays 2:30 – 3:15 by appointment or after class. Available other times by phone or on campus by appointment

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Course Overview

No organization has exerted as much influence on popular culture and the art form of animation as The Walt Disney Company. For decades, Disney films were the standard by which all other animated films were measured. This course will examine the biography and philosophy of founder Walt Disney, as well as The Walt Disney Company's impact on animation art, storytelling and technology, the entertainment industry, and American popular culture. We will consider Disney's most influential early films, look at the 1960s when Disney's importance in popular culture began to erode, and analyze the films that led to the Disney renaissance of the late 1980s/early 1990s. We will also assess the subsequent purchase of Pixar Animation Studios and the overall impact Pixar has had on Disney. The class will also look at recent trends and innovations, including live-action remakes and Disney+.

Screenings

There will be screenings during each class session, as well as occasional screening assignments. Links to the material we watch in class will be posted on a screening list on Canvas. A draft of the screening list for each class will be posted the night before class, but you are not required to screen these before class. A final screening list will be posted after class to reflect what we watched if there are changes.

Topics, Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas unless you see a link below the reading citation.

Readings on Canvas will be labeled with the author's name and page numbers. The readings listed below the date/topic should be read in advance of that class. I will also assign some additional readings toward the end of the semester.

Grading

Grades will be based upon the following:

Assignment 1 will be worth 10% of your grade

Assignment 2 will be worth 15% of your grade

Assignments 3-5 will each be worth 20% of your grade

Attendance / Participation / Curiosity / Discussion will be worth 15% of your grade

Speakers

We will have a few speakers through Zoom this semester. In advance, I will share the speaker's biography and/or articles about this speaker and their accomplishments.

Topics and Readings

September 12 Introduction to the course and to Walt Disney

September 19 *Steamboat Willie* and the shorts era

Assignment 1 due Wednesday, September 21

Maureen Furniss, **A New History of Animation**, 59-61.

J.B. Kaufman, "Introduction," in **Oswald the Lucky Rabbit**, David A. Bossert, 10-11.

Christian Moran, **Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow**, 9-15.

L.H. Robbins, "Mickey Mouse Emerges as Economist," **The New York Times Magazine**, March 10, 1935.

Steven Watts, **The Magic Kingdom**, 42-59.

September 26 More shorts, more competition, and an animated feature

Maureen Furniss, **A New History of Animation**, 92-108.

Neal Gabler, **Walt Disney, The Triumph of the American Imagination**, 213-275.

Patricia Zohn, "Coloring the Kingdom," **Vanity Fair**, February 5, 2010.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003>

October 3 The early 1940s features
Assignment 2 due Wednesday, October 5

Dewey Chambers, "'The Disney Touch' and the Wonderful World of Children's Literature," **Elementary English**, Vol. 43, No. 1 (January 1966), 50-52.

Mark Langer, "Regionalism in Disney Animation: Pink Elephants and *Dumbo*," **Film History**, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1990), 305-321.

Christian Moran, **Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow**, 25-33.

John Wills, "Felix Saltern's Stories: The Portrayal of Nature in *Bambi*, *Perri* and *The Shaggy Dog*," (excerpt) in Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West, **Walt Disney, from Reader to Storyteller**, 45-51, 58-61.

October 10 The war, a strike, and trips down south

Julianne Burton-Carvajal, "'Surprise Package,': Looking Southward with Disney," in Eric Smoodin, **Disney Discourse**, 131-147.

M. Thomas Inge, "*Song of the South* and the Politics of Animation," in Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West, **Walt Disney, from Reader to Storyteller**, 62-79.

Tom Sito, **Drawing the Line**, 101-151.

Charles Solomon, "The Disney Studio at War," in Maureen Furniss, **Animation – Art and Industry**, 145-150.

Optional Reading:

"The Testimony of Walter E. Disney Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities," in Gerald Peary & Danny Peary, **The American Animated Cartoon**, 92-98.

October 17 Mid-century modern at Disney

Adam Abraham, UPA Jolly Frolics DVD Liner Notes.

Amid Amidi, **Cartoon Modern**, 148-150, 153, 155-6, 159, 161-2, 165-6.

John Canemaker, **The Art and Flair of Mary Blair**, vii-xiii.

Didier Ghez, **The Hidden Art of Disney's Mid-Century Era**, 12-20.

Susan Ohmer, "That Rags to Riches Stuff': Disney's *Cinderella* and the Cultural Space of Animation," **Film History**, Vol. 5, No. 2 Animation (June 1993), 231-249.

October 24 **Cultural shifts in the 1960s**
Assignment 3 due Wednesday, October 26

Michael Barrier, **The Animated Man**, 270-278.

Matthew Jacobs, "Floyd Norman, Disney's First Black Animator, Reflects on the Studio's Past, Present and Future," **The Huffington Post**, August 26, 2016.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/floyd-norman-disney_us_57bf377ae4b04193420e22be

Richard Schickel, **The Disney Version**, 9-14, 339-364.

Steven Watts, **The Magic Kingdom**, 446-453.

October 31 **What Would Walt Do? And then the Katzenberg/Eisner era**

"The Art of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*," Sotheby's Catalog, 1989.

Douglas Gomery, "Disney's Business History: A Reinterpretation," in Eric Smoodin, **Disney Discourse**, 71-86.

Richard Neupert, **John Lasseter**, 21-29.

Tom Sito, **Drawing the Line**, 285-317.

November 7 **The Disney Renaissance and another golden age**

Jason Bailey, "What Disney risked to make 'The Lion King' in 1994," **The New York Times**, July 18, 2019.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/18/movies/disney-lion-king.html>

Maureen Furniss, **A New History of Animation**, 338-348.

Kim Masters, "The Epic Disney Blow-Up of 1994: Eisner, Katzenberg and Ovitz 20 Years Later," **The Hollywood Reporter**, April 9, 2014.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/epic-disney-blow-up-1994-694476>

Laura Sells, "Where Do the Mermaids Stand?" in Bell, Haas, and Sells, **From Mouse To Mermaid**, 175-192.

November 14 **Pixar Ascending**
Assignment 4 due Wednesday, November 16

Maureen Furniss, **A New History of Animation**, 373-7.

Tom Kemper, **Toy Story, A Critical Reading**, 7-33.

David A. Price, **The Pixar Touch**, 86-116.

November 21 **Entering a new century**

Steve Daly, "The Man Who Drew Too Much" **Entertainment Weekly**, 39-44.

Maureen Furniss, **A New History of Animation**, 379-80.

Chris Pallant, **Demystifying Disney**, 111-125.

David A. Price, **The Pixar Touch**, 227-258.

November 28 **Digital Takes Over, Disney Buys Pixar**

Laura M. Holson, "Has the Sky Stopped Falling at Disney?" **The New York Times**,
September 18, 2005.

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/business/yourmoney/has-the-sky-stopped-falling-at-disney.html?_r=0

Angie Jones and Jamie Oliff, **Thinking Animation**, 18-28.

Ariane Lange, "Inside the Persistent Boys Club of Animation," **Buzzfeed News**, August
28, 2015.

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/arianelange/creative-work-in-connection-with-preparing-the-cartoons>

Peggy Orenstein, "What's Wrong with Cinderella?" **The New York Times Magazine**,
December 24, 2006.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/24/magazine/whats-wrong-with-cinderella.html?searchResultPosition=4>

Josh Spiegel, **Yesterday is Forever**, 65-79.

December 5 A Whole New Disney

Blake Cole, "Brain Tease," **Penn Arts & Sciences Omnia**, July 9, 2015.

<https://omnia.sas.upenn.edu/story/brain-tease>

Bill Desowitz, "Immersed In Movies: Lauren MacMullan Goes Deeper into Mickey Mouse and 'Get A Horse!'" **Indiewire**, August 26, 2013.

<http://www.indiewire.com/2013/08/immersed-in-movies-lauren-macmullan-goes-deeper-into-mickey-mouse-and-get-a-horse-122686/>

Rebecca Keegan, "'Frozen,' 'Get A Horse!' female directors mark firsts for Disney," **Los Angeles Times**, November 22, 2013.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/nov/22/entertainment/la-et-mn-frozen-get-a-horse-female-director-20131124>

Caitlin Roper, "*Big Hero 6* Proves It: Pixar's Gurus have Brought the Magic Back to Disney Animation," **Wired**, October 21, 2014.

<http://www.wired.com/2014/10/big-hero-6/>

Josh Spiegel, **Yesterday is Forever**, pp. 79-85.

Drew Taylor, "'Get a Horse!' Animator Lauren MacMullan Reveals How Mickey Mouse Got the 3D Update In Classic Style," **SSN**, December 23, 2013.

<http://www.ssninsider.com/awards-spotlight-get-a-horse-animator-lauren-macmullen-reveals-how-mickey-mouse-got-the-3d-update-in-classic-style/>

Optional Reading

Molly Petrilla, "Penn at Pixar," **The Pennsylvania Gazette**, September/October 2013.

http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0913/feature1_1.html

December 12 Disney+

** Stand by for links to additional up-to-the-minute articles

Charles Bramesco, "The dead-eyed new Lion King painfully illustrates the difference between cinema and video games," **AV Club**, July 16, 2019.

<https://film.avclub.com/the-dead-eyed-new-lion-king-painfully-illustrates-the-d-1836338813>

Kim Masters, “Can John Lasseter Ever Return to Disney?” **The Hollywood Reporter**, April 25, 2018.

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/he-who-not-be-named-can-john-lasseter-ever-return-disney-1105297>

Elizabeth Segran, “How Disney grew its \$3 billion Mickey Mouse business – by selling to adults,” **Fast Company**, April 1, 2019.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90324660/how-disney-grew-its-3-billion-mickey-mouse-business-by-selling-to-adults>

Emily Todd VanDerWerff, “Zootopia wants to teach kids about prejudice. Is it accidentally sending the wrong message?” **vox.com**, March 7, 2016.

<https://www.vox.com/2016/3/7/11173620/zootopia-review-racism>

Alissa Wilkinson, “Pixar’s Coco is sweet, visually stunning, and much too predictable,” **vox.com**, November 21, 2017.

<https://www.vox.com/2017/11/21/16679186/coco-review-pixar>

Steven Zeitchik, “Hollywood’s animation sector sorts its royalty from its minions,” **Washington Post**, November 11, 2018.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/in-epic-rumpus-hollywoods-animation-sector-looks-to-sort-its-royalty-from-its-minions/2018/11/09/0dc30f12-e2be-11e8-ab2c-b31dcd53ca6b_story.html

Assignments and Due Dates

There will be five writing assignments this semester. There will be no midterm or final exam. Please submit your assignments through Canvas by midnight on the day they are due. If you need additional time for an assignment, please contact me and we can work out a reasonable due date.

Papers should be double-spaced and should use a readable 12-point font. For opinion papers, if you use quotes from sources other than the reading you are writing about, please reference them. Also, note that bibliography citations aren’t included in the page count.

Feel free to use the citation style you prefer.

Remember: Always have a solid thesis statement that captures the big idea of your paper.

Assignment 1 – due September 21 (3 pages or longer)

Autobiographical essay – your Disney animation history

People in the animation industry – film directors, show creators, network executives, etc. – are often asked about the animated films and shows that influenced them when they were young.

For this paper, talk about the animated Disney films, television shows and short films that you watched from the time you can remember. What were your favorite Disney movies and series? What animation influenced you? What sorts of material did you like, and what didn't you like? If you are hoping to work in animation, what or who inspired you to do that? Why are you interested in Disney animation? What do you hope to learn about in this course?

Assignment 2 – due October 5 (3 pages)

Comparison

With a focus on Disney and Pixar productions, select two films, two series, two characters, two series creators or two directors, and compare/contrast them. These don't have to be from what we've discussed in class, but they should fit in with the overall direction of the class. Try to find two subjects that have something common, such as similar premiere dates, similar genres, or the same producer. An example: if you are writing about a particular director, you can talk about two features they directed. What have you observed? How are these films similar? Or different? And why? There can be an endless number of points to compare – consider your thesis statement as you think about what you're comparing. I am also open to comparisons between a Disney or Pixar film and a film from DreamWorks or another studio, for example, if there are natural points of comparison.

Assignment 3 – due October 26 (3-4 pages)

History/Biography/Significance

Choose an animation director, producer, executive, designer, or other key individual from Disney or Pixar animation and then place your chosen subject within their historical context. Who was the person and why are they of interest to us now? What did they do? What was their source of inspiration? What impact did their work have? How did they impact Disney or Pixar? How did world events, technology, other visual artists or shows influence this work? What was the relationship between this person and their contemporaries? Did this person have any further or lasting influence?

Assignment 4 – due November 16 (3-4 pages)

Opinion

Write a 3-page opinion paper on a film or television show you watched for this class. I am interested in your reactions, observations, and personal thoughts. No need to summarize the material in depth, although make sure you let me know what show you are writing about. Remember to start with a solid thesis statement that you are proving. If you need help accessing any material, please let me know.

Assignment 5 – due between December 14 and 21 (5-6 pages)

This is the final paper of the semester – stay tuned for a more complete explanation of this assignment.

Select one of these topics and write 5-6 pages on it:

- Write a book proposal for a book on a topic in Disney/Pixar animation – a book that you wish existed or that you would like to write. A format for this will be shared as we get closer to the end of the semester.
- Select any film or major event in Disney/Pixar animation that we didn't cover in depth and analyze it, considering the creative team involved and its importance in the history of animation. Remember to start with a thesis.
- Interview someone from Disney or Pixar to get a firsthand understanding of their work and their inspiration, or their studio. I can work with you to contact this person. For the paper, discuss your conversation and your observations.
- Develop a feature film or television series idea for Disney+. I will share more on this topic in class.
- Propose a documentary for Disney+ on a Disney- or Pixar-related topic. Discuss why this topic is important and why it will be of interest to the Disney+ audience. I will share more on this topic in class.
- If you have a topic in mind that doesn't fit into these categories, please let me know and we can consider it.

If you have questions about your topic or need help shaping your idea, please feel free to discuss this with me for additional feedback and guidance.

Please note: It will be necessary for you to determine your topic in advance of the night before it's due.

Class Policies

Attendance

Please sign the attendance list that will circulate at the beginning of class.

Absentee Policy

If you are not in class, you will be marked absent. Both attendance and participation make up a percentage of your grade, so it is important that you attend class and are here to participate in class discussions.

If you need to arrive in class late or leave early, please let me know. Also, if you need to miss class for an exam, a school-related conference, a religious holiday, or a family emergency, please let me know.

Breaks

During each class, we'll have a 10-minute break around 5:00.

Participation

Please participate in the discussion and please feel free to ask questions during the lectures. You'll get more out of the course if you participate, and it's part of your grade.

Late Papers

It is in your best interest to turn in your papers on time.

If you need extra time to complete a paper, please discuss this with me, and we will work together to determine an acceptable due date for you. If you turn papers in late without contacting me, you will be marked down a grade step (A/A-/B+/B/B- etc.) for each day that you are late. Late papers will not be accepted after one week.

A final grade reminder:

Incompletes are a privilege that students must request.

Policy Regarding Electronic Devices

Do you remember how hard you worked to get into Penn? Now that you are here, please consider how you spend your time in the classroom and focus on the class. After all, it's a course about animation. If I notice you on your phone regularly or if you seem busy online during class, this will be noted and reflected in your participation grade.

If you have any questions about these policies, please let me know.