

Spring 2020

DD 442-002: Visual & Special Effects in Movie (Revised for Remote Learning)

Jessica Ross

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DD442: Visual & Special Effects in Movies

Spring 2020

Weds: 11:30-2:20

Rm: 236 H Campbell Hall

Instructor: Jessica Ross-Nersesian

Email: jessica.c.ross@njit.edu

Office Hours: Set by appointment

Course Description

The course will introduce students to the art, history, and process of special effects and visual effects in film, TV, and games. Topics will include practical (physical) and digital effects, as well as the combination of both these techniques. Students will observe various special and visual effects in entertainment media and learn to identify various techniques. These techniques include the use of physical models, special effects make-up, and digital effects. Production studios will also be discussed as students learn about the VFX industry. By the end of the course, students will have a well-rounded understanding of the history of visual and special effects as well as the ability to create desired special and visual effects in their own work.

Recommended Texts

- *Elemental Magic: The Art of Special Effects Animation*, by Joseph Gilland
- *Houdini Foundations for Film, TV, & Gamedev*, by Robert Magee
- *Masters of FX*, by Ian Failes

Course Objectives

- Understanding of cinematic effects production practices
- Knowledge of the evolution of visual and special effects throughout cinematic history
- Ability to sketch, storyboard and animate special effects, then execute animation tests via animatics
- Ability to apply historic and current cinematic practices to class projects
- Fluency with cinematic visual and special effects vocabulary

Academic Calendar

Class Policies

Study Participation Grading Structure

A list of studies will be presented to you during a class. You are expected to participate in two studies. Each study will take in total one hour of your time. You can schedule to take the study when it's convenient for you during the semester. Participating in a study will give you a learning experience into how UX research is done as part of the HCI component of the class. If you cannot participate in a study, you will be given a reading assignment to do for the grade as an alternative.

- 5% grade for participation in two studies, each take one hour

Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Assignments that are not clearly labeled will not be accepted or graded. Late homework will be graded down one letter grade for every class late.

Academic Warning: Students who do not complete and submit assignments on time and to a satisfactory standard will fail the class. It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed assignments from other classmates and make up work in time for the next class. Students who incorporate existing assets, copyrighted assets, or tutorial outcomes into their creative works will receive a failing grade for the project. All student work and assets therein are expected to be original and created by that student for the project in question.

Google Drive: All Assignments must be uploaded to the class Google Drive Folder prior to submission. All uploaded files must be properly compressed. Maximum file size to be uploaded is 200MB.

Vimeo: All motion assignments must be uploaded, with downloading enabled, prior to submission to the following Vimeo.com group: **NJIT DD442 Visual & Special Effects in Movies SPRING 2018** <https://vimeo.com/groups/511469> All project screenings will be run from the Vimeo.com group.

Data Backups: You are expected to keep multiple backups of all course data and to have your current project files available at all times during class time. You are encouraged to keep a cloud storage account in addition to a physical backup.

Lab Policies: No food or drink is allowed in the computer lab. Lab door codes are to be kept private within the roster of enrolled students. Lab projectors and speakers are only for instructor use. You are expected to use good judgement in setting lengthy rendering tasks using lab facilities. Failure to adhere to these policies can result in your being locked out of the

labs.

Class Policies: Cell phones, email, music players, social networking and music streaming software should not be used during class. Usage of these devices or applications will result in your being asked to leave the class and being marked absent for that class session.

Instructor Expectations

At all classes you are expected to bring new computer models, renderings, and hand drawings (sketches) relevant to the project in progress. You are expected to work each and every day on the projects assigned. If for any reason you doubt your ability to do so you should consider whether you belong in this studio.

Work must be submitted via Canvas forums created by the instructor each week

Participation: Your participation grade is evaluated on the following points:

- Did you offer help?
- Were you active in class?
- You are available helping outside class?
- You're respectful during critiques and group discussion towards teammates?

Updated Grading Scheme:

% of final grade	Date	Grade Item	
1	1/21	Week 01 Assignment	live
10	2/5	Short Film	live
8	2/6	Project Proposal	live
10	3/4	Special Effect Presentation	live
5	3/25	Week 10 Progress Posting	online
15	3/25	First Draft VFX Storyboard	online
9	4/1	Week 11 Progress Posting	online
20	4/8	Revised Storyboard	online

5	4/8	Week 12 Progress Posting	online
9	4/15	Week 13 Progress Posting	online
9	4/22	Week 14 Progress Posting	online
20	4/29	Week 15 Progress Posting	online
25	5/6	Final Presentation	online
101		Total	

NJIT uses the following grades:

A/4.0 (superior)

B+/3.5 (excellent)

B/3.0 (very good)

C+/2.5 (good)

C/2.0 (acceptable)

D/1.0 (minimum)

F/0.0 (inadequate)

The following factors will be considered when assigning your grade:

A. Participation Ability to intellectually engage the material investigated in the course. Students are to thoughtfully engage the material presented in readings, presentations and discussions. Responses to questions should be directly and thoughtful related to topics investigated in the assignment.

B. Communication The ability to communicate ideas and concepts to others. This includes written, verbal, and visual communication skills. Outside critics may be brought in at the end of each project to review your work in an open forum environment. These presentations should be considered “client presentations” and should be presented with a level of professionalism consistent with your work.

C. Independent thinking Independent thinking will be evaluated and will be based on the ideas and thoughts developed on an independent basis by the student. Depth of creative thought is primary to the independent thinking evaluation. Independent thinking must be clearly demonstrated in all aspects of the course including verbal participation in the classroom.

D. Professional Attitude Students are to express and articulate clearly their view toward the topics in this course in a method which reflects the quality of a professional in the field of

design. It is the ethical responsibility of the student to support the learning community in this course in a positive and constructive manner. Maintaining a positive learning community is parallel to expectations one will experience in supporting a positive work environment after graduation. Professional attitude includes, but is not limited to, the ability to maintain and contribute to a positive learning environment, professional attitude towards classmates, guests, and the instructor. To receive a positive evaluation, professional attitude must be clearly demonstrated on a consistent and daily basis. Do not take this portion of the course for granted--you are expected to demonstrate professional maturation processes within the course. The ability to receive and give critical feedback, respond to challenging situations with a positive attitude, and support an excellent working studio environment are all essential to receiving high marks in professional attitude evaluations.

Kepler: Project grading is not officially applied to student standing until project deliverables have been uploaded in the proper format to the Kepler system. Failure to upload work to Kepler will result in an F For The Course.

Attendance Policy, Accommodations For Students With Disabilities: No more than three unexcused absences are permitted without a grade reduction. Each unexcused absence above the three (starting with the fourth) will result in a grade reduction of 1 for the semester. In other words, four absences would result in a maximum grade of B (assuming everything done is of "A" quality), five absences would result in a maximum grade of "C", six in a maximum grade of "D", etc. Students do NOT receive extensions for submission of work due to any unexcused absences. Acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the individual instructor. Absences for illness in order to be excused MUST be accompanied by documentation from professional medical personnel who are NOT members of your family. Since religious holidays are known in advance, students who expect to be absent due to religious holidays must notify their instructor by the second week of class. NJIT and instructors will endeavor to make any accommodations required and necessary for the success of students with disabilities. However, in order to receive accommodations disabilities MUST be documented with the NJIT Disability Office AND notification of request for accommodation must be made to the instructor by the second week of class. No accommodations can be granted "after the fact" unless due to a situation (injury/illness/etc.) that occurs or is documented during the semester. In those instances accommodations will commence upon notification or observation of the disability.