

## **USC SCA CTPR 423 INTRO TO SPECIAL/VISUAL EFFECTS IN CINEMA**

**Fall 2015 – 2 units Prerequisites: Safety Seminar**

INSTRUCTORS: Gene Warren Jr. Gene Warren III

EMAIL: [genewarren@hotmail.com](mailto:genewarren@hotmail.com) [gene3vfx@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gene3vfx@sbcglobal.net)

PHONE: 818-331-7604 818-606-3087

DAY: Monday

TIME: 7:00-10:00 PM

LOCATION: SCC Stage 3

OFFICE HOURS: (by appoint.)

SA: Brian Brooks

EMAIL: [brian.brooks.ii@gmail.com](mailto:brian.brooks.ii@gmail.com)

PHONE: 443-465-6918

Athletic shoes and long pants **MUST** be worn to all Cinematography classes and when picking up and returning equipment. No open toed or dress shoes will be permitted. If you come to class dressed inappropriately, you will be asked to leave and marked absent.

Please note our final class is Monday, December 14th. All students are required to attend, take the final exam and screen their final projects.

### OVERVIEW

Welcome to CTPR 423. This course will primarily cover the practical elements of visual and special effects.

Discussion of digital effects will focus on how the various in-camera techniques integrate with the newer digital tools.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To further the student's understanding and appreciation of the art and craft of special/visual effects.
- To gain an understanding of how special/visual effects are conceived, generated and produced.
- To receive and participate in hands on experience.

### GRADING

Class Attendance/ Participation -10%

Forced Perspective Assignment- 10%

Mid-term Exam- 15%

Script Breakdown- 15%

Group Projects/ Participation within group- 30%

Final Exam- 20%

Extra Credit- TBD

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. Due: Class Meeting #7 10/12/2015

Find, construct or purchase a miniature scale model (No more than 25 dollars), details to be provided class meeting #6.

2. Due: Class Meeting #7 10/12/2015

Use a forced perspective technique in a still photograph or up to 10 seconds of digital video footage. Include full size actors in your shot.

3. Due: Class Meeting #15 12/14/2015

Breakdown a Special/Visual Effects excerpt from a pitched Hollywood screenplay.

Describe 2 possible sets of techniques and solutions based on a big budget film as well as a low budget/no budget production (Screenplay will be handed out 11/02/2015).

In class, hands on projects will consist of filming various elements relating to the particular technique discussed each week. All filmed elements will be used in an overall composite which will be presented class meeting #9 (Post Compositing).

## FINAL FILM PROJECT

Four production groups will be formed from the class. Each group will produce a final film up to 10 minutes long containing in-camera practical and special effects shots. Post compositing shots will be allowed but only in coordination with the professors.

Each project will be due 2 weeks after filming.

Group booked dates for stage shooting:

11/09/2015 - Group 1

11/16/2015 - Group 2

11/23/2015 - Group 3

11/30/2015 - Group 4

\*GROUPS WILL BE CHOSEN DURING MEETING #4.

\*\*PROJECT PROPOSALS/SCRIPTS OR BOARDS MUST BE SUBMITTED TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR STAGE SHOOT NIGHT.

## GUIDELINES FOR EXTRA CREDIT PROJECTS

A written paper outlining the objective of the project and storyboards indicating view angles and equipment placement must accompany all submitted projects.

All projects must be in the form of digital video including end credits of all who worked on the project (1-3 students per extra credit project). No outside help allowed.

Each film producer must present his/her project in a screening to the class along with a brief statement of objectives.

Project proposals must be submitted prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> class meeting to be considered for approval. All expenses are the responsibility of the film producer(s) and extra credit projects are not to be worked on or completed during class time.

**DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES TURN IN ANYTHING THAT YOU OR YOUR TEAM HAS NOT PRODUCED FOR THIS CLASS.**

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is not optional!

- 1) You must discuss all absences from and arriving late to class with your instructors.
- 2) Absence or lateness will be categorized as excused or unexcused. An absence or lateness is considered excused: if you discuss it with us and have a note from an authority. All medical absences require a visit and note from a doctor.

(Examples, assume you earn an A)

One absence will result in your final grade dropping one portion of a grade, i.e., from A to A-. Two absences will result in your final grade dropping two portions of a grade, i.e. from A to B+. Three absences will result in your final grade dropping three portions of a grade, i.e. from A to B and so on...

Unexcused lateness will alter your final grade in the following way: (Examples, assume you earn an A).

One late arrival will not count against you because it is LA.

Two will result in your final grade dropping one letter portion of a grade, i.e. from A to A- and so on... just like absences.

If you arrive late, you **MUST** come to us during a break and let us know you are present. Please don't assume we saw you arrive. If you fail to do so, you may be marked absent.

## REQUIRED COURSE EQUIPMENT

Either a digital or analogue still camera (the quality does not matter; you can use the camera in your smart phone), or a video camera is mandatory. But we highly encourage a manual still camera for reasons that will pertain to the forced perspective project.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DPS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to us within the first two weeks of the semester. DPS is located in STU301, and is open 8:30 AM until 5:00PM, Monday through Friday. Their number is 213-740-0776.

## STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: 4 <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

□ **NOTEWORTHY DATES TO REMEMBER**

□ **09/07/2015 – LABOR DAY – NO CLASS THIS DAY**

□ **10/12/2015 – MID-TERM EXAM AND TURN IN FORCED PERSPECTIVE PHOTOGRAPH PROJECT**

□ **11/09/2015 – GROUP 1 STAGE SHOOT NIGHT ASSEMBLY DUE 04/20/2015**

□ **11/16/2015 – GROUP 2 STAGE SHOOT NIGHT ASSEMBLY DUE 04/27/2015**

□ **11/23/2015 – GROUP 3 STAGE SHOOT NIGHT ASSEMBLY DUE 05/04/2015**

□ **11/30/2015 – GROUP 4 STAGE SHOOT NIGHT ASSEMBLY DUE 05/11/2015**

□ **12/14/2015 – FINAL EXAM - REVIEW FINAL FILM PROJECTS – REVIEW SELECTIVE VFX BREAKDOWNS**

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

**MEETING #1 08/24/2015 COURSE OVERVIEW**

INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS HISTORY AND TECHNIQUES  
SPECIAL AND (VISUAL) EFFECTS CATEGORIES: PHYSICAL/PRACTICAL EFFECTS, IN CAMERA EFFECTS, SPECIAL EFFECTS PROPS, SPECIAL MAKE-UP EFFECTS, PYRO-TECHNICS, MINIATURES, CHARACTER ANIMATION, POST COMPOSITING. SPECIAL EFFECTS COST AS IT RELATES TO CHOICE IN TECHNIQUE.

**MEETING #2 08/31/2015 PHYSICAL/PRACTICAL EFFECTS**

BREAKING AND COLLAPSING SCENERY, WIND AND RAIN.  
BREAKAWAY PROPS BREAKING WINDOWS, BREAKING BOTTLES, CROCKERY AND CHAIRS.  
STUNTS, FIGHTS.  
ARROWS, KNIVES, SWORDS AND DAGGERS, HOT AND MOLTEN METAL, LAVA.

BASIC SAFE USE OF STANDARD MOVIE EQUIPMENT.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**(LABOR DAY HOLIDAY - 09/07/2015 - NO CLASS)**

**MEETING #3 09/26/2015 SPECIAL EFFECTS PROPS**

CONSTRUCTION: POLYSTYRENE FABRICATION, PLASTIC FORMING MACHINES  
MOLD MAKING: LATEX CASTING, GLASS FIBER LAY-UPS, PLASTER OF PARIS AND CASTING RESIN.  
SCI-FI LIGHTS, ELECTRICAL FLASHES, RAY GUNS & BLASTERS, LABORATORY AND CHEMICAL EFFECTS, POPPING CORKS AND SHAKING EQUIPMENT.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**MEETING #4 09/21/2015 IN-CAMERA EFFECTS**

UNDER/OVER CRANK PHOTOGRAPHY.

SUPERIMPOSITIONS: COLORED SUPERIMPOSITIONS, OVERLAYS, DOUBLE EXPOSURES.

MIRROR EFFECTS: FIFTY-FIFTY MIRRORS, GLASS SHOTS AND SPLIT SCREEN (FIXED-MATTE) SHOTS.

SCENIC PROJECTION FRONT AND REAR SCREEN, PROJECTED LIGHT EFFECTS  
THE NODAL POINT AS USED IN VISUAL EFFECTS.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**MEETING #5 09/28/2015 SPECIAL MAKE-UP EFFECTS**

BLOOD, BONES, SLIME AND PROSTHETICS.

FROSTBITE, SCARS, WOUNDS, SCRATCHES, TEARS AND BLOOD EFFECTS.

CASTING BODY PARTS.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**GROUPS WILL BE CHOSEN DURING THIS CLASS MEETING.**

**MEETING #6 10/05/2015 MINIATURES**

MINIATURE EFFECTS: FOREGROUND HANGING MINIATURES, FULL FRAME MINIATURES AND CHOICE OF SCALE.

MINIATURE CONSTRUCTION (CHOICE OF MATERIALS).

MINIATURE LIGHTING PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES.

MINIATURES AND MOTION CONTROL (MODELS AND CAMERA).

THE NODAL POINT.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**STUDENT WILL BE ASKED TO BRING IN A SCALE MODEL FOR THE NEXT CLASS**

**MEETING #7 10/12/2015 MINIATURES**

MINIATURE EFFECTS: CONTINUED

COMBINING SCALES

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**MID-TERM EXAM**

**TURN IN FORCED PERSPECTIVE ASSIGNMENT**

**MEETING #8 10/19/2015 CHARACTER ANIMATION**

STOP MOTION/CELL ANIMATION/CGI/MOTION CAPTURE.

STOP MOTION PUPPETS (ARMATURED, CLAYMATION AND REPLACEMENT).

HAND PUPPETS, ROD PUPPETS/ANIMITRONICS (SAG ACTORS).

COMPUTER GENERATED MONSTERS AND OTHER OBJECTS, WHY MOTION CAPTURE?

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**(SPRING RECESS – 03/16/2015 - NO CLASS)**

**MEETING #9 10/26/2015 WATERWORK, ATMOSPHERIC ELEMENTS AND PYROTECHNICS**

WORKING WITH WATER.

CREATING ATMOSPHERIC ELEMENTS FOR POST COMPOSITING.

PYROTECHNICS: TYPES OF EXPLOSIONS, FIRING BOXES, REMOTE CONTROL, SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

SAFE STUDIO: EXPLOSIONS, FLAMES, FIRES AND FURNACES AND THE LAW.

BULLET EFFECTS: USING COMPRESSED AIR, ON PEOPLE, IN GLASS AND MIRRORS, ON VASES, BOTTLES AND SCENERY.

(IN CLASS HANDS ON PROJECT)

**Team #1 – Proposal Due**

**MEETING #10 11/02/2015 POST COMPOSITING**

HISTORY OF POST COMPOSITING (IN-CAMERA, OPTICAL AND DIGITAL).

INTRO TO COMPOSITE TECHNIQUES AND PROGRAMS.

RED/GREEN/BLUE SCREEN CAPTURE TECHNIQUES.

MATTE MAKING, ROTOSCOPING AND INTEGRATING SUBJECTS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.

COMPARE OPTICAL TO DIGITAL TIME FRAMES.

(IN CLASS PRESENTATION OF HANDS ON PROJECTS COMPOSITE AND HOW IT WAS PUT TOGETHER IN NUKE).

BREAKDOWN PITCHED HOLLYWOOD SCREENPLAY.

**Team #2 – Proposal Due**

**MEETING #11 11/09/2015**

**TEAM#1 PRODUCTION STAGE 3 CALL TIME 6:00 P.M. (7:00 P.M. everyone else)**

CLASS EXERCISES IN TECHNIQUES AS APPLIES TO THE GROUP'S SCRIPTED PAGE

**ASSIGNMENT:** COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PROJECT\*

CLOSED SET

### **Team #3 – Proposal Due**

**MEETING #12 11/16/2015**

**TEAM#2 PRODUCTION STAGE 3 CALL TIME 6:00 P.M. (7:00 P.M. everyone else)**

CLASS EXERCISES IN TECHNIQUES AS APPLIES TO THE GROUP'S SCRIPTED PAGE

**ASSIGNMENT:** COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PROJECT\*  
CLOSED SET

### **Team #4 – Proposal Due**

**MEETING #13 11/23/2015**

**TEAM #3 PRODUCTION STAGE 3 CALL TIME 6:00 P.M. (7:00 P.M. everyone else)**

CLASS EXERCISES IN TECHNIQUES AS APPLIES TO THE GROUP'S SCRIPTED PAGE

**ASSIGNMENT:** COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PROJECT\*  
CLOSED SET

**MEETING #14 11/30/2015**

**TEAM #4 PRODUCTION STAGE 3 CALL TIME 6:00 P.M. (7:00 P.M. everyone else)**

CLASS EXERCISES IN TECHNIQUES AS APPLIES TO THE GROUP'S SCRIPTED PAGE

**ASSIGNMENT:** COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHY OF PROJECT\*  
CLOSED SET

**MEETING #15 12/14/2015**

RECAP OF COURSE MATERIALS

REVIEW FOR THE FINAL EXAM

**SCREEN FINISHED FINAL FILM PROJECTS**

**SCRIPT BREAKDOWN DUE**

**FINAL EXAM**

*\* GROUP PROJECTS COUNT TOWARDS FINAL GRADE*