



**CTPR 423 INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL EFFECTS
IN CINEMA**

Units: 2

Spring 2021 — Mondays — 7:00pm – 10:00pm

Coronavirus affected syllabus

100% Distance Learning

Etiquette Rules for the Zoom Classroom

*You must turn video on and participate. Mute yourself unless you have a question or comment.
Only post chat messages relevant to the lessons.*

While it's important to stay hydrated, please reframe from eating during zoom sessions.

Try to find a quiet space and stay in an attentive sitting position.

Please no reclining or multi-tasking.

*Consider your background and avoid sitting in front of a window which may either be too
bright and distracting or properly exposed and you'll be a silhouette.*

We want to create a more direct sense of engagement with each student and among students.

We expect behavior during our online classes similar to what we would expect if we were in-person.

This class may not be audited.

Location: SCC Stage 3

Instructor: Gene Warren III, Christopher Lee Warren

Office: SCA stage 3

Office Hours: (By Appointment)

Contact Info: warrenii@usc.edu

818-606-3087

Teaching Assistant: Jacqueline Rosenthal

Contact Info: jerosent@usc.edu

818-667-9211

SCA PRODUCTION DIVISION
VIRTUAL PRODUCTION PROTOCOLS

And

BUBBLE DEFINITIONS

Adopted Fall 2020

Revised Spring 2021

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 in California and around the world, USC and the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) have taken a strong stance regarding the need for safe and mindful behaviors among all members of the SCA community. Medical authorities agree that even the young and healthy are capable, if infected, of becoming ill, or of being non-symptomatic unconscious vectors of the disease's spread.

The health and wellbeing of all community members has to be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating together. We understand that attentiveness to the concerns of all SCA community members - students, staff and faculty, including those with underlying health conditions -- is simply an extension of the key principle of creative collaboration that has guided our school for decades. We're all in this pandemic together and need to behave accordingly. USC and SCA are governed by LA County Health Regulations, according to which no in-person instruction or collaboration is allowed or sanctioned. This is the case on any USC project or exercise no matter where in the world it is executed. In order to continue instruction and production for the purposes of cinema education the Production Division has adopted Virtual Production Protocols to govern our activities.

The underlying principle of our Virtual Production Protocols is:

**NO IN-PERSON COLLABORATION, EXCEPT AMONG MEMBERS OF A
DEFINED AND DECLARED "BUBBLE"**

The specifics that follow may not apply to all courses but the principles do apply to all.

Certain multi-section courses and groups of courses (e.g. Capstone Production Courses) may have additional guidelines. Those additions will be presented to classes by faculty at the beginning of semester.

These materials will be available at all times on SCA Community. They should also be incorporated into each course syllabus or distributed with course syllabi.

By registering for the semester students are automatically subject to the Production Division's Covid Compliance Agreement, also reviewable on SCA Community.

Virtual Production, Safe Bubbles Defined

Virtual Production:

- Pre-production will be done completely online.
- Production will be recorded remotely
- Students will fulfill their roles by working on computers from their separate homes. Communication among the students and between filmmakers and performers will be conducted via Zoom, FaceTime or similar platforms.
- Actors or Documentary Subjects in their own homes will perform and assist in adjusting lighting and sound. They will capture their performances, under student filmmaker direction, using smartphones or approved rental cameras.
- If the director chooses not to use professional actors, they may cast themselves and/or housemates within their defined Bubble.
- Additional photography, such as establishing shots and B-roll, may be shot on the students' own premises or approved adjacent locations. This must be property that the Bubble controls in order to prevent coming into accidental contact with the public.
- The use of stock footage is encouraged.
- Post-production will be done completely online: picture editing on Avid, sound editing on ProTools, remote color grading on Avid, and sound mix.
- Workflow will be modified to support different cameras available to students & actors.
- As with any SCA production class, we will follow current safety and health guidelines for LA County, USC and SCA.

Bubble Definitions:

- **Bubbles** are zones within which safer contact normally occurs for each participant. These are your housemates (people with whom you live and interact without a mask or physical distancing on a daily basis). Each student has their own **Bubble**. They must not meet in person with other students.
- Each actor or documentary subject in a film also has their own **Bubble**. Unless actors/doc subjects live with one another, they will not have any in-person interaction with each other. Filmmakers may not interact in-person with their actors/doc subjects unless those actors/doc subjects are part of the filmmaker's Bubble.

- Note: When you cast an actor, you are also casting a location (the house, yard, apartment, stairway, etc.) available to that actor and controllable for production. You also have potential access to the services of anyone else in the performer's bubble, their roommate, housemate, spouse, etc. as long as they are declared and certified as Bubble members in advance of production.
- You will cast, rehearse, block and shoot remotely as defined above.
- You may support actors only with production gear rented from SAG approved rental houses, or personal gear of theirs that is approved. You may use your own approved gear when you are filming. Any transfer of gear to actors must follow specified Production Division COVID-Safe guidelines posted on SCA Community.

Course Description

Welcome to CTPR 423. Our aspiration is to generate an appreciation for the art of special/visual effects and foster an understanding of how special/visual effects are conceived, generated and produced. This course will primarily cover the practical elements of visual and special effects using various film clips, discussion and hands on Zoom presentations. Discussion of digital effects will only focus on how the various in-camera techniques integrate with the newer digital tools.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to :

Apply and combine scales through the use of forced perspective techniques to produce and submit a photographic still or moving picture.

Demonstrate the basic mechanics of stop motion animation and produce a 10 to 20 second stop motion animation clip.

Analyse a provided screenplay to identify and submit possible special and visual effects solutions. (commonly referred to as a 'Script Breakout')

Every student will participate within a group to develop and produce a short *SCRIPT* using special and visual effects techniques previously used/taught throughout the session.

Prerequisite(s): Safety Seminar

Course Notes:

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, May 12th. All students are required to attend, take the final exam and read their final projects.

Required course equipment

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

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

A study sheet of commonly used words and phrases will be handed out week 1. It is meant for students to be more familiar with film industry jargon used in the special and visual effects discipline.

Grading Breakdown

	of Grade
Participation	10%
Mid term exam	20%
Forced perspective assignment	10%
Script excerpt f/x breakout assignment	10%
Stop Motion Animation clip	10%
Group f/x production Script	10%
Effects films reviews	10%
Final exam	20%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Rubrics

For participation, forced perspective and script breakout assignments there are extra points to be had for inspired work beyond the basic examples of an understanding of the conceptual work.

The midterm and final will be graded by dividing the number of questions into 100. Each incorrect answer will be that number taken away from 100 resulting in the grading scale outlined above.

In class, hands on projects will consist of Chris and Gene filming on Stage 3 various elements relating to the particular technique discussed each week. *

~~*-COVID LIFTED ALLOWING-~~

Grading Timeline

The Midterm will be reviewed the following week.

The forced perspective assignment will be graded within two weeks after the due date.

Additional Policies

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+ i.e. 100%)

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 A-. 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 affect final grade in the following way: (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.

Final script project

Four production groups will be formed from the class. Each group will produce a final *Script*. 10 to 15 pages long containing in-camera practical and special effects shots.

-NOTEWORTHY DATES TO REMEMBER-

- ☐ **01/18/2021 – MLK OBSERVANCE – NO CLASS**
- ☐ **02/15/2021 – PRESIDENTS DAY – NO CLASS**
- ☐ **03/01/2021 – MID-TERM EXAM**
- ☐ **03/01/2021 – TURN IN FORCED PERSPECTIVE PHOTOGRAPH PROJECT**
- ☐ **05/10/2021 – REVIEW GROUP PROJECTS – FINAL EXAM**

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

MEETING #1 01/25/2021 - COURSE OVERVIEW

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

MEETING #2 02/01/2021 - PHYSICAL/PRACTICAL FX - MAKE-UP FX

BREAKING AND COLLAPSING SCENERY. BREAKAWAY PROPS, BREAKING WINDOWS, STUNTS, FIGHTS. ARROWS, KNIVES, SWORDS AND DAGGERS. BLOOD, SCRATCHES, AND BLOOD EFFECTS. CASTING BODY PARTS.

MEETING #3 02/08/2021 - IN CAMERA EFFECTS

FORCED PERSPECTIVE

UNDER/OVER CRANK PHOTOGRAPHY.

MIRROR EFFECTS: FIFTY-FIFTY MIRRORS, GLASS SHOTS AND SPLIT SCREEN OVERLAYS, DOUBLE EXPOSURES. GHOST EFFECTS USING 50/50 MIRROR

INSTRUCTION OF BASIC SAFE USE OF STANDARD MOVIE EQUIPMENT.

(PRESIDENTS DAY - 02/15/2021 - NO CLASS)

MEETING #4 02/22/2021 - IN CAMERA EFFECTS

SCENIC PROJECTION FRONT AND REAR SCREEN.

PROCESS PHOTOGRAPHY (POOR MAN'S PROCESS)

(ON STAGE PRESENTATION OF EFFECTS TECHNIQUES VIA ZOOM)

-COVID LIFTED ALLOWING-

MEETING #5 03/01/2021 – SCRIPT BREAKOUT

READ AND IDENTIFY IN SCRIPTS THE VARIOUS EFFECTS TECHNIQUES REQUIRED.

TURN IN FORCED PERSPECTIVE ASSIGNMENT

MID-TERM EXAM

GROUPS WILL BE ANNOUNCED DURING THIS CLASS MEETING.

MEETING #6 03/08/2021 -- MINIATURES

MINIATURE EFFECTS: FOREGROUND HANGING MINIATURES AND CHOICE OF SCALE. MINIATURE CONSTRUCTION (CHOICE OF MATERIALS).

MINIATURE LIGHTING PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES.

MINIATURES AND MOTION CONTROL (MODELS AND CAMERA).

THE NODAL POINT AS USED IN VISUAL EFFECTS.

(ON STAGE PRESENTATION OF EFFECTS TECHNIQUES VIA ZOOM)

-COVID LIFTED ALLOWING-

MEETING #7 03/15/2021 - WORKING WITH/IN NATURAL/PYRO ELEMENTS

WORKING WITH WATER. CREATING ATMOSPHERIC ELEMENTS FOR POST COMPOSITING. USING FIREARMS AND PYRO-TECHNICS.

MEETING #8 03/22/2021 - CHARACTER ANIMATION/PUPPETRY

STOP MOTION PUPPETS (ARMATURED, CLAYMATION AND REPLACEMENT).

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

WHY MOTION CAPTURE?

MEETING #9 03/29/2021 - 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.

MEETING #10 04/05/2021 – TEAM # 1

MEETING #11 04/12/2022 – TEAM # 2

MEETING #12 04/19/2021 – TEAM # 3

MEETING #13 04/26/2021 - TEAM # 4

Starting April 5th we will be meeting in groups. The groups will be expected to have a short SPECIAL/VFX script. We will breakdown and go over scene for scene as if we were shooting it virtually. We will review the years lessons and discuss any questions and/or answers you as individuals might have about favorite scenes form your favorite fx movies or just techniques in general.

Group 1 will collectively write a script and have it ready for April 5th. The other groups will need to finish their scripts by their respective group night. All groups will rotate through the homework assignments.

Starting on **April 5th** each team will have their respective tasks and will have two weeks to finish each assignment. This will go as follows:

April 5th

Team 1 will be with us

Team 2 will be doing the *First* homework Due April 19th

Team 3 will be doing the *Second* homework Due April 19th

Team 4 will be doing the *Third* homework Due April 19th

April 12th

Team 2 will be with us

Team 3 will be doing the *First* homework Due April 26th

Team 4 will be doing the *Second* homework Due April 26th

Team 1 will be doing the *Third* Homework Due April 26th

April 19th

Team 3 will be with us

Team 4 will be doing the *First* homework Due May 3rd

Team 1 will be doing the *Second* homework Due May 3rd

Team 2 will be doing the *Third* homework Due May 3rd

April 26th

Team 4 will be with us

Team 1 will be doing the *First* homework Due May 10th

Team 2 will be doing the *Second* homework Due May 10th

Team 3 will be doing the *Third* homework Due May 10th

Homework for the four weeks of shoot.

First: Watch two movies from a list provided by us and write a few paragraphs long review of the VFX/Special Effects you find in each movie.

Have a note pad as you watch each film. For example, four particular headings:

PRACTICAL MAKE/UP MINIATURE COMPOSITE

Tally and make notes for each that you encounter to reference when writing your review.

First paragraph; approach and technique. Second paragraph; how well were the techniques carried through.

Second: Read an excerpt from a script provided by us and do an FX breakout.

Third: Animate a minimum 5 second clip. 120 frames. Your choice of character or style.

STUDY WEEK – 05/03/2021

MEETING #14 05/10/2021 – FINAL CLASS

RECAP OF COURSE MATERIALS

REVIEW FOR THE FINAL EXAM

REVIEW FINAL SCRIPT PROJECTS

FINAL EXAM

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Diversity and Inclusion:

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX