**USC** School of Cinematic Arts

**CTIN 191 – Survey of Themed Entertainment**

**Units: 4.0**

**1 meeting per week, 3 hours and 50 minutes**

**Location:** SCI 108

**Instructors: Joe Garlington & Dan Molitor**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment either in person or via Zoom

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**Course Description**

Introduce students to the field of Themed Entertainment and Education design, outlining its history and, especially, current practice.

There will be two different kinds of lectures:

• Lectures about the history and basic philosophies that underlie the industry and its various components

• Lectures from various fields by industry experts who will showcase their work and discuss it relative to work done in their part of the industry

 This term, for instance, guest speakers will include : Chris Crump, David Ruzicka, Phil Hettema, Doris Hardoon, Seth Cover, Scott Trowbridge, Susan Beth Smith. These are people who have designed everything from individual attractions to whole lands and parks. Some are Imagineers from Walt Disney, others come from other major themed entertainment design firms.

Students will:

• Research Existing Attractions, especially including work in international markets

• Perform research to uncover future trends.

• Visit themed attractions around the Los Angeles area.

• Research and evaluate historical and international attractions.

• Be exposed to a wide range of themed entertainment explorations, not just Disney or theme park related but also museums, zoos, etc.

• Be exposed to real-world challenges.

• Explore diverse presentation media including models, simulations, animatics, etc.

**Learning Objectives**

• Give students a sense of the scale of the industry, the types of work done and the kinds of firms that do it.

• Gain an overarching understanding of the history of the subject.

• Gain an overarching understanding of current practice in the field.

**Prerequisite(s):** None.

**Co-Requisite (s):** None.

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None.

**Recommended Preparation**: Visit local theme parks. Visit local museums. Visit themed malls and shopping centers, escape rooms, zoos, aquaria, parades, etc. While you’re there, watch other guests as they enjoy the space. Take note of what they’re doing, how they’re interacting with each other, and where they’re getting confused.

**Course Notes**

Students should take risks, look beyond well-established examples and common wisdom to explore what’s new and different in design ideas. Students will work in teams. The quality of students’ group participation is critical –as important as the final project. Themed entertainment design is a collaborative discipline and learning to communicate, share workload, learn from and help others excel is a core value in this field.

Students will be required to attend several themed entertainment and education attractions around the LA area and document what they find there in their notes. These visits will NOT occur during class hours.

All students may be required to sign a Disney, Universal, or other Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to hear specific lecturers speak in the class.

**Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

Visual presentation tools (Keynote/Powerpoint).

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

There is only one, specific, required reading material : <http://themedenvironments.blogspot.com/>. Individual discussions from this site may be assigned reading, aligned with the guest speakers brought in each week.

Also, the Khan Academy “Imagineering In A Box” <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/hass-storytelling/imagineering-in-a-box>

Provides an excellent overview of Disney creative processes. This is not required but will prove very useful in providing a deeper understanding of the scope and process that Disney Imagineers employ in creating entertainment. This course is without charge.

Monies normally spent on textbooks will instead be spent on admission fees to various themed entertainment and educational facilities. The instructor will attempt to get students “passed” into these institutions, but some of them will require students to pay their own admissions.

In late January or early February, on a Saturday or Sunday, tbd, there will be a hosted walk through of Disneyland park. Joe and Larry will lead the students through the park giving students a “designer’s eye” perspective on the park. Students will have **to purchase their own tickets** as the university has notified us they will not do it for the class, and Disney won’t.

**Note** that this is a **mandatory** part of the class. It will take place on a Saturday or Sunday, not during class, so plan ahead for it, it is **required**.

Students will be expected to become familiar with the various **industry fan sites**, especially those targeting Disney and Universal Studios theme parks.

Supplementary readings include:

*Theme Park Design* by Steve Alcorn

*The Themed Space* edited by Scott A. Lukas

*The Theming of America, American Dreams, Media Fantasies, and Themed Environments* by Mark Gottdiener

*The Experience Economy* by B. Joseph Pine II and Games H. Gilmore

*Walt Disney Imagineering* by The Imagineers

*The Imagineering Workout* by The Imagineers

*Designing Disney* by John Hench

Dream It! Do It! by Marty Sklar

*It’s Kind of a Cute Story* by Rolly Crump

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

**Notes & Responses**

Because the class uses many outside professionals as speakers, many of whom are still working professionals, it is impossible to get them to arrive in an ideal order. To combat this all students will build “notebooks.” The notebooks will be assembled so that by the end of the term the ways in which the various disciplines work together will make sense, even if they are delivered in an order that might seem arbitrary. The notes will include notes taken during the guest speaker’s talks and will also include a minimum of one question for the professors, each week. All students will turn in their **“Notes and Responses**” each week. Each week’s notes are due at midnight the day prior to the next week’s class. Notes and Responses are to contain not only the notes taken in class, but more importantly, student reactions to what they hear in the lectures, questions for the instructor, and input from outside reading and research.

There are several goals for the Notes and Responses.:

One is to open an ongoing line of dialog between the students and the instructors so that the instructors can tailor the teaching to each student’s needs and interests – note that this is a two way street, hard for the instructor to answer a question that hasn’t been asked.

A second goal is to ensure that the students are actively working with the information presented in class. Notes and Responses that fail to include questions, observations, independent research will be considered incomplete. The field is enormous and few students will have anywhere near the natural background they might have in film, games, literature or even fine art. Even a student with a great background is unlikely to have seen more than a handful of the thousands of theme parks, museums, themed retail destinations, etc., that exist, so stretching the information presented in class by doing research, asking questions, etc. is critical to success, and to a good grade.

A third goal is to develop a document that could be referenced for years after the class as an outline of the industry when understanding that kind of information might be desired. Again, the field is not well known and designers working in this field tend to work broadly, work for a theme park today, a zoo tomorrow, specialty retail the day after that. This means that one of the goals of the class it to make sure students know what they don’t know. A matrix that showcases the numerous disciplines will be presented as part of the lectures and students will be expected to fill it out, so that by the end even if they don’t know much about a particular section of the field they will know it exists and know where to got to find out more about it.

Therefore how the document is organized will be part of what the instructor is looking at and part of what he or she will be grading the notes upon. The best notes will be organized in such a way that as new information is added it gets plugged into an overarching structure that makes it easy to find related information. Simply organizing the information by lecturer or lecture date will not be satisfactory.

It is also critically important to understand that “all business is show business,” to quote a former president of Saab, the *car* manufacturer. We believe that learning to present both clearly and compellingly is core to becoming a true professional in any creative field. That means that the notes are graded not only on robustness, but also on style, clarity, readability, essentially on their *overall ability to hold our attention*, that is, to “**entertain** us.” If your notes appear to be some boring list of what you heard you won’t get much of a grade. If you are in this class we presume you are trying to be entertainers. Find a way to make these reports entertaining. They don’t have to be pretty or an exercise in elegant graphic design, but they do need to have something about them that draws the reader in and holds his or her attention. At one level this is not just a note-taking and research exercise, it is also a creative exercise. The best notes will solve all three of these challenges.

Note that the professors will probably show few examples. We don’t want copies of other people’s solutions. We want to see you inventing your own solution. If you don’t know what to do – *invent*!

So to recap: The weekly notes need to include notes from the week’s lecture, developed in enough detail that they can be read by an outsider and understood. They need to include outside research into things that are related to the lecture. They need to include questions (minimum of 1) for the professor(s) and they need to be presented entertainingly, by which we mean that the layout and design of each page of the notes needs to be thought through in some way. They don’t necessarily have to be pretty, but they do need to be engaging in some way.

Attraction Reports & Presentations

There will be two to three “small**”** attraction reports & associated presentations (based upon class size, since they are presented in class). One of the reports will be about an **historical attraction** that no longer exists, one will be about a **contemporary attraction located in the LA area**, and 1 will be about **contemporary attractions located outside southern California**.

Students will be paired for this work, with the pairings changing from project to project, the goal being to help students to learn how to work with lots of different types of people, as they will when they move into industry. In this industry nobody works alone. Getting to know how to communicate with others, to share workloads, etc. are part of the course of study. Students will be asked to provide “work plans” for their joint work projects in which they outline which team member will be providing what part of the work to create the final, joint project. Students will be graded not only on the final outcome of the project, but on how their independent section contributed to the whole. Clear plans that include clear task descriptions, clear timelines and clear responsibilities will be required and graded independently.

Each project is basically made of two parts: Research and presentation. The duo will be expected to perform research to understand the detail of an approved attraction and then to prepare an interesting / entertaining presentation about what they have learned, to teach the other students in the class. Pretend you are in a themed entertainment design company and that you are having to give your bosses a report on something they’ve asked about. Your salary depends on how well you make the presentation. Notes will be given both on the quality of the research and the quality of the presentation. Note that both inventiveness in presenting and effectiveness of information dispensation count. Students are studying to become entertainers, boring presentations will not get a good grade.

Midterm & Final Research Projects

• Students also will do longer-term projects, their mid-term and final research projects. It is presumed that these two projects will be delved into in much greater detail than the short-term projects partly because students have more time to dig into the these projects and partly because they have a larger team working on the subject. While the short-term projects are likely to be individual attractions, the longer-term projects are presumed to be more complex, a museum, a theme park or a land within a theme park, a zoo, etc.

The class will be divided into three to four working groups (depending on class size), so that means 4 – 6 students per team. As with the smaller projects, research and presentation matter for each. As with the smaller projects plans will need to be presented to the instructor and bought off at the start of the project. Holding to internal timelines, etc., will be part of what gets graded. Each of these two projects will be presented to a panel of industry professionals to provide students with broader feedback than the instructor alone can give.

Final Written Exam

• Finally the class will have to take a final,written exam. This exam will cover the entire term and consist of five short essay questions from which students pick two to answer, and three long essay questions from which the students pick one to answer.

This class will focus on in-class discussion, critique and problem solving for individual research projects. Students must treat their research projects professionally, bring milestones to class on time, ready to present. Students must participate actively in all discussions and critiques, giving and receiving feedback of the highest quality.

**Organizing Group Creative Development**

Since students will be presumed to have little experience organizing creative development in a group project, the instructor will work with student teams to help them understand how collaborative creative development is organized and managed. Like shingling a roof students will be encouraged to establish areas where each holds primary responsibility (like the main part of a shingle) where they will provide backup (like the portion of a shingle that is tucked under its partner) and areas where they have no responsibility and, in fact, shouldln’t even show up (a shingle blowing across the roof covers nothing except by accident). Students will be asked to break down each project into its component parts, then work out which students carry which parts. The instructor will evaluate the students, first on their plans, including on the evenness of distribution of work, on how handoffs (the human interfaces) between areas are arranged and then facilitated, on how naturally the skills of the individuals line up with the needs of the project and how well timelines are followed. Students (people in general) tend to underestimate how long tasks will take and they tend to procrastinate. By creating plans with detailed task descriptions and timelines with internal deadlines teams will be encouraged to maintain good work habits. Teams will check in with the instructor weekly, failure to meet internal deadlines will degrade grades.

 Grades will be based upon

* Inventiveness (this is a creative field after all)
* Entertainment/educational value of the presentations/papers
* Project organization
* Followthrough on timelines
* Delivery of scope both in quality and quantity of team play.

This last aspect is often most difficult to evaluate directly since the instructors don’t normally sit in teams as they work. To help with this teams will be required to use the instructors’ “office hours” to meet with one or both as needed, but at least 3 times during the semester so they can directly observe team play. The instructors recognize that this is imperfect but it is how managers all over the world manage projects of every possible scale.

**Grading Breakdown**

**Assignment** **% of Grade**

Weekly Class Notes 15

Small Attraction Report 1 10

Small Attraction Report 2 10

Small Attraction Report 3 10

Mid Term Project 15

Final Project 15

Final Exam 10

Participation 15

**Assignment Submission Policy**

With the exception of the final exam all projects end up as presentations. Students sign up to deliver projects on scheduled dates. Failure to deliver as scheduled is failure of that element and gets a failing grade. For smaller assignments reports will be part of the deliverable. Those reports will be due at the close of the presentation. All large group projects will be presented on the same day to a jury of industry professionals. Their reactions will significantly impact grades. Again, failure to present on time is equivalent to failing the assignment.

**Missing an Assignment Deadline, Incompletes:**

The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment deadline or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructor ***before the assignment due date*** and present verifiable evidence in order for a deadline extension to be granted. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor or student assistant before final grades are due. Incompletes are only available after the Week 12 withdrawal deadline.

For assignments turned in after the assignment deadline without prior permission from the instructor, a penalty will be imposed equal to 10% of the total available points for the assignment, for each day or part of a day that the assignment is late, up to a maximum of seven days.

**Attendance Policy:**

We assume everthing we do in class is part of the class structure and part of the integrated learning that is why students are in the class in the first place. This means that students who miss classes miss the opportunity to learn, whatever the reason for the abscence. The goal for the class is to learn. If you’re not in class you can’t do that learning. So, punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students arriving more than five minutes late to three classes, more than ten minutes late to a single class, or leaving early, will be marked as being absent from class, unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructor. The following guidelines are from the Interactive Media & Games Division handbook regarding absences and grading and apply to all students.

Guidelines for absences affecting grading

* Two absences: lowers the grade one full grade point (for example, from A to B)
* Three absences: lowers the grade two full grade points
* Four or more absences: request to withdraw from course (instructor’s discretion)

In certain circumstances where absences are reasonalble and explained consideration will be taken of ways for a student to make up for an absence. But because so much of the class involves teamwork and participation in class we assume these considerations are only made in very limited circumstances.

Social media, including text messaging and internet messaging, are excluded from class unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using them.

**Diversity**

In making games and interactive media in a professional and ethical way, it is important that you consider diversity. When looking at your projects, you should consider who is depicted and how this work will impact others. What kinds of individuals and communities are represented in your work? What point of view does your work express? This class my assist you in learning how to make work that includes diverse viewpoints, and may discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of games and interactive media.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

*We will have a guest lecturer in class every week, as stated before. Below is an example of the subject material covered throughout the semester and the professionals who have in the past provided those lectures. We will update the class calendar with the actual guest lecturers prior to the beginning of the Spring semester.*

**Week 1:** Overview of the class – introduction to each other, discussion of course goals and themes: preparation, process, practice and partnership. Break up class into 2-person teams for 1st two reports and also into the larger team students will work with for their mid-term.

*Lectures:* Story/Writing in Themed Entertainment – Dan Molitor will discuss how story works in themed entertainment and how it is supported by writers. Joe Garlington will present Turtle Talk with Crush and talk about how it was developed. Chris Crump will talk about The Little Mermaid Ride from a show set / production designer’s perspective.

*Assignment:* Begin research for 1st presentation. Note that the “small” research talks are presumed to be 5 – 8 minutes in duration followed by feedback from the instructor and the class. The depth and quality of the research will be discussed as will the innovativeness, quality and entertainment/informative level of the presentation.

**Week 2:**

*Lecture:*

Guest Lecturers: David Ruzicka will talk about leading edge trends in immersive entertainment, focusing especially on escape rooms and immersive theater like his *Willows* project. Larry Gerts will discuss designing for museums using work done for the Experience Music museum in Seattle.

*Assignments:*

Each week the assignments are the same (so they won’t be reiterated below):

• Write up and submit your annotated class notes (see above). Class notes are due every week of the term except the weeks of the mid-term and the final.

• Working in your two-person teams, research and develop your smaller presentations, which will be presented according to a schedule worked out in the first class (and perhaps adjusted during the first week through email).

• Work on your larger, mid-term or final research project with your larger team.

**Week 3:**

*Lecture:* Rowan Doyle will discuss current trends in location based and event based themed entertainment. She is an independent industry consultant who has worked widely across the industry.

**Week 4:**

*Lecture:* tbd

**Week 5:**

*Lecture:* Phil Hettema – Founder and president of THG (formerly The Hettema Group) and prior to that head of creative for Universal Creative, who lead the development of Universal’s first, ground up designed theme park, Islands of Adventure, will take us through how one master plans a whole theme park.

**Week 6:**

*Lecture:* Greg Mac Laurin will talk about special effects design for theme parks and museums. Part of his talk includes handing out Pepper’s Ghost kits so that students can learn how to work with a Pepper’s Ghost illusion by directly manipulating one.

**Week 7:**

*Lecture:* Seth Cover – co-founder of MyCoToo, a leading industry design firm, will talk about a subject tbd.

**Week 8:**

*Lecture: Scott Trowbridge –* Scott, currently an SVP at Walt Disney Imagineering and leader of Disney’s Star Cruiser hotel and also the Galaxy’s Edge land at Disneyland. (Also formerly with Universal where he lead the Harry Potter and Spiderman attraction developments) will discuss the development of the latest Disney projects that have been announced.

This week is also **-** *Pre-Mid-Term Review*

Aside from Scott’s talk, this week is different from the prior weeks. The large research teams will present the first of their larger research projects to the instructors and possibly a jury of guests for evaluation and feedback. Note that these presentations are presumed to be 15 – 20 minutes in duration, with the rest of a half an hour being devoted to feedback from the instructors and guest professionals. Over the next week the team will make use of that feedback to finalize their mid-term presentation for review and grading.

**Week 9:** *Mid-Term Presentation*

This week the students will again present their mid-term presentation, however this time it will be not only to the instructor, but also to a panel of industry professionals (this week to include Susan Beth Smith and Doris Hardoon (and others) who will provide feedback. As before the presumption is that the team will present for 15 – 20 minutes and that the jury will use the rest of a half an hour for feedback.

**Week including Wednesday, March 15th - Spring Break – No Class.**

**Week 10:**

*Lecture:* Trey Gilmore, a graduate of Cal Arts theater program about 5 years ago who now co-owns a very successful event design company will talk about the transition from college to industry and how he and his partners took their student knowledge and used it to start a successful company.

**Week 11:**

*Lectur:* tbd

**Week 10:**

*Lecture:* tbd.

**Week 12:**

*Lecture:* Linda Hung, a Vice President at Forrec a Canadian architectural and themed entertainment design firm will talk about the conversion of an old theme park into a new Lego theme park, going through the steps from initial research, through ideation and then into construction.

**Week 12:**

*Lecture:* Doris Hardoon, a former VP at WDI and current Disney “Living Legend” who oversaw the design and implementation of the gateway experiences at Shanghai Disneyland will talk about storytelling through placemaking and how that works when you are working cross-culturally.

**Week 13:**

*Lecture:* tbd.

**Week 14:**

This week will be like the Pre-Mid-Term week in that there is no lecture. Instead the four large research teams will present the second of their larger research projects to the instructor (and possibly others) for evaluation and feedback. Note that these presentations are presumed to be 15 – 20 minutes in duration, with the rest of a half an hour being devoted to feedback from the instructor. Over the next week the team will make use of that feedback to finalize their Final presentation for review and grading.

**Week 15:** *Final (live) Presentation*

This week the students will again present their Final presentation, and as with the Mid-Term this time it will be not only to the instructor, but also to a panel of industry professionals who will provide feedback. As before the presumption is that the team will present for 15 – 20 minutes and that the jury will use the rest of a half an hour for feedback.

However this time there is a difference. The notes the jury give will be used by the team to create a final “take-away” version of their presentation. In industry most presentations are given in two ways, first as a live presentation and second as a set of documents that are left behind for the reviewers to go through more thoroughly, usually in private study at a later date.

**Study Week:** There will be no class held this week.

**FINALS WEEK:** On the day when the “final exam” has been scheduled and no later than the time when that test should end, each student will turn in their answers to a “take-home” test. The test will be given out at the end of the final class.

**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 Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.  You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety whole USC community.  Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.  *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.  *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html> provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [*http://emergency.usc.edu/*](http://emergency.usc.edu/)will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**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.

**Syllabus Updates**:

This syllabus is liable to change up to the beginning of class and possibly over the semester. Please check the posted syllabus regularly, and note all changes that are shared by the instructor in class.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

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