

Film Studies 2159B
Disney (Winter 2018)

Professor Janelle Blankenship
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Screening: Wednesday - 11:30-2:30 [AHB 3B04]
Lecture/Discussion: Thursday - 9:30-11:30 [AHB 3B02]



Office Hours:

Thursday 12-2pm or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

Kristen Niles (PhD Candidate, English): kniles7@uwo.ca

David Guignon (MA Candidate, Theory & Criticism): dguignio@uwo.ca

Course Objectives:

Benjamin Barber in *The New York Times* argued “whether Disney knows it or not, it is buying much more than our leisure time. It has a purchase on our values, on how we feel and think, and what we think about.” This course offers a closer look at Disney as one of America’s most long-standing “dream factories,” examining the cultural narratives, industrial strategies, fantasies and ideologies that fuel Disney’s global impact in the 20th and 21st century. In addition to analyzing key Disney animated features, we will also look at the studio’s early cartoons, educational and advertising films, nature documentaries, live action films and propaganda shorts. We will study Disney’s relationship to art, politics and ecology and also examine the “invention” of childhood, notions of “family” entertainment and constructions of race, class and gender in Disney filmmaking. Films include *Bambi*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Tron*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Song of the South*, *Steamboat Willy*, *Fantasia*, *The Lion King* and *Frozen*.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to critically analyse the techniques and formal structure of Disney’s filmmaking, identify cultural and social themes in Disney’s oeuvre and also reflect on the role reception, fandom and marketing play in shaping Disney’s screen culture. In this course, students will hone independent research skills (utilizing the pro-quest historical newspaper database). A close analysis of archival sources and primary source material such as lobby cards, press books, posters, stills and reviews will also promote a deeper awareness of film historiography and film-industry publicity and marketing strategies. By the end of the course, successful students will be able to demonstrate how film relates to wider economic, cultural and social contexts and issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Class Attendance and Participation [20%]
- Historical newspaper database assignment [15%]
- Quiz [10% total]
- In-Class Exam [20%]
- Final Exam [35%]

Required Textbooks (available in the University Bookstore):

- * Janet Wasko *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (Polity, 2001) [UD]
- * Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Hass, Laura Sells (Ed.) *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (Indiana University Press: 1995) [MtM]
- * Other required readings will be available on our course webpage on OWL