

Department of English & Writing Studies  
Film Studies Program

DISNEY DREAM FACTORY  
FILM 2159A – Fall 2024

Times/Venues for Lecture and Office Hours are posted on Brightspace under **Overview**

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*“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things because we're curious, and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths...”*

~ Walt Disney

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For decades, the name ‘Disney’ has been associated with popular aspects of Americana, especially those that pertain to spectacular, escapist approaches to culture that idealize traditional values as they apply to human life and relationships. Given the tremendous Disney mass market output that goes well beyond film production, Benjamin Barber’s argument—that “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”—speaks to the Disney empire’s profound and premeditated influence on our most important cultural narratives.

Through an examination of diverse media sources (animated shorts, lobby cards, press books, advertisements, full-length animated and live action feature films, etc.) and their treatment of topics such as childhood, family, relationships, race, class, sexuality, and gender, this course casts a critical look at Disney as one of America’s most long-standing “dream factories” that shape the fabric of our collective consciousness through its innovative technological industry and strategic use of discourse. Finally, this course also encourages the centrality of critical self-reflection in the various ways that we as audiences are potentially instrumentalized within these transnational ideological networks, not only as their consumers but also as their re-producers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. synthesize concepts from a number of theoretical perspectives in order to read and think critically about the potential biases, prejudices, and motivations that inform Disney productions;
2. analyze literary, artistic, social, and cultural artifacts that are informed by—or that demonstrate—the tensions, anxieties, and aspirations embedded in Disney narratives;
3. reflect on their experiences as informed audiences whose personal dealings with reception, fandom, and marketing may offer points of potential intervention;
4. enhance their ability to express themselves both orally (through in-class participation) and in writing (through quizzes, essays, and examinations).

### COURSE MATERIALS

1. Wasko, Janet. Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Polity, 2020. (available at the UWO Bookstore)
2. Additional required readings will be posted on OWL. – Please refer to the latest version of the Course Calendar

**A NOTE ON “SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS”:** You will find some readings listed as “Supplementary Readings” in the course calendar. These are just that: supplementary, meaning they may be helpful to read if you have interest or time. These may also be used as material for deepening your own knowledge in preparation for the Oral Exam or Critical Essay. They will NOT be included in any tests, quizzes, or examinations.

### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

1. A stable internet connection for weekly asynchronous viewing (screenings must be done at your own time)
2. OWL Brightspace and UWO library access for screening links
3. Disney+ is helpful but not required

Course material is hosted on OWL: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk either by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

**Electronic Devices:** No aids are permitted for the Final exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including laptops, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted unless there is a documented and approved accessibility request.

### **ANTIREQUISITES: Film Studies 2196A/B, if taken in 2016-2017**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation and Attendance:	10% (8% + 2%)
Oral Exam:	15%
Semiotic Analysis:	20% (2 x 1000 words; pair work)
Paired Critical Writing Project:	20% (max 2500 words, pair work)
<u>Final Exam:</u>	<u>35% (TBA)</u>
TOTAL:	100%

#### A. Class Participation and Attendance

All students are expected to (1) complete all reading assignments and (2) participate in class discussions. Being a critical reader and film viewer, manifested in the ability to dialogue with assigned texts and formulate informed questions or opinions, is a skill that this class will try to foster. Remember that ATTENDANCE IS **NOT** PARTICIPATION.

Attendance, or physical presence throughout the entire class time, is mandatory and thus will be regularly checked. If you are not in class, you cannot participate in class discussions. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the

course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs. University policy on absences and accommodations for legitimate reasons will be observed.

Participation refers to meaningful immersion with the course material, demonstrated through thoughtful, consistent, and collegial engagement in class discussions, group activities, office hour consultations, and other instances where critical thought can be observably performed. This is a Film Studies course and it is therefore a reasonable expectation that you verbalize your insights around the films in discussion-based formats. Unless you have a documented condition recognized by your academic or accessibility counselor, I expect your engaged participation in each class.

### B. Oral Exam

The Oral Exam will be a brief dialogue (30 minutes, give or take) between a small group of students and the instructor/TAs on each week's materials. While the format is a roundtable conversation, each student will be marked individually. The topics will vary from week to week, and may come in the form of explaining terms, synthesizing concepts, contextualizing an image, discussing a quote or statement, elaborating on a discussion point, etc. The Oral Exam will take place on time slots that students will sign up for and will be ongoing throughout the term.

### C. Semiotic Analysis

In pairs, students will be asked to analyze clips and/or images related to the assigned films, specifically with regards to visual signifiers and technical film aspects such as mise-en-scene, editing, sound, cinematography, etc.

### D. Paired Critical Writing Project

In pairs, students will work together to write a critical essay that makes a case for a Disney film or films that engages with the themes of representation to be discussed this term (e.g., make a case as to why Film X provides positive or equitable representation of women, contrary to class discussions). The critical essay must build semiotic analyses as support for its arguments. More details to be announced later on.

### E. Final Exam

The final exams comprise identification, short answer, and essay-type questions. Key terms and concepts will be provided in advance to help students prepare for the exams.

Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g. December and April exams).

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

### **ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION AND MISSED COURSEWORK**

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation. The following assessments ALWAYS require supporting documentation:

- Examinations scheduled during official examination periods (e.g., Final Exam, as defined by policy)
- Practical laboratory and performance tests (Defined by policy)\* = **not applicable for this course**

### **FLEXIBILITY STATEMENT**

Formative assessments (Oral Exam, Semiotic Analysis, Critical Writing Project) in this course have built-in flexibility.

For the Oral Exam, if you are unable to attend your scheduled date due to extenuating circumstances, you are allowed to reschedule ONCE with NO penalty. In this case, you do not need to request Academic Consideration; you can email me directly to reschedule. **Each rescheduling request beyond the first will merit a 10% penalty.**

For the Semiotic Analysis and Critical Writing Project, you are allowed to submit up to THREE days / 72 hours with NO penalty. In this case, you do not need to request Academic Consideration; you can email me directly to let me know you will be submitting within the grace period. **Submissions outside the grace period will receive a grade of zero.**

Please note that because the deadlines for these assessments already includes flexibility in the form of one-time rescheduling (Oral Exam) and the three-day grace period (SA, CWP) with no penalty, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

### **GENERAL COURSE GUIDELINES**

Students are expected to be both physically/virtually and mentally present in class; participation is integral to the learning experience. Use of electronic devices in-class should be for academic purposes only.

#### **A. Email**

Email correspondences will be sent often and the OWL site will be updated regularly. **Please use your UWO email account for official inquiries and correspondences, and please allow up to 24 hours for a response (up to 48 hours over the weekend).** **NO ASSIGNMENTS SUBMITTED BY EMAIL WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Standard email etiquette is expected; please address myself and TAs respectfully and by name. I will not respond to emails that use "Hey," or "Hi," in the salutation. ("Hi Christian, ..." is fine, but "Hey, I have a question..." is not.).

**For any emails sent, please use "FILM 2159A 2024 – [your concern]" in the Subject line.**

**NO EMAILS EXPLAINING ABSENCES PLEASE.** **If you are unable to be present in class, you CANNOT receive attendance or participation marks.** If your absence merits reasonable accommodation (for example, for observing religious obligations, representing the University in an official capacity, medical emergencies, compassionate grounds, etc.), please get in touch with your academic counsellor.

#### **B. Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research

purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

### C. Plagiarism, Academic Offenses, Intellectual Property

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of a text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate, and by proper referencing such as footnotes and citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses plagiarism checking software. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com.

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### D. Grade Review / Re-considerations

I strive to be as thorough and transparent as possible in all my marking. Thus, rubrics will always be provided for any assignment. In the event that you are dissatisfied with the mark you receive for any assignment, I am open to providing further feedback and hearing requests for reconsiderations on the **basis of rubrics and academic merit ONLY**. This means reasons such as "I am applying for X program or scholarship", "I worked really hard on this assignment", "I need X mark in this course" are never valid reasons for grade appeals. Any conversation about further feedback DOES NOT constitute automatic grade increases, and in fact may merit a decrease especially if reviewed by a third party (e.g., another professor, a fellow TA).

### E. Accommodations and Accessible Education

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

**Academic Accommodation** is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

## F. Support Services

- OWL Brightspace and Technology Support: Western Technology Services (WTS) 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800
- USC Services: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
- Academic Advising: Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>
- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

## G. Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

## H. Recognition of First Nations Territory

The Department of English and Writing Studies recognizes that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples, and acknowledge the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nations groups of this land and place in Southwestern Ontario.