

Department of English & Writing Studies
Film Studies Program

Film 2159A (650)
Disney Dream Factory
Fall 2025

Instructor: Professor Janelle Blankenship

Online Asynchronous/View films on your own time using links provided in online screening folder
Read posted Screening Intros, Lecture Notes, and Assigned Texts
Visit OWL FORUM Discussion Board Online
Complete and upload assignments



Antirequisites: [Film Studies 2196A/B](#), if taken in 2016-2017.

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*, *Wall-E*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *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 proquest 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 Materials

Required Textbooks (available for purchase at the University Bookstore):

* Janet Wasko *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (2nd Ed., Polity, 2020) [UD]

Paper Copy SKU: 9780745695648 \$32.60 **or**

Ebook SKU: CEB_EBOOKID=9774160 \$26.00

* Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Hass, Laura Sells (Ed.) *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (Indiana University Press: 1995) [MtM]

Paper Copy SKU: 9780253209788 \$28.55 **or**

Ebook SKU: 9780253116161 \$21.99

* Other required readings will be available on our course webpage on OWL

Optional Textbook (available for purchase as Ebook using link below, \$12.99)

Mindy Johnson, *Pens, Pencils and Brushes -* <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/pencils-pens-amp-brushes-a-great-girls-39-guide-to-mindy-johnson-v9781368044189?term=9781368044189>

Methods of Evaluation

- Class Participation - A minimum of 12 thoughtful posts to our WEEKLY FORUM discussion board on OWL. The suggested length for FORUM posts is 6-8 sentences. Please note that students may post FORUM responses at any point during the term. You do not need to email your instructor or TA for an extension to post a FORUM response. If possible, post FORUM responses by Friday, 5pm each week. The final deadline to submit FORUM responses is 11:55pm, **Dec. 8th** [25%]
- Historical newspaper database assignment/Short Essay [**Week 5, due Oct. 9th**] [25%]
- Online Group Presentation [**Week 10, due Nov. 15th**] [20%] Small groups will be assigned by instructor and assignment details provided in an email]
- Creative-Critical Final Project– Many Options!! Topics: Disney Storytelling, Children's Media, Live Action Remakes, Special Effects, Participatory Fan Culture, Fanvids, Fanfiction or Fanart, Disney/Ecology/Nature, Global Disney, Disney+ [**Due Dec. 8th**] [30%]

Please Note: Assignments handed in late without prior approval will be penalized 3% per day. You must request an extension before the due date, and extensions will be given at my discretion.

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the **final project or paper** must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are not eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

For in-person courses, attendance is mandatory in all classes. 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.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western 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/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

FORUM Guidelines/General considerations regarding “netiquette”

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

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 OneClass or 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.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Unless stated otherwise, the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is not unacceptable in this course.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

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 for such checking 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 of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

- Class Participation - [25%]
- Historical newspaper database assignment/Short Essay [**Week 5, due Oct. 9th**] [25%]
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