

FTV 18: Media Parks: The Cinematic and Televisual History of Theme Parks
UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television • Summer Institute 2022

Example Syllabus. *The syllabi posted are general syllabi for students who wish to find out the topics generally covered in these courses.*

Course Description:

In this two-week intensive course, we will explore the history and evolution of the relationship between moving image media (film, television, and video games) and theme parks. Together, we will examine the contexts and shared histories of theme parks and screen media, explore some of the theoretical, industrial, and cultural issues surrounding them, and investigate how these cultural phenomena are shaping one another in today's media landscape. We will consider selected theme park-related texts, including films, television shows, video games, theme park rides, and theme park "lands," from a media studies perspective. Our primary focus will be on local texts from Disneyland, Disney California Adventure, and Universal Studios Hollywood as the source for our case studies, which we will analyze firsthand during our class field trips.

You will be asked to draw on the parks visited during our field trips as sites of original scholarly research and analysis. You will be challenged to practice critical thinking skills during our class discussions and in your written assignments. Through these written assignments, you will be introduced to the fundamental skills of college-level academic writing. By the end of the course, you will have developed and written an original analysis of a theme park space based on first-hand observation.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand the history, nature, and development of theme parks from a media studies perspective.
2. Develop critical media analysis, interpretation, and argumentation skills through guided field trips, screenings, scholarly readings, class discussions, and written assignments.
3. Become familiar with key media studies frameworks, including media industry studies, cultural studies, and genre studies, and how they allow us to connect the experience of watching films and going to theme parks with larger social issues and forces.
4. Practice reading comprehension skills by reading and discussing college-level academic sources.
5. Hone college-level writing skills, including crafting a strong thesis statement, selecting and using appropriate academic sources, organizing your ideas, and structuring your analysis.

Required Texts:

All readings will be provided on the course website. Please read the required readings ***before*** the date for which they are listed and be prepared to share questions and thoughts about the readings in class.

How to Be Successful in this Course (Course Requirements):

- Attend and actively participate in classroom lectures, discussions, activities, field trips, and screenings
- Read the assigned texts before class and be prepared to discuss them

- Complete all written assignments, including journal entries, short response papers, and a long response paper

Grading Breakdown:

Participation:	20%
Journal Entries:	30%
Short Response Papers:	30%
Long Response Paper:	20%

Participation:

Course participation is determined by your *active* participation in class discussions and in-class activities. I encourage you to think critically about course concepts and to engage in open discussion and analysis of our research materials and case studies with your classmates. We want to hear your thoughts and ideas! This means that it is essential to be prepared to express your own ideas and to ask and answer questions about the material, including screenings and assigned readings. I encourage you to take notes during lectures, screenings, and readings on any questions or comments you would like to raise in class discussions.

Field Trips:

During the two weeks of the course, we will embark on three curated visits to Southern California theme parks: Universal Studios Hollywood, Disney California Adventure, and Disneyland. While these excursions will no doubt be fun, they are first and foremost active learning experiences and sites of analysis. Field trips are crucial for this course because the rides and lands we study are fully-embodied, kinetic, multisensory experiences. While we will revisit the rides in class via ride-through videos on YouTube, much of the experience fostered by park attractions and lands simply cannot be replicated on screen.

Our visits will be structured around on-site instructor lectures and guided experiences as well as required visits to select attractions and park lands (please see the list of required attractions/lands for each visit in the calendar section below). These visits will allow us to experience first-hand the case studies we discuss in lecture and section, read about in our readings, and whose film or television counterparts we view in our screenings. The required attractions/lands will also be the springboard for your journal entries, which will in turn tie together with lecture concepts, core readings, and screenings to inform your short response papers. While in the parks, you will also be given time to visit from a list of recommended attractions and lands, one of which will provide the topic for your original analysis in your long response paper. Please see the list at the end of the syllabus for recommended topics from which to choose.

Journal Entries:

During each park visit, you will be assigned specific rides and lands to visit and asked to complete four brief (½-1 page; at least 200 words each) journal entries recording observations of and reflections on your experiences. I will provide you with questions to help guide your responses. (For example: What is the narrative of Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT! and how is the ride's narrative communicated to you, the rider, via visual, auditory, haptic, or other ride elements? Who are you in this story? How do you know? How is your body addressed by the ride?). These entries will help develop skills in active experiencing

and are intended to help you to think critically about your park experiences. They will also prepare you for the kind of analysis you will be asked to develop in your short and long response papers. You will be asked to use the Canvas app to submit your journal entries. It is vital that you take notes while *in* the parks. While these responses are meant to be more informal than your short and long responses, please write in complete sentences. You will be asked to submit these observational notes by 9am the morning after each field trip.

Short Response Papers:

During the course, you will be assigned three brief papers, one for each segment of the course. You will be asked to respond to prompts that will bring your first-hand observations from our site visits and screenings together with concepts from our lectures and readings. These short papers also serve as practice and preparation for the original analysis you will develop in your long papers. Each of the three short response papers should be approximately 1-2 pages (at least 350 words) typed double-spaced. Your papers should clearly and critically respond to the prompt, engage with key course concepts as presented in the readings and lecture, cite specific examples from the parks and screenings to support your analysis, and be written clearly and concisely, with proper spelling and grammar.

Long Response Paper:

For your long response paper, you will be asked to write a 3-4 page (at least 750 words) case study of an attraction or land of your choosing from one of the parks we visit. You must choose a single attraction or land not discussed in lecture from amongst the list of recommended attractions and lands at the end of the syllabus. If you are thinking about an attraction or land that you do not see listed, please approve it with me before the field trip to that park. Your ride/land must relate to moving image media (films, television, video games) in some way. I encourage you to explore the websites of the three parks in advance of our visit to think about what ride/land you would like to write about. It is imperative that you spend time with your chosen text—if you choose a ride, for example, you must ride it at least once—and take notes while you are there to draw from as you write your paper. As with your journal entries, this is an exercise in active observation—of your ride/land and your own experiences—and critical analysis.

In your paper, you should describe your case study and analyze how it functions as a media/park text. I encourage you to look to your short response papers as a model for this analysis. Your analysis should be in support of a strong thesis statement in which you put forth an argument about how your chosen topic. Your argument should address one or more of the following questions: How does this ride/land tell its story? How do you experience this story and how does the design of the space shape that experience? How is your body put in motion or how do you move through this space and how does that affect your experience? How does the space relate to its media text? You should cite specific examples and details and draw from (and cite) at least one course reading and one outside scholarly source to support your analysis. We will work together during class time to develop your thesis statements, discuss appropriate sources and how to find them, and consider how to structure your papers. Your long response paper will be evaluated based on the quality and detail of your argument, observations, and analysis, your engagement with course ideas, clarity of expression, organization, presentation, and proper grammar and spelling.

Late Assignments:

If any assignment is late, one letter grade will be deducted per 24-hour period past the deadline (for example, an A assignment received two days late will receive a C). After three days, late work will not be accepted except in the case of extenuating, documented circumstances. If any situation arises that will affect your attendance, participation, or ability to complete your work on time, please notify me as soon as possible.

UCLA Statement of Academic Integrity and Information on Student Conduct:

With its status as a world-class research institution, it is critical that the University uphold the highest standards of integrity both inside and outside the classroom. As a student and member of the UCLA community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, when accusations of academic dishonesty occur, The Office of the Dean of Students is charged with investigating and adjudicating suspected violations. Academic dishonesty, includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the presentation of another author's words or ideas as if they were your own. If you have any questions about documentation, quotations, and related matters, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor before submitting your work.

Please also refer to the UCLA Rules of Student Conduct at the below website:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Student-Conduct>

Additional Information on Academic Integrity:

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to ask me! UCLA has a number of writing resources, and I am always happy to help or to point you in the right direction. Additionally, if you require clarification on any of the assignments or ideas presented in class, please speak with me so that I can help. In your assignments, always include your own original thoughts and properly cite any and all material from other sources. It is imperative that you pay *very* close attention to your use of research and other materials. For more information on the University's policy on Academic Integrity and Conduct, please refer to your student manual or the Dean of Students' website:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>

University of California Diversity Statement:

Adopted by the Assembly of the Academic Senate May 10, 2006 Endorsed by the President of the University of California June 30, 2006

The diversity of the people of California has been the source of innovative ideas and creative accomplishments throughout the state's history into the present. Diversity – a defining feature of California's past, present, and future – refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more.

Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees. The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all

backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to qualified students from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State.

Diversity should also be integral to the University's achievement of excellence. Diversity can enhance the ability of the University to accomplish its academic mission. Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Ideas, and practices based on those ideas, can be made richer by the process of being born and nurtured in a diverse community. The pluralistic university can model a process of proposing and testing ideas through respectful, civil communication. Educational excellence that truly incorporates diversity thus can promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all to foster innovation and train future leadership.

Therefore, the University of California renews its commitment to the full realization of its historic promise to recognize and nurture merit, talent, and achievement by supporting diversity and equal opportunity in its education, services, and administration, as well as research and creative activity. The University particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.

Disability Statement:

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Course Schedule:

9:00-11:30	Lecture
11:30-1:00	Lunch
1:00-3:30	Screening
3:30-5:30	Discussion

Unit 1: Definitions and Origins of Theme Parks

Note: Bolded case studies will be visited in-person during our site visits

Day 1: Introduction and the Origins of the “Modern Theme Park”

- **Guiding Questions:** This day sets the context for the entire course. We will consider how theme parks came about in the mid-20th century. Questions include: Where did theme parks come from? How do we define theme parks? What is a “theme”? How are theme parks different from “amusement” parks? Why is Disneyland considered the first theme park?
- **Case studies:** early amusement parks, **Disneyland**, Universal Studios backlot tours, **Universal Studio Tour**
- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** King, Margaret J. “The Theme Park: Aspects of Experience in a Four-Dimensional Landscape.” *Material Culture* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 1-15.
- **Screening:** *Disneyland* Episode 1, “The Disneyland Story” (1954); Clip from *The Reluctant Dragon* (1941)

Day 2: Industrial Synergy, Branding, and the “Inhabitable Text” of the Park

- **Guiding Questions:** Why was Disneyland developed? How did it emerge out of the film and television industries? What is branding? How was branding used in Disneyland’s early days? What is industrial synergy? How did the Universal Studios Hollywood park come about?
- **Case Studies:** **Disneyland**, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Disneyland* television series, *Davy Crockett*, *Modern Family* Season 3, Episode 22, “Disneyland” (2012), Universal Studios backlot tours, **Universal Studio Tour**
- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** Anderson, Christopher. “Disneyland,” in *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties*, 133-155. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
 - **Read:** Blackwood, Gemma. “Dream Factory Tours: The Universal Pictures Movie Tour Attraction in the 1960s.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 38, no. 3 (2018): 516-535.
- **Screenings:** “Dateline: Disneyland” live ABC broadcast (1955); *Modern Family* Season 3, Episode 22, “Disneyland” (2012)

Day 3: Field Trip to Universal Studios Hollywood

- **Journal Responses:**
 - Studio Tour (ride)
 - Wizarding World of Harry Potter (land)
 - Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey (ride)
 - Jurassic World: The Ride (ride)

- **Required Attractions and Lands**
 - Studio Tour
 - The Wizarding World of Harry Potter (Hogsmeade)
 - Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey
 - Ollivander's Wand Show
 - Jurassic World: The Ride

Day 4: Media, Theme Park Geography, and Ideology

- **Guiding Questions:** How are theme parks organized? What is a backlot? What is a genre? How do park spaces relate to backlots? How do park spaces relate to film genres? Are these spaces ideological? Do these different organizational strategies shape different experiences?
- **Case Studies: Main Street, U.S.A., Tomorrowland, Tomorrowland, Frontierland, Davy Crockett, Knott's Berry Farm, Universal Studio Tour**
- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** Neuman, Robert. "Disneyland's Main Street, U.S.A., and Its Sources in Hollywood, U.S.A." In *Disneyland and Culture: Essays on the Parks and Their Influence*, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West, 37-58. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011.
- **Screening:** *Tomorrowland* (2015)
- **Due by 9am: Journal Entries from Field Trip 1**

Unit 2: Experiencing Media Park Space: Adaptation and Haptic Space

Day 5: Cinematic Narratives in Built Space

- **Guiding Questions:** What is a ride? What are some forms of rides? What is a narrative? What is adaptation? How are films and television shows "built" in theme parks? What happens to a film story when it is translated into a ride? How are films like rides? How are they different? How do we figure into the story?
- **Case Studies:** Snow White's Enchanted Wish, **Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey**, The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea Adventure, **Jurassic World: The Ride**
- **Homework:**
 - Freitag, Florian. "Movies, Rides, Immersion." In *A Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces*, edited by Scott A. Lukas, 156-165. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon ETC Press, 2016.
 - Rahn, Suzanne. "The Dark Ride of Snow White: Narrative Strategies at Disneyland." In *Disneyland and Culture: Essays on the Parks and Their Influence*, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West, 87-100. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011.
- **Screening:** *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007)
- **Due: Short Response 1**

Day 6: Field Trip to Disneyland and Disney California Adventure

- **Journal Responses:**
 - Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT! (ride)
 - Cars Land (land) and Radiator Springs Racers (ride)
 - Pirates of the Caribbean (ride)

- Main Street, U.S.A. (land)
- **9am – 12pm: Disneyland**
 - **Required Attractions and Lands**
 - Tomorrowland
 - Main Street, U.S.A.
 - Pirates of the Caribbean
 - Star Tours: The Adventures Continue
- **1pm – 8pm: Disney California Adventure**
 - **Required Attractions and Lands**
 - Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT!
 - Radiator Springs Racers
 - Cars Land
 - **Free Time (use this time to experience recommended attractions/lands)**

Day 7: From Space to Screen: Remediation and Adapting Park Space

- **Guiding Questions:** How are park spaces adapted for the screen? What happens when a physical space becomes a movie? How do these films position the spectator? How do they create narratives from built space?
- **Case Studies: Pirates of the Caribbean (ride),** *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise (2003-2017), *The Haunted Mansion* (2003), *Tower of Terror* (1997), *Jungle Cruise* (2021)
- **Homework:**
 - Schweizer, Bobby and Celia Pearce. “Remediation on the High Seas: A Pirates of the Caribbean Odyssey.” In *A Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces*, edited by Scott A. Lukas, 95-106. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon ETC Press, 2016.
- **Screening:** *Pirates of the Caribbean and the Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003)
- **Due by 9am: Journal Entries from Field Trip 2**

Day 8: Embodiment and Kinetic Narratives

- **Guiding Questions:** How do we experience rides? How do we experience their stories? From whose perspective are these stories told? How do these spaces figure our bodies into the narrative? How is this different from watching a screen?
- **Case Studies: Peter Pan’s Flight, Star Tours, Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT!**
- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** Ndalianis, Angela and Jessica Balanzategui. “‘Being Inside the Movie’: 1990s Theme Park Ride Films and Immersive Film Experiences.” *The Velvet Light Trap* 84 (Fall 2019): pp. 18-33.
- **Screening:** *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014)

Unit 3: The Future of Media Parks: Interactivity, Immersion, and Worldbuilding

Day 9: Interactivity and the “Gamification” of Park Space

- **Guiding Questions:** How are rides like games, and what does that mean? How do we interact with rides? Is being in the park or on a ride like playing a game?
- **Case Studies: WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure,** Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters, Kinect: Disneyland Adventures (Xbox 360), **Play Disney Parks app**

- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** Darley, Andrew. “Games and Rides” In *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres*, 147-167. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- **Screening:** Hands-on in-class game lab: *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* (Xbox 360); *Tales from Galaxy’s Edge* (Oculus Quest VR)
- **Due: Short Response 2**

Day 10: Field Trip to Disneyland

- **Journal Responses:**
 - Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge (land)
 - Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (ride)
 - Millennium Falcon: Smuggler’s Run (ride)
 - Avengers Campus
- **9am – 12pm: Disney California Adventure**
 - **Required Attractions and Lands**
 - WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure (possible substitute: Toy Story Midway Mania!)
 - Avengers Campus
- **1pm – 8pm: Disneyland**
 - **Required Attractions and Lands**
 - Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance
 - Millennium Falcon: Smuggler’s Run
 - Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge (and Play Disney Parks App)
 - **Free Time (use this time to experience recommended attractions/lands)**

Day 11: Transmedia Storytelling and Immersive Cinematic Environments in Park “Lands”

- **Guiding Questions:** What is a theme park “land”? How do we understand lands in relation to rides, theme parks, and the future of media park spaces?
- **Case Studies: Cars Land, Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge, Avengers Campus**
- **Homework:**
 - **Read:** Williams, Rebecca. “From Star Tours to Galaxy’s Edge: Immersion, Transmediality, and ‘Haptic Fandom’ in Disney’s Theme Parks.” In *Disney’s Star Wars: Forces of Production, Promotion, and Reception*, edited by William Proctor and Richard McCulloch, 136-149. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019.
 - **Read:** Wolf, Mark J.P. “Beyond Immersion: Absorption, Saturation, and Overflow in the Building of Imaginary Worlds.” In *World Building*, edited by Marta Boni, 204-214. Amsterdam University Press, 2017.
- **Screening:** *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015)
- **Due by 9am: Journal Entries from Field Trip 3**

Day 12: Conclusions: Worldbuilding and The Future of Media Park Spaces

- **Guiding Questions:** How have theme parks changed since the mid-1950s? How have they stayed the same? How have our experiences changed? Where are they headed today? How might they change in the future?
- **Case Studies: Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge, Rise of the Resistance, Millennium Falcon: Smuggler’s Run, Avengers Campus, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter**

- **Homework: Long Response Paper Due**
- **Screening:** *The Imagineering Story* Episode 6, “To Infinity and Beyond” (2019)
- **Due: Short Response 3**

Other Recommended Attractions and Lands (Possible Topics for Long Papers):

Universal Studios Hollywood

- The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash
- WaterWorld
- Revenge of the Mummy: The Ride
- Despicable Me Minion Mayhem
- The Simpsons Ride
- Transformers: The Ride 3D
- Kung Fu Panda: The Emperor's Quest

Disneyland

- Indiana Jones Adventure
- Jungle Cruise
- Haunted Mansion
- Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride
- Snow White’s Enchanted Wish
- Peter Pan’s Flight
- Alice in Wonderland
- Pinocchio’s Daring Journey
- Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters
- Roger Rabbit’s Car Toon Spin
- The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh
- Dumbo the Flying Elephant
- Casey Jr. Circus Train

Disney California Adventure

- Monsters, Inc. Mike & Sulley to the Rescue!
- Toy Story Midway Mania!
- The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure
- Inside Out Emotional Whirlwind
- Luigi’s Rollicking Roadsters
- The Incredicoaster
- Mater’s Junkyard Jamboree
- Goofy’s Sky School