# FTV 18: Media Parks: The Cinematic and Televisual History of Theme Parks UCLA Film and Television Summer Institute

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

## **Course Description:**

In this three-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, Knott's Berry Farm, and Universal Studios Hollywood as the source for our case studies, which we will analyze firsthand during our class site visits.

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.

# **COVID-19 Safety Policies**

For summer 2023, indoor masking is not required but is strongly recommended. Please see UCLA's website for more information on COVID policies and protocol, including where you can find masks on campus: <u>https://covid-19.ucla.edu</u>. If you develop any COVID-19 symptoms during your time in the program, please notify the program staff.

Attendance: Due to the intensive nature of the program, a maximum of one program absence is permitted.

#### **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 assignments, including journal entries, discussion responses, short response papers, a presentation, and a long response paper.
- Be on time and pay attention. Please do not distract your classmates.
- Be present! Put phones and other non-classroom-related devices on silent and leave them in your bag or pocket.

#### **Grading Breakdown:**

Participation:	20%
Reading Discussion Responses:	10%
Journal Entries:	20%
Short Response Papers:	20%
Presentation:	10%
Long Response Paper:	20%

#### **Participation and Course Conduct:**

Course participation is determined by your engagement and active participation in all class discussions and in-class and on-site 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 ideas you would like to raise in class discussions.

Your conduct outside of class and in the dormitories may impact your participation grade for the UCLA Film and Television Summer Institute. As UCLA students, you are expected to adhere to the UCLA Student Code of Conduct, the UCLA Summer Sessions Participation Agreement, and the UCLA Film and Television Summer Institute Code of Conduct. Failure to be punctual or adhere to any of the policies in those agreements including treating staff, TAs, faculty, and fellow students with the upmost respect, may negatively affect your participation grade as determined by Residential Program Staff, Production Coordinators, Teaching Assistants, and/or Faculty.

#### Field Trips:

During the three weeks of the course, we will embark on curated visits to four Southern California theme parks: Knott's Berry Farm, Universal Studios Hollywood, Disney California Adventure, and Disneyland. We will also attend a studio tour. While these excursions will no doubt be fun, they are first and foremost active learning experiences and sites of critical analysis. Field trips are crucial for this course because the rides and lands we study are full-body, kinetic, and multisensory experiences. While we may revisit the rides in class via photos or ride-through videos on YouTube, much of the experience fostered by park attractions and lands simply cannot be replicated on screen.

Our site visits will be structured around on-site 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 provide us with first-hand experiences of the case studies we discuss in lectures and discussions, 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 inform your short response papers, along with lecture concepts, core readings, and screenings. While in the parks, your group will also be given time to visit the park text you will analyze in your presentation and long response paper.

#### **Discussion Responses:**

Three times during the course, you will be asked to respond to discussion topics on the Canvas course website. You are expected to post **one** original post and **two** responses to classmates' posts. Your original posts should respond to the prompt with meaningful discussion and/or thought-provoking questions to your classmates. Your responses to your classmates should be thoughtful and respectful. While you should respond to the prompts, these posts need not be overly lengthy—the quality of your thoughts is most important.

#### **Journal Entries:**

After each site visit, you will complete four brief (at least 200 words each) journal entries recording observations of and reflections on your experiences. While they need not be long, your responses should include specific details, rather than generalizations. I will provide you with prompts to help guide your responses. These entries are intended to help develop skills in active experiencing and 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 Canvas to submit your journal entries. It is important that you take notes and photos 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 the day after each field trip.

#### Short Response Papers (3 total):

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 your three short response papers should be approximately at least 400 words, typed and 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.

#### **Presentations:**

During the final week of the course, we will hold a class mini-conference where you will make a brief (five to ten minute) presentation on your final paper. During your presentation, you will give a synopsis of the analysis you are conducting, demonstrating your understanding of how core course concepts apply to your media parks text or texts. This conference provides an opportunity for you to ask questions, for your classmates to provide peer feedback, and for you to share the interesting work you've been doing!

#### Long Response Paper:

For your final long response paper, you will each write a case study of at least 800 words of an attraction, pair of attractions, and/or land from one of the parks we visit. You will choose a topic and submit a topic proposal at the beginning of the course. Your case study will relate to moving image media (films, television, video games) in some way. I encourage you to explore park websites <u>in advance of our visits</u> to familiarize yourself with your selected topic. It is imperative that you spend time with your chosen text—if you choose a ride, for example, you must ride it <u>at least once</u> and should take notes while you are there to draw from as you write your paper. If you bring a camera/phone to the parks you are also encouraged to take photos of details of your case study to use in your presentation and to illustrate 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.e., how it works as a spatial experience and how it relates to its associated media text (film, etc.). In doing this, you should demonstrate an understanding of course concepts. 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 may 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 <u>one course reading</u> and <u>one appropriate outside source</u> 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, analysis, 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. Please note that AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, are not allowed during any stage of work in this class. Our goal is to hone your own thinking and writing skills. If you are struggling with any part of the class, please see me before turning to academic dishonesty! For additional 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 as soon as possible as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

#### **Unit 1: Definitions and Origins of Theme Parks**

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

## Day 1/Monday, June 26

#### 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-20<sup>th</sup> 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, The World-Famous 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: Clip from *The Reluctant Dragon* (1941); Clip from *Disneyland* Episode 1, "The Disneyland Story" (1954); "Dateline: Disneyland" live ABC broadcast (1955)

## Day 2/Tuesday, June 27

#### Industrial Synergy, Branding, and the "Inhabitable Text"

- **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 Universal Studios Hollywood come about?
- Case Studies: Disneyland, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Disneyland television series, Davy Crockett, Modern Family, The World-Famous 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: *Modern Family* Season 3, Episode 22, "Disneyland" (2012); *Jurassic World* (2015)
- **Due:** Discussion responses

# Day 3/Wednesday, June 28

#### 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:** Wills, John. "Nostalgia for the Old West in Knott's Berry Farm, Orange County, California." *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal 19*, no. 4 (2022): 341-358.

- **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: Final paper topic
- Pre-college Symposium in James Bridges Theater

# Day 4/Thursday, June 29

# Field Trip to Knott's Berry Farm

- Journal Responses:
  - Ghost Town (Old Schoolhouse, Western Trails Museum, Pan for Gold [can just observe, since there is an additional charge to participate], Livery Stable, Ghost Town Blacksmith, Butterfield Stagecoach)
  - Calico Mine Ride
  - Calico Railroad-be sure to depart from Calico Square depot to see the Ghost Town bandits
  - One roller coaster of your choosing
    - More intense options: GhostRider, HangTime, Silver Bullet, Xcelerator
    - Less intense options: Jaguar!, Pony Express, Sierra Sidewinder

# • Required Attractions and Lands:

- Ghost Town (Old Schoolhouse, Western Trails Museum, Pan for Gold [can just observe, since there is an additional charge to participate], Livery Stable, Ghost Town Blacksmith, Calico Railroad)
- Calico Mine Ride
- Camp Snoopy
- One roller coaster of your choosing
  - More intense options: GhostRider, HangTime, Silver Bullet, Xcelerator
  - Less intense options: Jaguar!, Pony Express, Sierra Sidewinder

# Day 5/Friday, June 30

Due: Knott's journal responses

# Unit 2: Experiencing Media Park Space: Adaptation and Haptic Space in Park Rides

# Day 6/Saturday, July 1

# Cinematic Narratives in Built Space: Embodiment and Kinetic Narratives in Park Rides

- **Guiding Questions:** What is a ride? What are some forms of rides? How do we experience rides? How do we experience their stories? From whose perspective are these stories told? 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 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: Snow White's Enchanted Wish, Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea Adventure, Jurassic World: The Ride, Indiana Jones

# Adventure, Star Tours, Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT!, Radiator Springs Racers

- Homework:
  - **Read:** 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.
  - **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): 18-33.
  - **Read:** 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 Prisoner of Azkaban (2004); Raiders of the Lost Ark (clip)

#### Day 7/Sunday, July 2 Studio Tour

#### Day 8/Monday, July 3

#### 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:
  - **Read:** 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:** Short response paper #1

#### Day 9/Tuesday, July 4

**Due:** Studio Tour journal responses

#### Day 10/Wednesday, July 5

#### 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:
  - The Wizarding World of Harry Potter (Hogsmeade)
  - Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey
  - Ollivander's Wand Show (recommended)

- The World-Famous Studio Tour
- Jurassic World: The Ride
- Pre-college Symposium in James Bridges Theater

# Day 11/Thursday, July 6

Due: Universal Studios journal responses

## Unit 3: Interactivity, Immersion, and Worldbuilding in Park Lands

## Day 12/Friday, July 7

# Transmedia Storytelling and Immersive Cinematic Environments in Park "Lands"

- **Guiding Questions:** What is a theme park "land"? How are lands different from individual rides? What is involved in the experience of a land? How do we spend time in them? Navigate them? Do they have narratives? How are these narratives communicated? How do we understand lands in relation to rides, theme parks, and the future of media park spaces?
- Case Studies: Wizarding World of Harry Potter, 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:** Discussion responses

# Day 13/Saturday, July 8

**Due:** Short response paper #2

# Day 14/Sunday, July 9

No assignments due, but I encourage you to use this time to research and prepare for your presentations and final long response paper

# Day 15/Monday, July 10

#### Field Trip to Disneyland and Disney California Adventure

# • Journal Responses:

- Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway (ride)
- Cars Land (land) and Radiator Springs Racers (ride)
- Pirates of the Caribbean (ride)
- Indiana Jones Adventure (ride)
- Disneyland
  - Required Attractions and Lands
    - Main Street, U.S.A.
    - Tomorrowland

- Star Tours: The Adventures Continue
- Indiana Jones Adventure
- Pirates of the Caribbean
- Disney California Adventure
  - Required Attractions and Lands
    - Radiator Springs Racers (single rider recommended)
    - Cars Land

**Day 16/Tuesday, July 11 Due:** Disneyland/DCA journal responses

#### Day 17/Wednesday, July 12

## Interactivity, Convergence, Worldbuilding, and The Future of Media Park Spaces

- **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? 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: WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure, Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters, Kinect: Disneyland Adventures (Xbox 360), Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run, Play Disney Parks app, Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, Rise of the Resistance, Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run, Avengers Campus, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter
- 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.
- Student Presentation Mini-Conference
- **Due:** Discussion responses
- Pre-college Symposium in James Bridges Theater

#### Day 18/Thursday, July 13

#### Field Trip to Disney California Adventure and Disneyland

- Journal Responses:
  - Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge (land)
  - Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (ride)
  - Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run (ride)
  - WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure (possible substitute: Toy Story Midway Mania!)
- Disney California Adventure
  - Required Attractions and Lands
    - WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure (possible substitute: Toy Story Midway Mania!) (single rider option)
    - Avengers Campus
- Disneyland
  - Required Attractions and Lands
    - Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance
    - Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run (has single rider option)
    - Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge (and Play Disney Parks App)

# • Free Time (use this time to experience recommended attractions/lands)

Day 19/Friday, July 14 Due: Disneyland/DCA journal responses

Day 20/Saturday, July 15 Due: Short paper #3

## Long Response Paper Due 11:59pm PST Tuesday, July 18th