

FYS 055: Deconstructing Disney
Mondays and Fridays, 2:30-4:20
Fall 2021

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Office Hours, Rice 314:
Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30pm
Friday, 10:30am-12pm

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webneel.com

“[W]hether 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.”

--Benjamin Barber, *New York Times*, 1995

The Disney Corporation is one of the most powerful media and entertainment conglomerations in the world and one of the most recognizable corporations on the planet. Its products have had a profound impact on American—and increasingly global—culture. Disney’s films, cartoons, and theme parks have shaped Americans’ perceptions of race, nation, gender, sexuality, and class for over a century; indeed, some scholars believe Disney has been central to the creation of what we might call America’s “brand,” or the sense of an American way of life. Today, the reach of the Disney Corporation is enormous: twelve theme parks in the United States, Europe, and Asia; a film empire; a television network; cruise lines; stores; and a new streaming service that has rapidly been acquiring content produced by other studios. Disney’s influence is so ubiquitous that the Oxford English Dictionary includes the verb, “to disnify,” which it defines as “to alter in a way considered characteristic of Disney films, cartoons, or theme parks, to romanticize, sanitize, or simplify.”

In this First Year Seminar, we will explore the topic of Disney—its history, its film canon, its theme parks—as we work on the skills of critical analysis, visual literacy, cultural critique, writing,

argumentation, and collaborative research. We will draw on historical, political, racial, feminist, and cultural analysis to understand the messages, evolution, and influence of Disney cultural products, as well as to explore how those products have shaped our own perceptions and understanding of the world, whether consciously or not. Along the way, we'll have a lot of fun watching cartoons and movies, engaging in spirited discussions, and considering what actually makes something fun. Most screenings will take place during class time; occasionally, you will be expected to screen material outside of class.

As a First Year Seminar, this course will introduce students to some of the most important skills demanded by college-level study, including participating in seminar discussions, critical thinking and reading, analytical writing, doing research, and working collaboratively. Deconstructing Disney also counts as a Writing Intensive course, which means that there will be many short writing assignments and that you will be doing drafts, revising papers, and writing for different audiences. There will be many opportunities to work with me and our Course Writing Associate, Meredith Warden, to discuss paper ideas, go over drafts, and consult on course assignments.

*Please note, I have chosen to have our class meet virtually for our four last sessions after the holiday break. If, however, the class expresses a near unanimous preference to meet in person, I am happy to switch to in-person meetings for our last sessions. The link for our virtual class meeting site is: <https://oberlin.zoom.us/j/82158658049>

Required Texts

The following books are available at the college bookstore and are on reserve at Mudd:

Cher Krause Knight, Power and Paradise in Walt Disney's World (Univ. Press of Florida, 2014)

Jason Sperb, Disney's Most Notorious Film: Race, Convergence, and the Hidden Histories of *Song of the South* (University of Texas Press, 2012)

Janet Wasko, Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy, 2nd ed. (Polity Press, 2020)

All other readings are available as links through the online syllabus on the class website at <https://sites.google.com/oberlin.edu/deconstructing-disney/home>. Please bookmark the class website. You may want to print assigned readings and bring them with you to class.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the history of the Disney corporation and its cultural and economic power.
- Apply a range of critical methods to the study of films and other cultural texts.
- Become conversant in major debates about the production and reception of Disney products.
- Gain facility reading scholarly texts critically and efficiently, identifying a text's key argument, approach, and use of evidence; and evaluating the merits of scholarly arguments.
- Improve writing skills, understand the ways in which audience and genre affects writing styles, and become adept at reviewing and revising written works.
- Communicate ideas orally and feel comfortable engaging in vigorous discussions with peers.
- Collaborate effectively with a group on a research presentation.

Assignments

Your grade for FYS 055 will be based on attendance and participation, an in-class viewing journal, two longer papers, a group research presentation, and several short written, oral or creative assignments. Detailed information about each assignment can be found on the class website or at the end of this printed syllabus.

1) Regular Attendance and Engaged Participation:	15%
2) Viewing Journal	15%
3) Two short writing and speaking exercises	5%
3) Scaffolded Film Analysis and Revisions	20%
4) Theme Park Academic Analysis Essay and Revision	20%
5) Group Research Presentation	15%
6) Disney Product/Revision Pitch	10%

You must successfully complete every assignment and revision in order to pass the class. In addition, assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. If an assignment is due at the beginning of class, it must be turned in at the start of class to count as on time. Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade every 24 hours turned in after the deadline (i.e., a B paper would become a B- paper). If you are having trouble getting something done on time, ask for an extension. I will grant extensions for illnesses, family emergencies, or other unexpected events, but you must email to ask for an extension *before* the paper is due. I won't give an extension just because you have another paper due on the same day, so please plan ahead.

Expectations

The Classroom Environment: Talking about Disney should be fun, but we will also be discussing issues that can be challenging, such as race, gender, sexuality, and power. All of us share a responsibility to make this an enriching and safe space for making arguments, expressing our views, disagreeing with others' ideas, and raising questions. "Safe" is not the same as comfortable; there may be moments of discomfort in discussion, but students should treat their classmates with patience and respect. Respecting our class space also means coming to class on time and being attentive while in class.



Work Expectations: College workloads can be overwhelming. As a general rule of thumb, you should plan on spending 2 to 3 hours preparing outside class for every hour of class time. So that means for a class like this, you should assume that most weeks, you should plan on spending at least six, and as many as ten, hours outside of class doing the reading and working on assignments. I

have indicated the number of assigned pages of reading for each class session as an aid for you as you plan your time. Every student has to discover their own most effective work schedule, but I know lots of good tips and tricks that might help if you are feeling anxious about your workload. Please come talk to me if you need some strategies for managing your coursework.

Academic Honesty: Oberlin has an honor code, which is the agreement you make to do your work with academic integrity. All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code. You must write and sign the honor code on all the written work you hand in for this class. The Honor Code reads: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment." I expect you to do your own work for the class and to give credit for all source materials that you use in your work. If you are unclear about how to credit a source or what exactly counts as plagiarism (passing off someone else's ideas or writings as your own), please come talk to me. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me.

Educational Access: I am committed to creating inclusive learning environments and to designing a course in which all students can learn. If any aspects of the instruction or design of the course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation, please let me know. If you receive any specific accommodations, please provide documentation from the Disability Service Office.

Extra Help: My door is open if you seek extra help or just want to talk! You can make an appointment to meet with me (in person or virtually) during my regularly scheduled office hours (see online syllabus for the link). The best way to reach me about any other issue is by email. I may not respond immediately, but I will always answer emails within 24 hours.

Class Meeting Schedule

October 4: Introduction: Welcome to liberal arts learning!

Tim Burke, "[Staying Afloat: Some Scattered Suggestions on Reading in College](#)"

Rachel Tustin, "[How to Get All Your College Course Reading Done Efficiently](#)," study.com, 2018.

Sean Decatur, "[The Saudade of 'September'](#)," 2018

October 8: The Challenge of Analyzing Disney: Too Little, Too Much, or Just Right? (~25 pages)
[Disney autobiography Due]

Read before class:

Jason Sperb, "How (Not) To Teach Disney," *Journal of Film and Video* 70:1 (Spring 2018): 47-60

Greil Marcus, "Forty Years of Overstatement: Criticism and the Disney Theme Parks" in Karal Ann Marling, ed., [Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance](#) (1998)

Watch in class: Collection of early Disney shorts

Part I: Disney—The Corporation

October 11: Disney—The Early Years (48 pages)

Read before class:

Steven Watts, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century," *Journal of American History* 82: 1 (June 1995): 84-110.

Janet Wasko, "Disney History(ies)" in Understanding Disney, 2nd ed., pp. 9-29

Watch in class: Snow White

October 13: First part of film paper due by midnight

October 15: Discussion – *Snow White* and the Disney Take on Fairy Tales (42 pages)

Frank Nugent, "One Touch of Disney: And New York Surrenders to the Genial Warmth of his 'Snow White' Fantasy," *New York Times*, January 23, 1938, p. 157.

Elizabeth Randall Upton, "Music and the Aura of Reality in Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*" in The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen, pp. 17-30.

M. Thomas Inge, "Walt Disney's *Snow White*: Art, Adaptation, and Ideology," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 132-142.

Tracy Mollett, "'With a Smile and a Song...' Walt Disney and the Birth of the American Fairy Tale," Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy Tales 27:1 (2013): 109-124.

October 18: The Disney Business Formula (~30 pages)

Read before class:

Susan Ohmer, "Laughter by Numbers: The Science of Comedy at the Walt Disney Studios" in Daniel Goldmark and Charlie Keil, ed., Funny Pictures: Animation and Comedy in Studio-Era Hollywood (2011), 109-123.

Alan Bryman, "The Disneyization of Society," *The Sociological Review* (1999), read 29-41.

Gregory Ciotti, "How Disney Creates Magical Experiences (and a 70% Return Rate)," helpscout.com, <https://www.helpscout.com/blog/disney-customer-experience/>

In Class: Talk about ideas for group projects

October 20: Second part of film paper due by midnight

October 22: The Disney Corporate Empire (~60 pages)

Janet Wasko, Understanding Disney, pp. 31-70, 94-104.

“How Mickey Mouse Evades The Public Domain,” <https://priceconomics.com/how-mickey-mouse-evades-the-public-domain/>

Watch in class: Mickey Mouse in Haiti (28 minutes)

Part II: Disney—The Movies

October 25: Film Analysis—A Brief Introduction (29 pages)

Louise Krasniewicz, “Round Up the Usual Suspects: Anthropology Goes to the Movies,” *Expedition* 48:1 (2006): 8-14.

Janet Wasko, Understanding Disney, pp. 119-140.

Watch in class: *Song of the South*

October 27: Third part of film paper due by midnight

October 29: Disney and Race I: Discussion of *Song of the South* (68 pages)

Read before class:

Jason Sperb, *Disney’s Most Notorious Film*, pp. 1-18; 37-85

Watch in class: “Top Ten Insanely Racist Moments in Disney Movies that You Totally Forgot About” [YouTube]; start watching *The Princess and the Frog*

November 1: Disney and Race II (72 pages)

Read before class:

Jason Sperb, Disney’s Most Notorious Film, Chapters 3&4, pp. 86-157

Watch in class: finish *The Princess and the Frog*

November 3: Fourth part of film paper due by midnight

November 5: Discussion—*Princess and the Frog* (~38 pages)

Neal Lester, “Disney’s *The Princess and the Frog*: The Pride, The Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First,” *Journal of American Culture* 33:4 (December 2010): 294-308

Jessica Baker Kee and Alphonso Walter Grant, “Disney’s (Post?)-Racial Gaze: Film, Pedagogy, and the Construction of Racial Identities,” in *Teaching with Disney* (2016): 67-79.

Lauren Dundes and Madeleine Streiff, “Reel Royal Diversity? The Glass Ceiling in Disney’s *Mulan* and *Princess and the Frog*,” *Societies*, December 2016. [can skim *Mulan* section]

Watch in Class: The Little Mermaid (first half)

November 8: Library Visit

Librarian Elizabeth Sullivan will visit our class to talk about doing research at the library.

Watch in Class: The Little Mermaid (second half)

November 10: First full draft of film paper due by midnight

November 12: Disney, Gender, and Feminism (45 pages)

Read Before Class:

Laura Sells, “Where do the Mermaids Stand? Voice and Body in *The Little Mermaid*” in Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, ed., *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, pp. 175-191.

Cole Reilly, “An Encouraging Evolution Among the Disney Princesses? A Critical Feminist Analysis,” *Counterpoints* (2016): 51-63.

Dominic Symonds, “‘We’re All in this Together’: Being Girls and Boys in *High School Musical*” in *The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen*, pp. 169-184.

Malcolm Gladwell, [“Little Mermaid Part 3: Honestly Ever After,”](#) Revisionist History Podcast (37 minutes)

November 15: Disney and Self/Body Image (~28 pages)

Read before class:

Sara Leo, "Online Fan Activism and the Disruption of Disney's Problematic Body Pedagogies," *Counterpoints* (2016): 193-205.

Dorothy Hurley, "Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess," *The Journal of Negro Education* 74: 3 (Summer 2005): 221-232.

Oona Goodin-Smith, "Study: What Disney Princesses aren't saying (hint: it's more than you think)," *USA Today*, February 1, 2016.

"We Got Photoshopped to look like Disney Princesses and this is what happened," *Buzzfeed*, April 27, 2015.

"Disney Princesses with Realistic Waistlines Look Utterly Fabulous," *Buzzfeed*, October 30, 2014.

Watch in class: Melissa May, "Dear Ursula" (YouTube)

November 17: Revision of film paper due by midnight

November 19: Queering Disney (74 pages)

Read before class:

Amanda Putnam, "Mean Ladies: Transgendered Villains in Disney Films" in Johnson Cheu, ed., *Diversity in Disney Films*, 147-162.

Sean Griffin, *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens* (2000), pp. 48-89, 133-138, 143-152.

Watch in class: Scenes from "Aladdin"

Part III: Disney—The Parks

November 29: Disney's Parks—Utopia or Dystopia? (73 pages)

Janet Wasko, "Analyzing Disney Worlds" in *Understanding Disney*, pp. 175-188.

Cher Krause Knight, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 3, "Swampland: Walt Disney Builds Paradise" in *Power and Paradise*, pp. 1-24; 44-69.

Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock, *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, pp. 35-42.

Watch in class: excerpts of *Disneyland Video History* [YouTube]; selections of videos of Banksy's "Dismaland" (2015)

December 3: Disney Parks II: The Future According to Disney (39 pages)

Read/Watch Before Class:

“Carousel of Progress” Disney attraction, Youtube Video

Cher Krause Knight, Power and Paradise, pp. 102-129

Alexander Wilson, “The Betrayal of the Future: Walt Disney’s EPCOT Center” in Eric Smoodin, ed., Disney Discourse, 118-128.

Watch in class: selections from *Moana*

December 6: Disney Parks III: Disney’s Global Perspective (~45 pages)

Read/Watch Before Class:

Watch **whole** video of “It’s a Small World” Ride, 2012 [YouTube]

Katherine Baber and James Spickard, “Crafting Culture: ‘Tradition,’ Art and Music in Disney’s ‘It’s a Small World,’” *Journal of Popular Culture* 48:2 (2015): 225-238.

Cher Krause Knight, Power and Paradise, pp. 129-138.

Scott Shaffer, “Disney and the Imagineering of Histories,” *Postmodern Culture* 6:3 (May 1996).

Doug Herman, “How the Story of ‘Moana’ and Maui Holds Up Against Cultural Truths,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2, 2016.

December 10: The Disney Parks IV: Disney, History, and American Identity (~36 pages)

Read before class:

Mike Wallace, “Mickey Mouse History: Portraying the Past at Disney World,” pp. 134-138.

Bethanee Bemis, “Mirror, Mirror for Us All: Disney Theme Parks and the Collective Memory of the American National Narrative,” *The Public Historian* 42:1 (February 2020): 54-79.

Drew Taylor, “A Deep Dive into the Bloody Battle for Disney’s America, the theme park that never was,” *Collider*, July 3, 2020.

Watch in class: The Hall of Presidents, entire show, 2021 [YouTube]

December 13: Disney as Religion/Disney Fan(atic) Culture (35 pages)

Read before class:

Cher Krause Knight, Chapter 2, "Keeping the Faith: Disney World as a Pilgrimage Center" in Power and Paradise, p. 24-43.

David Giles, "The Magic of the Magic Kingdom: Folklore and Fan Culture in Disneyland," MA Thesis, University of Utah, 2017, pp. 1-5, 19-28.

Watch in class:

"The Church of Disney" [Youtube]

"Inside the Magical Home of Singapore's Biggest Disney Fan" [Youtube]

December 17: Disney and American Democracy (38 pages)

Read before class:

Elizabeth Butterfield, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Disney: Marx and Marcuse at Disney World" in Philosophy and Disney, 247-258

Adelaide H. Villamoare and Peter G. Stillman, "Pleasure and Politics in Disney's Utopia," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 32:1 (2002): 81-89, 104

Henry Giroux, "Conclusion" in The Mouse that Roared, pp. 205-220.

December 20: Pitch Party/First draft of Theme Park Academic Essay Due

In class:

2-minute student pitches for a film to watch together on January 3

Peer Review Writing Exercise

January 3: Film Viewing/Analysis -- Student Choice (*Zoom session*)

January 7: Group Presentations (*Zoom session*)

January 10: Group Presentations (*Zoom session*)

January 12 by midnight: Revised Theme Park Academic Essay Due (upload to blackboard)

January 14: Conclusion (*Zoom session*)

Read before class:

Your Disney Letter written for the second class

Your Viewing Journal from the entire semester

Sunday, January 23, 2:00-4:00pm (*Zoom session*): Final Project Due; Presentations during exam slot

FYS 055 Assignments

Attendance and Engaged Participation (15% final grade): The first and most important component of success in any college class is showing up ready to engage with the class material, which means you have to do the reading listed before each class session before the class meets. There is NO substitute for doing the reading. FYS 055 is a discussion-based seminar and the quality of discussions depends on coming prepared to class ready to discuss the assigned material. Attendance is always expected because we learn from each other and our conversations. Of course, if you are ill or have a personal emergency, send me an email before class to let me know. Otherwise, plan on being in class. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

Come prepared to participate in discussion by speaking, listening attentively to others, encouraging others to comment, arguing respectfully, and asking questions. I know that not everyone is comfortable talking in class; if that's the case for you, please come see me so we can develop strategies to make it easier for you to speak in class. Being able to express your ideas and respond to others is as vital for your success in college as being able to write effectively, and everyone will be encouraged to hone their discussion skills throughout the semester.

Viewing Journal (15% of final grade): Every time we watch a Disney film, cartoon, or documentary together in class, you will be required to spend several minutes writing a response in a Blackboard journal. You will typically have about five minutes to write after a viewing. Please plan to bring a computer with you to class if you can. If you do not have a computer or other device you can use to do online journaling, you may instead write in a paper notebook journal specifically dedicated to the purpose. I will be reviewing the journal entries regularly and will give periodical feedback on them. Journal entries are a place for you to gain facility with critical analysis; this is not a place simply to record your personal response (I liked this, I hated that), but to consider the kinds of themes and issues we are considering in class: what kinds of cultural, social or political messages does this film send; what is interesting about the animation, color choices, language, music? Was there a particular scene or moment that you believe is particularly noteworthy? Why? What else do you want to know about this video? Every journal entry should include **one question that you have that could be the basis for a discussion the following class.**

Two Short Writing/Speaking Exercises (5% of final grade): Each student will write a short "Disney autobiography" at the beginning of the semester and will give a short oral presentation to make a case for an additional movie for us to watch together near the end of the semester.

1) Write me a letter of 1-2 pages in which you reflect on your own personal relationship with Disney. In what ways was Disney a part of your childhood? Was there a film that meant a lot to you when you were growing up that or a character with whom you particularly identified? Have you visited any of the Disney parks and what did you think of them? What do you think about Disney now, as a young person starting college? Send me a copy of your letter by **noon on Friday, October 6th**. These letters will not be formally graded, but we will have a chance in class to discuss what you and your peers have written. This is a low stakes

way for you to begin framing your thoughts about Disney and for me to become acquainted with you and your writing styles. Please email me your letters at rromano@oberlin.edu

2) Persuasive speech: In class on December 20, each student will have **two minutes** to make a case for a movie or other Disney product that we should watch and analyze together as a class during our class session on January 3rd. Please prepare your pitch in advance. Explain why you think this particular film is important for the class to watch and study together. You might consider how the film relates to Disney's repertoire, how it might add to our understanding of Disney or of American culture, and what makes it important or distinctive.

Scaffolded Film Analysis Article and Revision (20% of final grade): During the first half of the course, you will be working in stages to produce an article of ~1500 words analyzing *Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), or *Bambi* (1942). Imagine you are writing this article for a popular blog or for a publication like *Time Magazine* that is doing a retrospective on early Disney films. We will be working on these articles in stages, with one short assignment due each week on Wednesdays by midnight (so I have time to review them before our Friday class session). Each student will also be assigned a peer review partner; you will reach other's weekly assignments and give each other feedback. As the semester progresses, you will draw on the materials you create each week to write a draft of a coherent, engaging, well-argued article aimed at a general audience, which you will then have an opportunity to revise. First draft is worth 5% of your overall grade; final draft is worth 15% of the overall grade.

Step 1 (Due Wednesday, October 13 by midnight): Choose which film you want to analyze and watch it on your own time. Write a response about your initial reaction to the movie and identify and explore the film's themes, its characters, music, or any other characteristics you consider interesting and significant. Responses should be no more than 500 words (about 1-single spaced page). Pay attention to your writing and work to avoid the "Seven Deadly Writing Sins" (handout on website on Assignments Page).

Step 2 (Due Wednesday, October 20 by midnight): Read three reviews of your film from the time of its release and explore how reviewers at the time saw the film. What elements of the film struck them? What were their critiques? How does their response to the film compare to your own? You will find reviews of each film collected on the class website. Your response should be no more than 500 words.

Step 3 (Due Wednesday, October 27 by midnight): Use a library database like ArticleFirst, America: History and Life, or JSTOR or an online database like Google Scholar or Google Books to find one scholarly article about your chosen film. In no more than 500 words, summarize the argument of the article and identify the approach of the scholar (are they a film studies scholar, a historian, doing a gender analysis?). You should also make your own case about what you think of their argument; is it persuasive to you? Does it raise questions for you? Do you agree or disagree with different elements of their analysis of the film?

Step 4 (Due Wednesday, November 3 by midnight): Use library resources or internet research to explore how/why your chosen film has been talked about in recent past (since 1990). You can search in *New York Times Historical Newspapers* or *Los Angeles Times*

Historical Newspapers, in popular magazines, for podcasts, or on sites like YouTube. Find and summarize two different contemporary responses to the film. If you have chosen *Dumbo*, please do not focus on the response to the 2019 live-action *Dumbo* remake. Again, responses should be no more than 500 words.

Step 5 (Due Wednesday, November 10 by midnight): Drawing on all of the materials you have produced so far, write an article of approximately 1500 pages where you develop your own analysis of your film, discuss how scholars have viewed the film or Disney's early work, explore the evolution of its reception, and make some kind of case about why this film might be interesting (or not) for contemporary audiences. Your article should also draw on two readings that we have done for the class to help you analyze the film and must use at least one quote from each of those chosen readings. Your article should be directed at a general audience and should not be just your earlier responses strung together. Most importantly, you need to develop an argument that you use to structure the essay, as well as a hook to draw readings in. Drafts will be reviewed for argument, structure, writing style, clarity, and citation form. Students will meet with me or Meredith Warden individually to talk about their drafts and will be expected to meet with their peer review partner to exchange feedback.

Step 6 (Due Wednesday, November 17 by midnight): Revise your draft taking into account the feedback you have received from me and from your peer reviewer.

Theme Park Academic Analysis Paper and Revision (20% of final grade): The five class sessions after Thanksgiving focus primarily on the Disney theme parks. Find an argument or assertion in a reading on the theme parks with which you disagree and in a paper of approximately five pages, draw on your own ideas and other course materials to develop a counter-argument. Your paper should summarize the claim that you find questionable; explore what kind of author made the claim, for whom, and why; and explain the nature of and reasons for your disagreement. You must draw on and cite at least three other course readings as you make your case, although you can certainly use more. But this is not a research paper—you are not expected to do any additional outside research. This paper should be written for an academic audience; imagine that you are writing a short piece for a Disney Studies journal.

The first draft is due in class on December 20. Please bring a printed copy of the essay with you to class and upload a copy to the course blackboard site. The first draft will be worth 5% of your grade. The final draft will of the essay, worth 15% of your grade, is due on January 12th by midnight and should be uploaded to the course blackboard site.

Group Research Presentation (15% of final grade): Groups of four students will collaborate on researching a topic related to Disney and in teaching the class about their topic. Each group will have half a class session (approximately 40 minutes) to teach the class about their topics. Research could explore a specific themes, aspects of Disney's history we have not covered in much depth, or specific Disney cultural products. Possible topics include:

- Disney and death

- Disney and disability
- Disney's take on nature and the environment
- Disney's World War II propaganda cartoons and films
- Disney and Broadway
- Disney's foray into city-planning in the town of Celebration, USA
- A movie, television series, or theme park attraction that we are not studying in class
- Disney Vacation Adventures
- Disney cruises
- Disney stores

These are just a few possibilities—there are many others! We will brainstorm and select project topics in class. Students will then sign up for groups based on their interests. Groups will plan a session that includes some formal oral presentation, a facilitated discussion, and some kind of in-class activity. Each group will also choose one reading for the rest of the class to do in advance of the presentation and will be required to turn in a research bibliography listing their six most important sources.

Groups will meet with me twice during the semester, once to plan their research and once to discuss their plans for the presentation. All groups are also required to meet with Meredith Warden to practice their presentations. Presentations will take place during our class sessions of January 7 and January 10.

Project/Revision Pitch (10% final grade): In lieu of a final exam, each student will create a short pitch to Disney that either recommends a new movie project or theme park attraction OR that argues for the revision of an existing movie or attraction. Your pitch should explain your idea for the project, why you think it is worthwhile, and why Disney should feel compelled to do it. Good pitches will draw on ideas from class, but this is not a formal paper. You may present your pitch in any way you like—make a short podcast or video (animated or otherwise), write a memo of no more than 2-pages, write a song (extra credit to anyone who rewrites the song to “It’s a Small World”). Direct your pitch to Robert Iger, the chairman of the Disney Corporation. We will screen/listen to/hear pitches during our regularly scheduled final exam period on Sunday, January 23, 2:00-4:00pm). Upload your project to blackboard by 2pm on January 23 (or, if that is not possible, to our class Google folder).

Schedule of Assignments

- **Friday, October 8, due by noon:** Disney Autobiographical Letter due (email to Prof. R)
- **Wednesday, October 13 by midnight:** Film analysis article, Step 1 (upload to BB)
- **Wednesday, October 20 by midnight:** Film analysis article, Step 2 (upload to BB)
- **Wednesday, October 27 by midnight:** Film analysis article, Step 3 (upload to BB)
- **Wednesday, November 3 by midnight:** Film analysis article, Step 4 (upload to BB)
- **Wednesday, November 10 by midnight:** First draft of film analysis article due (upload to BB; email to peer reviewer)
- **Wednesday, November 17 by midnight:** Revised film analysis article due (upload to BB)

- **Friday, December 20, due in class:** 1) 2-minute pitch for additional film to watch as a class; 2) first draft of theme park academic essay (bring printed copy to class; upload to BB)
- **January 7&10, in class:** Group Research Presentations
- **January 12, due by midnight:** Final draft of theme park academic essay (upload to BB)
- **January 23, 2:00-4:00pm:** Final projects due and presentations of your product/revision pitches (upload final projects to BB by 2:00pm)