

BASIC INFORMATION:

Course Coordinator – Julian.Lee@oberlin.edu (440) 774-6027, OCMR 1788
Course Meeting Times and Location – Wednesdays @7-9pm in King 243

Catalog Description – This course will examine how the media of animation, claymation, and puppetry have transcended their traditional roles as juvenile education and entertainment. Examples range from large-scale commercial vehicles, the works that allowed some to direct such works later, and amateur works created by students not unlike ourselves. Discussion will focus on both substance and style, but works solely of novel style will not be treated. **DISCLAIMER:** Though elements of each may creep in, this is *NOT* a course in pornography, anime, nor kitsch thereof.

COURSE PURPOSE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES:

This will leave no doubts. To expand the catalog description, this course will address the same issues as many more academic classes, but likely in a more accessible, colorful, playful manner. Main objectives of the course are to familiarize the students with a wide variety of media, and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using a given medium to address an issue. In addition, the criteria for television and MPAA ratings will be examined critically, with respect to class selections. The course materials are often provocative and course to the extent of being intentionally offensive...though put more positively, they will not leave the viewer indifferent. Could feasibly serve as an introduction as to “How to be a geek”.

CLASS DYNAMICS:

Kaboom! We will meet once a week for two hours. Though the coordinator will do thorough research on each example and topic in the course, he acknowledges that any number of those enrolled could at any given time know more about the topic than the coordinator. This said, an introduction and debriefing will be given before and after each piece, during which the coordinator will present all known and pertinent information. After each, the floor will be open to additions and opinions from the students. It is hoped that discussions will often be fruitful but never monopolized. Inevitably, puerile hijinx will ensue, but it will be kept constructive.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

Structure – Here’s the lesson plan. The first part is both more British and wholesome, the middle has more television connections, and the third is flat-out disgusting. General topics of interest, which will be addressed in most every case, include:

- The use of music**→The vast majority of the selections, indeed all the full-length features, are musicals. Why is this, and must it be so?
- Boys only?**→This course features no female directors, and the content of many of the pieces is sexually exploitative. Is this a fault in the course, in the media, in society?
- Attention spans**→Are they shortening? Is animation just a method of saving on special effects over live-action explosions? How do the works, especially longer ones, offset the effects of stylistic novelty wearing off after a certain point? What does it mean to be “cartoonish”?
- “Underground” or “Sell-out”**→An attempt has been made to sample both the independent and commercial extremes of animation without retreading too much of what most have already seen (i.e. Disney). Where in this spectrum does each piece fit?
- The Burning Question**→Is animation ever separable from its juvenile connotations, or can the medium “never grow up”?

WEEK 1: The Beatles’: Yellow Submarine (George Dunning). Synopsis-60’s psychedelic cartoon classic for the whole family
Topics of Discussion- •Power of music, pain of silence & censorship •Beatlemania •Family entertainment •Cartoons and Drugs •The Nowhere Man •Almost *no* female characters.

WEEK 2: Wallace and Gromit (Nick Park). S- bumbling clay man and genius dog have English misadventures. TOD- •Tedium and shortcuts of clay •What is “family entertainment”? What are its guidelines? •Is Disney (still or was it ever) wholesome? Address issues of Walt’s pro-Nazism, animal abuse, later films’ subliminal innuendoes. •Does it disturb anyone else that “The Wizard of Oz” contains footage of a suicide?

WEEK 3: When the Wind Blows (Jimmy T. Murakami). S-Easily our most depressingly somber selection...an elderly, animated, rural British couple dawdles through a nuclear holocaust. TOD- •animated drama •ignorance of elderly, rural, British (separately and together in the film) •Civilian’s views of international conflict, nuclear war •What would David Bowie do (wwdbd)?

WEEK 4: Animations of Monty Python's Flying Circus (Terry Gilliam) & Various experimental internet animation (i.e. AYBABTU, Evan Mather's Star Wars Figurine Shorts). S-mixed bag of shorts and apologetic catch-all for sore omissions...most experimental of the bunch. TOD- •Dadaism? •The "underground" •can *anybody* do this stuff? •Parody of Japanese culture (or at least its music, video games, and animation) •Minimal Star Wars discourse

WEEK 5: Pee Wee's Playhouse (Paul Reubens). S-Late 80's Saturday morning madness with every medium imaginable mixed with live action, variety-show style with recurring characters. TOD- •scandal and comebacks in childhood entertainment •live-action childhood entertainment •Manchildren •Social consequences of liking this sort of thing as an adult

WEEK 6: Mystery Science Theater 3000 Shorts (Joel Hodgson, Michael J. Nelson). S-science fiction puppetry lambasts fifties public service broadcasts (in lieu of bad movies for sake of time). TOD- •bad movies and how society treats them •midwestern satirical tendencies •Postmodern science metafiction and similar hooley

WEEK 7: The Simpsons (Matt Groening). S-Longest-running animated television show. I hear they might be good. TOD-•Secrets of success •Satire •Multicultural diversity and stereotypes •Itchy & Scratchy •Flanders' biography in Christian Science Monitor

WEEK 8: SPUMCO! (John Kricfalusi). S-Ren & Stimpy (animated dog and cat have misadventures for Nickelodeon), a visit to Spumco's website, and a Björk music video. TOD-•Laziness in animation •Violence •Animated music videos •Music of Raymond Scott in animation

WEEK 9: South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut (Matt Stone, Trey Parker). S-new kings of pop-offensive animation say what's wrong with America. TOD-•Irreverence and intentional offensiveness •Profanity and censorship •Homosexual humor for the masses •US-Canada relations

WEEK 10: Spike & Mike's Sick & Twisted Festival of Animation (Spike & Mike). S-collection of highly-offensive shorts, generally and objectively of little more than shock value. TOD- •Animated gore and violence •What are the limits of taste?

WEEK 11: I Married a Strange Person (Bill Plympton). S-gen-x couple gains power to save or destroy the world via a magic mole growing on the husband's neck. Explicit fun indeed. TOD-•Corporatization •Militarism •Married life, inlaw relations •Animated desire to take over the world

WEEK 12: Meet the Feebles. (Peter Jackson). S-muppets on crack. Really that and more in a variety show gone wrong. TOD-•Puppets and porn, drugs •repenting of independent past or selling out? (PJ's Lord of the Rings) •Worthless Filth?

Recommended Readings – A link to these will be attached to a weekly class e-mail and will provide background as well as discussion material.

WEEK 1: Article- The Hidden Stories Behind 'Yellow Submarine.'; By: Hieronimus, Robert R., Billboard, 09/11/99, Vol. 111 Issue 37, p13, (2 pages)

WEEK 2: Article- Bringing Wallace & Gromit to life.; By: Atkin, Ross., Christian Science Monitor, 5/12/98, Vol. 90 Issue 116, p8

WEEK 5: Article- Who killed Pee Wee. (cover story); By: Wilkinson, P., Rolling Stone, 10/3/91 Issue 614, p36 (6 pages)

WEEK 6: Article- Robocritics take flight.; By: Corliss, Richard., Time, 4/22/96, Vol. 147 Issue 17, p81 (2 pages)

WEEK 7: Article- Saint Flanders. (cover story); By: Pinsky, Mark I., Christianity Today, 02/05/2001, Vol. 45 Issue 2, p28 (7 pages)

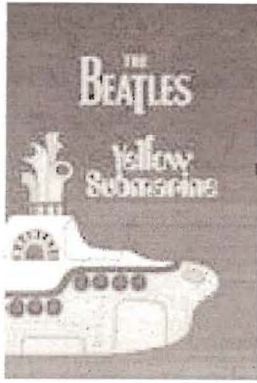
WEEK 8: Article- Master of the cult cartoon.; By: Barrier, Michael., Nation's Business, Jun98, Vol. 86 Issue 6, p83

WEEK 9: Article- South Park's Solar Anus. or, Rabelais Returns: Cultures of Consumption and the Contemporary Aesthetic of Obscenity.; By: Larsen, David., Theory, Culture & Society, 2001, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p65, (18 pages)

Assignments – It is hoped that the class will touch on something that a student has always wanted to treat in an academic paper. Given the ease of ranting and becoming non-academic, please write a SHORT ESSAY (max. 5 pages), preferably on works and/or issues covered in class. The due date will be decided in the first session of class. . In addition, each class will begin with a standardized (and brief) written review of the material from the previous session. The review will provide feedback to the instructor both in terms of what students think (and may not have discussed) of materials and what aspects made for fruitful discussion.

Materials – An open mind paired with a renewed sense of childhood whimsy are plusses but not required.

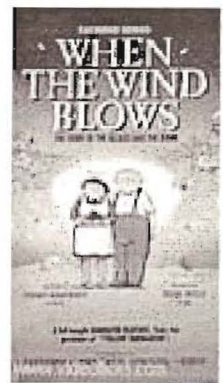
COORDINATOR'S PREEMPTIVE APOLOGY: I am sorry only to have included works that I like a lot (though surely in trademark exco fashion). This came at the expense of such notables as Beavis and Butthead, Roger Rabbit, Fritz the Cat, Heavy Metal, The Nightmare Before Christmas, and so on. Every effort will be made to allot time to discuss works omitted only by my own ignorance or lack of exposure and taste.



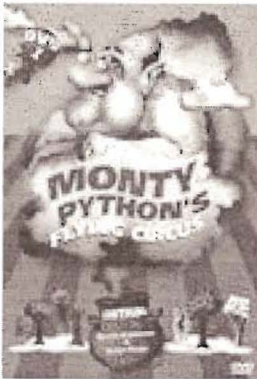
Adult Themes



Juvenile Media



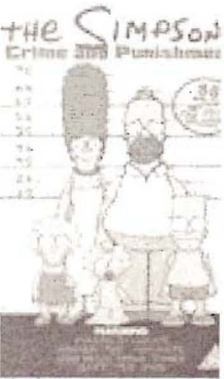
A Spring 2003 Experimental College Course



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See you at the fair;-)

