

Examining Culture Through Disney Animation  
(Culture Through Disney)

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## Information About Students Proposing the Program

*Why do you wish to propose and lead this particular program? What interests you about the program topic?*

At first glance, the animated films of Disney seem to be little more than simple childhood entertainment. A closer reading of these movies, however, reveals that they are a fantastic jumping off point for the exploration of cultural, social and historical topics. As program directors, we believe that we can combine our love of Disney movies with a curiosity for the larger world to create an accessible and entertaining outlet for stimulating conversation and understanding.

*What excites you about being a student program director? What are you nervous about as you think about stepping in to this role?*

We are extremely excited to share our vision with others, and to help people of different backgrounds find commonalities and understanding in one another. We are of course nervous about managing the responsibilities of the program along with our academic and extracurricular obligations, we however believe that we can rise to the challenge and that our current success as members the Integrated Humanities Program at L/L have prepared us to step into leadership roles.

*What do you hope to learn in your role as a student leader in L/L?*

We look forward to gaining insight from others. We want people to challenge our assumptions and bring new and diverse ideas of their own into the conversation. We hope that as student leaders we can guide the discourse of our program to help all members of the community learn to see different points of view.

*What expectations do you have for yourself and for the program if your proposal is accepted?*

We expect that we can use Culture through Disney as a jumping off point for engaging and eye-opening discussions of past and current issues. We expect to be exposed to new and varying opinion on many different topics. We expect that we can guide the level of conversation to emphasize participation and input from all the members of our program.

*What other time commitments will you have next year outside of your regular course work?*

Sam Kahn-Arcangeli anticipates continuing his work as an executive board member of the Inter-Residence Association. Drew Adamczyk will be continuing his commitment as a traveling and competitive member of the Lawrence Debate Union.

## Overview of Program

Examining Culture Through Disney is an exciting opportunity to combine the familiar animated films of Disney with an array of topics ranging from gender and sexuality to Middle Eastern affairs. Participants in the program will approach Disney films with the goal of starting dialogues that will lead to exploration and questioning of the world around them. Participants will also help to bring this discourse outside of Culture Through Disney to the rest of the Living Learning Center and the University community as a whole. To this end, Culture through Disney will sponsor screenings of Disney Films open to the community, followed by in-depth guided conversations tackling important cultural and social topics. Whether discussing gender parallels in *Mulan*, examining the role of abstract art in *Fantasia*, or using *Wall-E* to study environmental responsibility, the role of Culture through Disney is to create a safe and familiar place where a wide spectrum of subjects can be examined. Outside of the programmed content provided, members will continue the conversations started by common interests to learn from the many backgrounds that draw students to the University of Vermont. By tying the diversity of individual students experiences and values through a unifying factor like Disney Films, this program will bring them together.

## Learning Objectives

### Learning Objective One *Guided Exploration of Topics*

#### Action Steps

- A) At the start date of the program, members will meet with Program Directors to select a working list of titles that the program would like to view and discuss.
  - i. Members will be required to select representative works from many periods of Disney Animation
  - i. Members will select enough films to watch at least two per month for the year
  - ii. These movies will be acquired through rental from the Bailey-Howe Library and supplemented by personal collections.
- B) At the beginning of every month, program directors will select two films from the previously established list to be watched fortnightly.
- C) Participants will prepare for two weeks prior to watching through independent research and development of critical questions to bring to the group as a whole.
  - i. Research will be conducted using the library, internet, and television and films
  - ii. Participants will be expected to prepare original material that will benefit the entire program through improved dialogue.
  - iii. The Expectation of the PD's is not that members will complete exhaustive research, as we recognize that members have class and other expectations. However, program members are expected to have done enough background research to facilitate excellent and enlightening conversation.

**Expected Cost:** \$0. This Learning Objective will be accomplished through group discussion and rental of materials. The program will not require any additional funds to function at this stage.

**Learning Objective Two**  
*Participant Screening and Discussion*

**Action Steps**

- A) On previously announced dates, the Culture through Disney program will gather to watch Disney Films in the common room of a Culture through Disney Suite
- i. Movie Showings will occur fortnightly, and will be announced to the entire program and be available on a schedule
  - ii. Program members would be strongly encouraged to extend invitations to members and programs of the L/L community that can provide new insights on the movies in question (e.g. asking the Arabic House to sit in on a viewing of *Aladdin*).
- B) Immediately after viewing the movie in question, the program as a whole will enter into a discussion, to be guided by the program directors.
- i. The group will work together at this stage to insure that all voices are heard and to foster a feeling of safety and respect, open to all opinions.
  - ii. The program would also welcome input from guests and other individuals with distinct perspectives to offer on the movie shown, emphasizing acceptance and openness to new ideas.
- C) Program participants will work to develop a concise and eye-opening presentation on the movie for the larger L/L community.
- i. Program Participants will focus on what aspects of the film have influenced culture and/or how they reflect issues pertaining to the modern world and/or current events.
  - ii. Diversity of thought and examination of multiple viewpoints on these issues will be strongly encouraged by Program Directors and stressed as a key value of the community.

**Expected Cost:** \$0. At this stage, the emphasis is still on individual development of new ideas and personal expansion. Movies will still be rented or acquired from personal collections, which eliminates any potential cost.

**Learning Objective Three**  
*Selected Screenings and Guided Community Discussion*

**Action Steps**

- A) At the beginning of each month, program participants will gather to decide which of the previously viewed and discussed films should be shown to the community
- i. Members will decide which movie is to be shown in light of current events and with the intent of furthering the strongest possible community discourse

- B) The program will advertise on campus for showings and guided discussions of selected Disney Movies once per month in the Fireplace Lounge.
- i. Members of the Living/ Learning Community as well as the overall UVM community will be welcomed and encouraged to attend.
  - ii. Disney through Culture also intends to offer snack food and beverages at these showings, partly to attract interest but also to sustain appetites through the vigorous and intensive conversations to come.
- C) Guided by members of Disney through Culture, the community as a whole will discuss topics pertaining to the film and resulting from viewing it. This will encourage individuals to question the world around them and expand interest in new subjects.

**Expected Cost:** \$500 over the course of two semesters. With our intent of showing four movies per semester, we anticipate spending around \$60 per community screening on snacks and drinks. We think that the food and beverages provided by Culture through Disney will encourage more people to take advantage of the movie and discussion. Sam Kahn-Arcangeli has an 80" projector and screen if we cannot use L/L materials to screen the movies. Either way, we do not anticipate any additional costs associated with the actual showing and procuring of the movies in question.

## **Community Service**

We believe that our program will contribute to the overall feeling of intellectual curiosity at the Living Learning Center. By opening our screenings to the University Community, we hope to spread and improve the quality of discourse on a widespread scale. Additionally, we are in talks with the individuals involved in Davis Center programming, including Katherine Strotmyer and Melody Lynn-Walker, and we hope that we could present a screening of one of more Disney movies at the Davis Center. Also, we would love an opportunity to show Disney movies to the children at the Childcare Center.

## **Program Advisor**

While we have not officially settled on a program advisor, we have had several discussions with prospective individuals. At the moment, we are leaning towards the advisor and leader of the IHP, Richard Sugarman, but negotiations are not definite on either side.

## **Special Facilities**

We do not anticipate any need for additional facilities to improve the experience of Culture through Disney, aside from a suite common room to facilitate discussion and to provide space for program viewing of Disney Movies on a projector screen (to be provided by Program Director Sam Kahn-Arcangeli).

## Interaction with Other L/L Programs

One of the best parts of the Living and Learning center is the incredible diversity of the different programs. Within these programs, people find it easy to bond with their suitemates and fellow program participants, in large part because they have a strong commonality to work off of (whether it be a shared language, cultural heritage, academic focus, or other binding factor) However, it is often very hard for people from different programs around L/L to interact, as they feel that they don't have anything in common with other programs. This is really quite unfortunate, as we strongly believe that fostering links between the different programs at L/L is the best way to create a strong community feeling for the entire center. By using something like Disney that is unique in the sense that almost everyone, from any generation, has a strong degree of familiarity with the material, we can bring students together and show them how enjoyable and easy it is to interact with very different programs around L/L. We envision the very likely scenario that students from programs that usually have almost no interaction (Arabic House and IHP, for instance) will come to learn through fun and informal discussion and viewing of Disney movies that the people who share a complex with them are actually not so different. We think that the using these showings acts an extremely effective icebreaker, and we have already had a great deal of success showing them to people from other communities we've met casually. Our suite (currently) has several friends from the ISSP and French house who we met through invitations to watch Disney movies with us. As funny as it may sound, people we've met and would have otherwise had zero interaction with have become very close friends of ours because we started with something we shared on a basic level.

Included in our planned event of showing movies to the Living and Learning community, to foster short-term "great conversation" but also to create long-lasting bonds between programs, we also anticipate working directly with other programs to plan these events. Because the nature of Disney movies is that they incorporate multinational, multicultural, and extremely varied stories, we feel that different programs around L/L can contribute a great deal to the planning stage of these showings. For instance, we think that asking a program like the Arabic House to help us prepare for a showing of *Aladdin*, or the Integrated Humanities Program to provide their insights on *Hercules*. Every program at L/L can help us to improve the quality of the discourse and the enjoyment of sharing these movies, and we think that the Disney house will be a fantastic opportunity to creating lasting bridges between different programs.

The other major event we are still in talks to facilitate is the potential showing of Disney movies at the Davis Center. Through our contacts in the SGA, IRA, and elsewhere, we are hopeful that we can reach out to an even wider community and create bonds between students from around campus. We are extremely hopeful that in doing so, the Disney House can be the jumping-off point that people need to interact, and we think that an "icebreaker", so to speak, of showing movies with such a fantastic depth and universality to them as the works Disney will be an incredible way to create a stronger community, not only at L/L but at UVM as a whole.

## **Housing**

We would like to request 2-3 suites. Size of individual suites is not important (5-6-7 person), but we would like to house between 11-18 people. We think that a group this large will allow us to have excellent discussions within the program that we can bring to the University Community as a whole