

Hand Drawn Character Animation syllabus

DEPAUL
SCA

Hand-Drawn Character Animation

autumn 2015
M, W 10:10am - 11:40am
CDM 527

Instructor: Brian Ferguson

ANI 327
ANI 427

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Office hours:
M: 9am - 10am, 3:30pm - 5:00pm
W: 9am - 10am, 3:30pm - 5:00pm

Course

Description

In this course, students will be introduced to the traditional art of hand-drawn character performance. Topics covered will include acting, body mechanics, volume, weight, walk cycles, dialogue and facial expression.

Prerequisites

ANI 321 or ANI 421

Learning Outcomes

1. Gain a complete understanding of traditional animation principles and the tools needed to apply them to hand-drawn projects.
2. Utilize performance techniques to give character animations the illusion of life.
3. Analyze multiple animation styles and techniques, and experiment with drawing to create your own style based on your response to the medium
4. Evaluate various professional animation demo reels and produce your own demo reel quality character animation

Texts and Materials

Required Texts

The Animator's Survival Kit
Richard Williams, Publisher, Faber and Faber Inc. 2001

Texts you might really find useful, if you have the means
The Illusion Of Life
Frank Thomas & Ollie Johnston

Attendance Students are expected to attend every class. We cover an enormous amount of material in every class, and missing even one can be a huge setback. Any student missing 3 classes or more will be given a grade of “F” for the semester.

The student is responsible for any lectures or assignments missed. If an assignment is due a week that you are absent, it is your responsibility to make sure it still arrives on time. This is for your benefit. A good portion of our class time will be spent doing hands on tutorials, screening films, and critiquing work. Lecture notes will not make up for these missed learning experiences.

You may not miss the midterm or final class date. Doing so will equal an automatic two letter grade reduction of your final grade. If for some reason you cannot make one of these dates you must contact your instructor BEFORE the class that you must miss. Excuses given after the fact will not be accepted.

Participation One of the best ways to learn in a classroom environment is through active participation in discussions and critiques. In general, we will be following a pattern of creating animation and then discussing it in critique in the following week. When I open up the floor for you to speak, please make the effort to voice your honest and constructive opinion. This will help you learn from your mistakes and progress with your animation skills. It will also prepare you for the professional arena.

Class Work

Assignments

- ➔ Must be handed in on time. Late assignments will be accepted with teacher discretion, only. On time means submitted through COLweb by midnight the night before class on the day the assignment is due. Students who use class time to finish assignments the day they are due will forfeit the right to hand in that assignment.
- ➔ Late work:

- Late work will not be accepted unless approved of PRIOR to the class in which it is due or accompanied by a valid medical excuse.
 - You are allotted one “freebie” per term that allows you to turn ONE assignment late for full credit (up until the 10th week of the term). You only get one of these per term. All other late assignments are forfeited.
- ➔•Written Assignments: Must be typed.

* Special Accommodations: If you have any special considerations please see the instructor.

* BACK UP YOUR WORK: Failure of computer software and or Hardware will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance for late projects or incomplete grades so back up your work daily.

Critiques Unless I tell you otherwise, assigned work must be completed and submitted through COLweb by midnight the night BEFORE class starts. This will keep us from wasting valuable class time. In most cases (I’ll let you know the exceptions) I request that you use **QuickTime** format unless discussed with me previously. AVI’s are difficult to watch frame by frame (something we will be doing a lot of). **Handing in something unfinished is always better than nothing at all.** Due to the large size of our class, and the limited class time, not everyone’s work will get a full review during class. If you’d like more feedback, arrange to discuss your work with me during my office hours. We will view and discuss everyone’s final project during the last class.

Grading	Assignments	80% of grade		
	Final Project	20% of grade		
	Total	100%		
		A = 100-93	A- = 92-90	
	B+ = 89-88	B = 87-83	B- = 82-80	
	C+ = 79-78	C = 77-73	C- = 72-70	
	D+ = 69-68	D = 67-63	D- = 62-60	F = 59-0

Your grade will depend on the following criteria:

- **Meeting Project Deadlines:** It is vital to have your work available for critique. Work unavailable for critique will be considered late and will not be accepted unless you are using your one “freebie.”
- Creativity and personal input into execution of project

- Coming prepared to class, including assigned reading and assignments
- Showing in-progress work, which can benefit from suggestions, rather than presenting entirely new work at critiques
- Effective visually aesthetic solutions to all problems assigned
- Taking initiative to work outside of class and research
- Hard work and sweat
- Participation in critiques and discussions

Cell Phones

Use of cell phones in the class and the lab is prohibited. Please turn your phone off before entering class. Mistakes will happen (to me too), but repeated failure to turn your phone off will result in a lowered grade for the class. All phone conversations should be conducted outside the class – don't disturb those working in the lab and put others in an uncomfortable situation.

Headphones

Whether working with sound in your project, or simply listening to music while working, you need to be considerate of others and wear headphones. Be aware that if the volume is high enough, others can still hear what you're listening to despite the headphones. Inconsiderate behavior will result in a lowered grade.

Academic Integrity

Work done for this course must adhere to the DePaul University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the *Student Handbook* or by visiting

<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html>.

Plagiarism

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements, should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

Materials and Supplies

All assignments in this class will be transmitted digitally online through COLWeb unless otherwise noted. Any assignment handed in late or when not present in class may be put on a CDROM, DVD, or flash drive and delivered to the 4th floor desk of CDM to be put in my mailbox.

All CDROM's and DVD's must be labeled clearly with the following information: -Your name

-The name of the assignment -The class number and name you are submitting the assignment for -The term (ex. Fall 2015)

Weekly Schedule (subject to change)

* most classes will have an in-class demo

Week 1- Review syllabus, discuss grading, and what's expected while in class. We will revisit fundamental animation concepts, and terms, including; keys, breakdowns, inbetweens, timing charts, weight, spacing, and arcs.

We will then launch into good drawing for animation. This week will be focusing on form and direction in the character, making for dynamic posing.

Assignment: Flour sack: Animate a flour sack performing an action that clearly shows emotion, purpose and thought in the character.

Week 2- Review of posing from the first week. We will then continue the discussion on drawing for animation from the perspective of staging and dynamics of the whole composition.

Assignment: Flour sack; new goal, new story

Week 3- Review of composition from the previous week. We will then discuss the start of the process of animating a scene with personality. The focus will be the laying down of the foundation of what is the essence of the scene by drawing out story poses in thumbnail form.

Assignment: design a performance. Shoot it for playback as a quicktime movie
Graduate students design the scene with two characters interacting.

Week 4- Review thumbnails and story poses from previous week. Next step in the process of animating a scene with personality is blocking out the main elements of the performance. We'll also look at dialogue and lip sync in a scene.

Assignment: do a blocking pass at a scene. Shoot it for playback as a quicktime movie.

Graduate students do the scene with two characters interacting.

Week 5- Review of blocking pass at a scene. The next refinement in animating a performance is breaking down the blocked-in actions, and once that part is working, to inbetween the keys and breakdowns. Inbetweens and breakdowns should maintain both the structure of the character's form and the flow and intention of the character's motion.

Assignment: inbetweening a prescribed pair of key drawings.

Graduate students do breakdowns and design extremes that go beyond the keys.

Week 6- Review of the inbetweening assignment from last week. This week's lecture is about anticipation through the perspective of moving from one distinct emotion or thought to another.

Assignment: Animate a character making the transition from one specific thought or emotion to a distinctly different one.

Graduate students must design a performance that involves interaction between two characters.

Week 7- Review of emotional transition animation from last week. This week's discussion is regarding walking with purpose and specific character. The physicality of a character's whole body will convey huge volumes of that character's thoughts and emotions before even addressing facial expression.

Assignment: walk with changing purpose.

Graduate students will incorporate another performance to the character's animation so that the walk is still with purpose, but is secondary to the performance.

Week 8- Review of walk with purpose. This week's discussion will be about performance. Subtle vs broad acting will be examined, touching on some of the distinctions and values of each.

Assignment: start of the final project: choosing an audio file from which to work. This week the story poses should also be well worked out, as making changes later is highly wasteful and costly in terms of time. These should be shot and playable with the audio file as a movie file.

Graduate students will animate the performance as interaction between two on-screen characters.

Week 9- Physicality of broad animation. Why do broad animation? Where is it appropriate? How to do broad animation, and to what extent?

Assignment: blocking pass at final scene. This is building on the story poses which have already been established as optimal--not needing to be changed. They will give a good sense of how the performance has impact. This will also be shot and joined with the audio file as a movie file.

Week 10- We'll discuss the progress on the scenes for the final project. It will be open discussion with the class, for practice at experiencing a "sweatbox" environment. In this arena one can often hear several varied opinions, and then need to choose which remarks resonate with their own purpose. They must also be able to account for the opinion of those in authority when weighing their options.

Assignment: refinements on final scene

Week 11- Animation final. The assignment will be due.