
ANI 425 Visual Storytelling

Syllabus: Winter 2020

Monday: 5:45 – 9:00 pm, CDM Room 527 & 530

Instructor: Steve Socki: ssocki@cdm.depaul.edu Tuesday 11:00am to 2:00pm; always email me first

Office: CDM 511; Office Phone: 312-362-8273

Office hours: Tuesdays; 11:00am to 2:00pm; always email me first

Course Description

This class will focus on storyboarding and developing ideas as key pre-production tools for narrative animation, film, and gaming projects. The lectures, class work, and assignments will help students to expand their own cinematic drawing techniques, and help them to develop clear and dynamic stories for the screen. A variety of live-action and animated films and professional storyboards will be analyzed in class. Students will develop their personal style of boarding through a series of exercises and assignments. They will complete a short final animatic - a comprehensive pre-production blueprint for a project of their own choice.

Learning Goals

- Learn the vocabulary of film language, types of shots, transitions, and narrative structure
- Apply basic principles of character staging, shot progression, camera angles, lighting tones, & camera moves with in-class exercises & assignments
- Create a series of hand-drawn storyboards demonstrating knowledge of sequential narration with accurate perspective and placement of characters
- Practice visual methods of expressing character attitudes and acting that relate to story telling
- Combine storyboards with sound to create 'Animatics'

Learning Outcomes

- Understand conventional cinematic structure of shot progression, staging, and screen direction
- Compose visually dynamic shots, with good lighting, showing cinematic depth
- Create character-driven storytelling with convincing character attitudes and acting that visually support the narrative
- Apply all principles of storyboarding into a clear blueprint for an animated film, in which all visual aspects are working together

Textbooks and Printed Resources:

- No require textbooks; Recommended:
Dream Worlds: Production Design for Animation, by Hans Baker
Drawn to Life, by Walt Stanchfield
- For Students with Less Experience in Figure Drawing:
Drawing from Life, by George Bridgeman

Online Software Reference:

- Lynda.com tutorials for Adobe & most animation software; access w/DePaul Info
- Adobe Creative Suite <http://depaul.onthehub.com> discounts for DePaul Students

Prerequisite: Graduate Student in MA or MFA Animation

Drawing Experience:

Life Drawing is normally required. If you have not taken college-level life drawing classes, expect to spend additional time on all assignments. Plan to use your camera phones to shoot character pose references. Always work on improving your figure drawing.

Grading:

- Weekly Assignments = 75%
- Attendance & Participation = 10%
- Final Project= 15%

- Standard DePaul Grading Policy: 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
- Note: Any late work submitted will have a deduction. If submitted more than a week late you will receive no credit.

Attendance Policy: *There are only 10 classes – plan to attend all.*

- Miss 1 Class: Participation Grade lowered 25 – 50%
- Miss 2 classes: Participation lowered 100% (Final Grade lowered 10 -20%)
- Miss 3 classes: Final grade lowered 40% - You will be asked to Withdraw before deadline.
- If you are absent due to illness or family issues, YOU must contact the Dean of Students and request an Excused Absence. Please do not try to explain to me; the D of S dept. will send me a note to give you additional time to complete assignment; they maintain confidentiality - will not tell me any personal details about you.
<https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence-notification.aspx>
- ... However, it is always good to E-mail me if you will be absent. Refer to weekly notes.
- Constantly arriving late will be considered an Unexcused absence.
- Working on outside projects or constantly on your phone/computer will lower your participation grade to '0'
- If you miss a class, you are still required to submit work by the deadlines. Time management is essential in this production class.
- Late submissions receive partial credit; no credit for assignments that are more than 7 days late.
- The final class is normally mandatory. If you do not attend, your participation grade will be lowered 50% *

Incompletes:

You must apply for Incomplete directly through Campus Connect. The Associate Dean must approve this first, before I can approve. Must apply before the 10th week of classes. You will be asked to explain circumstances.

Participation in Class:

- Expect to be called upon to give input on weekly critiques. Plan to give brief, professional input that addresses principles of storyboarding. Contact me during first week if you have any personal issues with public speaking.
- Everyone will need to draw during in-class drawing exercises. In-class work is at the very beginning of class, so do not be late.

Assignments:

We will begin with fundamental methods for staging characters that will apply to all aspects of cinematic storytelling. You will learn how to block out a scene with perspective and basic character placement. Drawing skills are helpful but are not required; we will work with references and other guides, on paper, for in-class assignments.

- Some assignments will be submitted on paper, when noted.
- Most work must be submitted as a digital file 'Assignments Folder' on D2L, 1 hour before class.
- You may work digitally on assignments: students often use Photoshop; This is encouraged
- If you work with pencil and paper, scan your work at a high quality, and submit as a single PDF file. Do not submit an I-Phone photo of your artwork for any assignment. It is important to approach each project with a professional attitude, following the required formats and aspect ratios.
- Each assignment is normally worth 10 points (or 10% of your grade). Points will automatically be deducted if late, or in the wrong format, or at a low quality.
- Plan to spend at least 3 to 6 hours of work outside of class to complete assignments.
- You will need to use some Adobe software for some assignments; all software is available in the CDM Labs and hallway computers. Plan to work off-hours to use computer labs 527 & 722.

Facilities:

- Class will first meet in CDM room 527. Most classes we will be working in the Design Studio, CDM room 530. Class critiques will be in the 5th floor gallery when noted (across hall from room 527).
- We will also use a PC Lab for 2 classes; time & place to be determined.
- Digital Scanners are available on floors 1 & 4 of CDM. Other campus scanners are noted on the CDM page; can also check with facilities dept on 4th Floor.
- You can check out a Wacom Drawing Tablet from the "Film Cage," 14 E.Jackson, Basement Level.

- Use any CDM Computer to access Photoshop. Some Lincoln Park studios also have this.
- CDM Animation Tutoring Services may be schedule through: CDM Home Page > Click under Tutoring > Find a Tutor > find a Grad Student who knows the software > Make an appointment.

Supplies:

- Drawing materials and paper will be provided for in-class exercises. You are also encouraged to bring your own sketchbooks for in-class work.
- Always bring your own portable drive when working in any CDM labs. Begin to keep a separate folder for assignments and for “reference material.”

Using D2L:

- Class assignments must be submitted to the “D2L Assignments Folder” The formats and guidelines will be detailed.
- Lectures from room 527 will be recorded on D2L; the quality is not great, but may help as a reference. Work we do in room 530 will not be recorded.
- Weekly PowerPoint Class Notes, Student Samples, & Reference Art, will be posted on D2L > Content. Get used to navigating through this.
- Use the ColTube Site on D2L (bottom right) to view animation film library; specific works will be referenced in class. As I write this, they are updating a new, better system for viewing animation samples called “PANOPTO.”

If you have disability issues, let me know if you need special accommodations. If you have any personal problems preventing you from working on assignments, please contact the confidential resources available to you at DePaul.

Weekly Schedule: (Will change during the quarter; About 8 major assignments, & 2 or 3 short ones)

Week 1A: Overview; Basic Camera Composition, Establishing Shots

B: Types of Film Shots – Cinematic Vocabulary, Shot Progression; Create “Walk Board”

Week 2A: Simplified Character Construction, Character Start Poses & Reactions

B: Cinematic Depth – Thinking of Planes receding in Space Essential Perspective; Create “POV Board”

Week 3A: No Class

Week 4A: Dramatic Composition with Low/High Camera Angles

4B: Use of Camera Reveals & Motivated Camera Moves; Create “Le Café Board”

Week 5A: Dramatic Pacing, Building Visual Tension

5B: Insert Shots, Create “Desert Board”

Week 6A: Character Development & Design

6B: Character Construction; Team Production Methods

Week 7A: Build Cinematic Pacing with Framing

7B: Create a “Showdown Board”

Week 8A: Creating Elements that flow together in time;

8B: Basics of Animatics, Working with After Effects; Create “Short Animatic”

Week 9A: Use of Visual Tones; Visual Emphasis of Narrative

9B: Create “Tone Board”

Week 10A: Roughing out a “Beat Board”

10B: Work on Final Animatic

Monday, Mar 16, 11:30am ~ 1:45pm Class Critique for “Final Animatic” -

Important Dates

Fri, Jan 10: Deadline to Add Class

Fri, Jan 17: Last day to Drop class (full refund)

Mon, Jan 20: No Class – MLK Holiday

Fri, Feb 21: Last day to WITHDRAW from Class; Will receive “W” grade (Will not lower your GPA)

Note* If you have missed 2 or 3 assignments by this date you are unlikely to pass.

Also Note* If you have 3 or 4 unexcused absences by this date, you are also unlikely to pass.

Fri, Mar 5: Deadline to Request Incomplete from Associate Dean (see notes below for process)

*Note: This syllabus is subject to changes in content and dates during the quarter. Any changes will be posted under Announcements on D2L.

Online Teaching Evaluation:

Student teaching evaluations are conducted near the very end of the quarter. All evaluations are anonymous. This is a valuable and constructive tool in creating a better classroom experience for future students. A short break will be made available sometime during the last 2 weeks for the students to complete their evaluation – the instructor will not be present for this (Although donuts are usually provided). Submissions should be sent through Campus Connect.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/> If you have any questions be sure to consult with your professor.

Academic Policies:

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at:

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities:

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: Lewis Center #1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

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