
ANI 425 Visual Storytelling

Syllabus: Winter 2019

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

Instructor: Steve Socki Email: ssocki@cdm.depaul.edu

Office: CDM 511; Hours: Wed, 11am to 2pm; Phone: 312-362-8273

Course Description:

This graduate-level 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 terminology, aspect ratio, & digital format in visual storyboarding work
- Apply basic principles of shot variety, shot progression, & use of camera angles to support narrative
- Stage characters dynamically with light & shadow; visually show cinematic depth
- Complete weekly assignments that apply specific principles of visual storyboarding
- Practice visual methods of expressing character attitude & performance in relation to story
- Combine storyboards art with camera moves & sound to create a final Animatic

Learning Outcomes:

- Appreciate conventional cinematic structure of shot progression, staging, and screen direction
- Compose visually dynamic shots, with good lighting, showing cinematic depth
- Create character-driven storytelling visually, with clear character performance
- 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 Recommended:

- *Drawing from Life*, by George Bridgeman
- *Drawn to Life*, by Walt Stanchfield
- *Dream Worlds: Production Design for Animation*, by Hans Baker

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: MA or MFA Status

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%
- DePaul Grading: 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:

- Because this class meets only once/week, attendance is very important & will affect Participation Grade

- Miss 1 Classes: You will be notified through BlueStar, - 2.5 Point Participation
- Miss 2 Classes: -10 Points (grade lowered by at least 10%)
- Miss 3 Classes: -25 Points; Will be asked to withdraw & retake course
- Miss 4 Classes: Automatic Failure; not allowed
- If you are absent due to illness or family issues, you must contact the Dean of Students and request an Excused Absence. <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence-notification.aspx>
- Arriving late 2 times will be count as one Unexcused absence
- Working on outside projects or will lower your participation grade to '0'
- If you miss a class, you are still required to submit work by the deadline;
- Time management is essential, apply a professional attitude.
- Final class is 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, 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; at the very beginning of class - do not be late.

Assignments:

Approach this class as a professional. Be proud of the work you do; only submit your best effort. Each assignment asks that you apply a specific principle of visual storytelling; do not get off-track. We will gradually build onto these principles as the course progresses. I would like to see you end up with artwork that demonstrate your understanding of visual storytelling. Be confident in achieving solid staging, dynamic shot progressions, and clear character performance.

- Most work must be submitted as a digital file 'Assignments Folder' on D2L, 1 hour before class.
- Work in Photoshop for most assignments. Use the CDM tutors if you need help with the software.
- If you work with pencil and paper, scan your work at a high quality, and submit as a single PDF file Do not submit a Cell Phone camera shot of your artwork; treat each assignment as a professional piece of work.
- You will also need to use Adobe After Effects around week 5. All software is available in CDM 527, 722, 4th floor Lab, and 9th floor hall. Plan to work off-hours to access 527 & 722.

Facilities:

- Class will first meet in CDM room 527; we will work mostly in room 530 after Week 2.
- 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 in the Daley Building.
- Use any CDM Computer to access Photoshop. Some Lincoln Park studios also have this.
- CDM Tutoring Services on 9th floor available to help with software. Refer to 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:

- Most class work must be submitted to the “D2L Assignments Folder.” The formats and guidelines will be detailed.
- Lectures will be recorded on D2L; the quality is not great, but may help as a reference
- Weekly Class Notes, Student Samples, Reference Art, & Slideshows will be posted on D2L “Content Folder.”
- Use the *CoITube* Site on D2L (bottom right) to view film library of work referenced in class.

Email Me:

Please email me directly with any questions about assignments or if you have any problems working in my class. I will always make time to meet with you individually, outside of class. If you have any personal problems I will let you know about the helpful, confidential resources available to you.

Weekly Schedule: (Will change during the quarter, as noted)

WEEK 1A: Basic Composition; Storyboard Terminology

WEEK 1B: Types of Film Shots; Screen Direction; Shot Progression, Film Logic

WEEK 2A: Framing Devices; Cinematic Depth; Strong Composition; Visual Clarity

WEEK 2B: Tones; Dramatic Composition; Iconic Shapes; Use of Angles

WEEK 3A: Character Performance; Character Development & Design

WEEK 3B: Acting; Working with Dialogue; Clarity of Story through Characters

WEEK 4A: Camera Moves; Assembling BGs & Multiple Levels, Basic Animatic Assembly

WEEK 4B: Animatics; Working with Sound; Compositing in After Effects

WEEK 5A: Pitch Final Story; Blocking Out Final with Beat Boards

WEEK 5B: “The Hero’s Journey” & Other Structures; Work on Finals

FINAL: Tue, March 13, 2:30 ~ 4:45pm

Fri, Jan 11: Deadline to Add Class

Fri, Jan 18: Last day to drop class for full Refund (& no grade on transcripts)

Fri, Feb 22: Last day to Withdraw from Class – (receive “W” grade)

Fri, Mar 8: Deadline to Request Incomplete – (must be approved by Associate Dean)

*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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