COMM 299-201 Themes in Film & Digital Media
Topic: Introduction to Animation
Autumn 2017

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Description

The COMM 299 topic Introduction to Animation will introduce students to fundamental terminology, concepts, methods and practices in animation. The course will provide an overview of animation techniques ranging from cut-out image animation, pixilation, and 2D digital animation using After Effects.

The course will consist of lectures, screening relevant works, demonstrations, hands-on studio work and critiques. Students will learn about preproduction for animation and be asked to pre-visualize their work. Students will also learn about sound design as it relates to animation and production and post-production techniques using Dragonframe and applications in the Adobe Creative Suite. Students will create a variety of projects including storyboards and short animations. Participation in class discussions and critiques are an essential part of the course.

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the principles of animation.
- Describe the animation production process from conceptualization to a finished project, from storyboard to final film.
- Construct an animation using stop-motion techniques.
- Construct a basic 2D animation in After Effects.
- Demonstrate an understanding of sound design in animation.

Prerequisite

COMM 135 Intro to Video Production

Readings

Any required or suggested readings for this course will be made available to students via Sakai.

Attendance

This is a production class. We are covering a large amount of material in each class. If you miss a class, you will miss critical material that will help you complete your assignments and you will not be there to participate in class. You are responsible for getting notes from another student. University authorized absences for travel (e.g., travel for a club or team) must be cleared with me in advance and documentation must be provided. **You may NOT miss the final exam meeting period Monday 12/11/2017.**

Assignments, Points and Due Dates

Assignments are due (uploaded to LUC Box/Sakai and ready to be viewed) at the start of class at 7:00 pm on their assigned Monday due date, unless noted otherwise. If you miss class on the day an assignment is due, you are still responsible for ensuring that an assignment is submitted by the due date and time.

The majority of your grade for each assignment will be based on whether you actually completed the work and not necessarily the quality. Animation has a steep learning curve. But, work that has been thrown together thoughtlessly or is incomplete will be penalized.

The table below provides a quick overview of the planned assignments, their point values, and their deadlines.

Assignment	Points	Due Dates	Due Time
Project 1: Pre-Production	8	9/18	7:00 pm
Project 1: Check-in – show WIP	3	9/25	7:00 pm
Project 1: Cut-out/Collage Animation	9	10/2	7:00 pm
Project 2: Pre-Production	8	10/16	7:00 pm
Project 2: Check-in– show WIP	3	10/23	7:00 pm
Project 2: Pixilation Animation	9	10/30	7:00 pm
Project 3: Pre-Production	8	11/6	7:00 pm
Project 3: Check-in– show WIP	3	11/13	7:00 pm
Project 3: Digital Puppet Animation	9	11/20	7:00 pm
Final Project: Pre-Production	8	11/27	7:00 pm
Final Project: Check-in– show WIP	3	12/4	7:00 pm
Final Project	9	12/11	7:00 pm
Critique	8	***See below**	
Participation	12	****See below**	
Total Cumulative Points	**100**		

*Critique – 8 points

- ***In-Class Critique - 2 points***
    - o   All of your projects are due at the start of class on the assigned due date.
    - o   You will be scheduled for one in-depth in-class critique for either Project 1, 2, or 3.

- I will assign you to your in-depth in-class critique at the beginning of the semester.
- For your in-depth in-class critique, make sure your assignment is submitted on time or you will lose points for the in-class critique as well as points for submitting your assignment late!

- ***Online Discussion Forum Critique – 6 points***
  - Project 1 – two (2) points; Project 2 – two (2) points; Project 3 – two (2) points
  - You must provide online feedback for all student projects that were not critiqued in class on the Sakai discussion forum.
    - You must provide online feedback for projects 1, 2, and 3.
    - There will be a discussion forum for each project and a sub forum for each student.
    - Student project videos can be found on LUC Box and you will be provided a link for each student video.
    - You must provide online feedback for all student projects by the start of the next class.

**Participation – 12 points

Class participation is important! You are expected to participate in all in-class projects, demonstrations and discussions.

Late Assignments

- For Projects 1, 2, 3, and the Pre-Production and WIP portions of the Final Project, three (3) points will be deducted each day an assignment is late. (A day begins/ends at 7:00 pm.)
- **The Final Project may not be submitted late** and is due at the start of the final exam meeting 7:00 pm Monday 5/2/2016. You will receive zero (0) points for the Final Project if you fail to submit it on time.
- Critique work must be submitted on time. There is no make-up work for critiques.
- There is no make-up work for class Participation.

About Animation in This Class
How much time assignments require
You will be animating in this class and I hope you are excited! However, you will quickly learn that animation takes WORK! Expect to spend 3-4 hours minimum per week on assignments. You will find that some assignments may require more time while other assignments may require less time.

You will be drawing
You will be drawing in this class for pre-production assignments. DON'T PANIC! You will not be judged on how well you draw. You will be evaluated on your effort and your ability to visually plan out your work.

Back up your work

We are working with computers that will crash, fail, and eat your work. After Effects will definitely crash on you. Losing work is not an excuse for incomplete or late work. It is your responsibility to back-up your work.

Advice about reducing the likelihood that you will lose work:

- Save often. Save often. Save often.
- Save incrementally/Save in versions: Zefeldt_projec1_v001.aep, Zefeldt_project1_v002.aep,…
- Back up your files onto your external hard drive/flash drive at the end of each work session.
- BUT – do not work directly off of your hard drive/flash drive. These external drives should only be used for back up and transport.
- Do not save on the school's computers.
- Consider creating a second back up in an online storage site, like LUC Box.

Note on working in groups

Media production often involves a collaborative process. That being said, this course is intended to teach each student introductory animation and to individually obtain a basic level of competency to these introductory concepts and techniques. Most projects will be completed as individual assignments. Project 2 will be the only project completed as a group. Please note that every member of the group will receive the same grade for said assignment, so you are each equally responsible for the success or failure of the team.

Extra Credit

There may be opportunities for extra credit points throughout the semester. If an extra credit assignment is offered, it is at my discretion whether a student has fulfilled the assignment criteria.

Grading

At the end of the course, you will receive a letter grade. Your grade is based on a cumulative point system.

Letter Grade	Total Cumulative Points
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59

E-mail Policy

I will respond to e-mails within 48 hours, likely sooner. You may not e-mail assignments to me.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students and the student will automatically receive a failing grade for the course. Cheating on in-class assignments or any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment. Note, cheating includes, but is not limited to, submitting the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes without the expressed prior permission of all instructors. For more information see Loyola University Chicago's undergraduate student catalog section on Academic Integrity:
http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation form Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Equipment, Materials and Supplies

External Hard Drive or Flash/USB Drive
You will need an external, portable hard drive or a USB/flash drive that allows you to back up your media. The drive should be USB 2.0 or 3.0. It is your responsibility to back up your work.

Online File Storage Account
We will be using LUC Box for your animation project submissions. Make sure there is adequate space in your LUC Box so you can upload your projects to LUC Box. You will need to generate a link to your QuickTime movie files so your movie can be shared with the class for critiques.

For Project 2, you will be asked to checkout a special PC laptop with Dragonframe installed on it from the OWL Lab. You may need to upload your Dragonframe project and/or export onto an online file storage site, such as your LUC Box account.

Again, it is your responsibility to back up your work. If you are worried about space on your LUC Box account, you may want to consider signing up for a free online file storage account in addition to LUC Box (Dropbox.com, Google Drive, etc.). Always back up your work.

Headphones
You will be asked to add sound to your projects. Headphones will be a necessity. Headphones can be checked out from the OWL Lab.

You will need to obtain materials for storyboarding, character design and concept art

You will need to obtain materials for cutout animations and pixilation projects

Lab Hours and Locations

- OWL Lab, SOC Building Room, Basement Level
    - Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 10:00 pm
    - ***Checkout of Equipment is subject to OWL Lab rules and procedures; OWL Lab has final say.***
    - Relevant Equipment:
        - Animation Table for Project 1 (Reserve in OWL lab for 4 hour blocks; link to be provided to reservation request sheet)
            - Canon T3 DSLR
            - Copy Stand
            - Light Box
            - Side Lights
            - iMac with Dragonframe
        - Portable PC laptop setup with Dragonframe for Project 2 (24 hour check-out; weekend check-out)
            - You must checkout the following materials to complete Project 2:
                - PC laptop with Dragonframe and Dragonframe keypad
                - Canon T3 DSLR (or equivalent camera that works with Dragonframe – see supported cameras for Dragonframe: http://www.dragonframe.com/camera.php)
                    - Ensure that your camera has:
                        - Kit lens
                        - Battery with charger or AC power adapter
                        - Camera USB cable (to connect Camera to computer)
                - Tripod
- For list of Loyola Labs with scanners for scanning in pre-production materials:
    - http://luc.edu/digitalmedia/digitalmedialabs/lablocations/
    - SOC 002 definitely has a scanner.
- For list of Loyola Labs with Adobe After Effects, Photoshop, and Illustrator:
    - http://luc.edu/digitalmedia/digitalmedialabs/softwareapplications/

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change throughout the semester and will be adapted to fit the needs of the students.

Assignments are due at the start of class on their due date.

Class 1 (8/28)

- Introduction to course - What are we going to do in here?
- Course logistics/syllabus review
- What is Animation?
    - The single frame, persistence of vision, historical development of animation
    - How is animation different from/similar to live action film?
- Principles of animation
- Lab:
    - Stop Motion Studio (smart phone apps)
    - 1st Dragonframe intro
        - Basic set-up overview
        - Demonstrate principles of animation

Class 2 (9/11)

- Pre-production boot camp: Story development, character design, concept art, production plans and treatment – Part 1
    - Story development through sketching
    - What is a treatment?
    - Why do we storyboard – can't we make it up as we go along?
- Lab:
    - Treatment and storyboard group exercise
- 2D Stop-motion media exploration
- Project Assigned:
    - Project 1: Pre-Production for Cut-out/Collage project

Class 3 (9/18)

- Lab 1:
    - Demonstration of Cameras and Dragon Frame
- Lab 2:
    - Demonstration of Cut-out/Collage technique
- Project Assigned:
    - Project 1: Cut-out/Collage Animation
- **Due:**
    - Project 1: Pre-Production for Cut-out/Collage project

Class 4 (9/25)

- Sound design for animation
    - Diegetic and Non-Diegetic sound
    - Primary sound stems used in animation:
        - Dialogue
        - Music
        - SFX
- Lab:
    - Synchronization of audio tracks and effects
- What are critiques and why are we going to do them?
    - Assign critique groups for semester
- **Due:**
    - Project 1: Check-in – show WIP

Class 5 (10/2)

- More about the principles of animation
- Pixilation/Found Objects - "Combining the animated with the real."
    - Pixil or Pixel what? What is Pixilation exactly?
- Lab:
    - Demonstration of pixilation production process
- Assigned:
    - Project 2: Pre-Production for Pixilation Animation
- In-class Critique Project 1
- **Due:**
    - Project 1: Cut-out/Collage Animation

Mid-Semester Break – No class (10/9)

Class 6 (10/16)

- Overview of CG Animation
- Introduction to After Effects
- Assigned:
    - o Project 2: Pixilation Animation
- Lab:
    - o Groups pitch/critique Project 2 treatment and storyboards
- **Due:**
    - o Project 2: Pre-Production for Pixilation Animation

Class 7 (10/23)

- Review Introduction to After Effects
- Digital Puppets in After Effects
- Lab 1:
    - o Hierarchy-based puppet in After Effects: import, set-up, and keyframe
- Lab 2:
    - o Trouble-shooting Project 2 with Groups
- **Due:**
    - o Project 2: Check-in– show WIP

Class 8 (10/30)

- Continuation of Digital Puppets in After Effects
- Lab 1:
    - o Pin-based puppet in After Effects: import, set-up, and keyframe
    - o hierarchy-based puppet vs. pin-based puppet
- Pre-production: Story development, character design, concept art, production plans and treatment - Part 2
    - o Character design and principles of animation: Appeal
    - o Design Approaches
    - o Neutral Pose for Digital Puppets
    - o Character Bones
- Lab 2:
    - o Character Design Workshop
- Assigned:
    - o Project 3 Pre-Production for Digital Puppet Animation
- In-class Critique Project 2
- **Due:**
    - o Project 2: Pixilation Animation

Class 9 (11/6)

- Creating Digital Puppets in Photoshop and Illustrator
- Digital Puppets and Replacement Animation in After Effects
- Storyboarding and Planning for Animation Puppet Creation
- Lab:
    - Begin creating digital puppets in Photoshop/Illustrator
- Assigned:
    - Project 3: Digital Puppet Animation
- **Due:**
    - Project 3 Pre-Production for Digital Puppet Animation

Class 10 (11/13)

- More about After Effects:
    - Compositions and puppets
    - Thinking cinematically with layers
    - Camera moves
    - Deeper dive - Optimal settings for Photoshop vs. Illustrator puppet imports
    - Intro After Effects Expressions
- Lab 2:
    - Workshop Digital Puppet Assignment
- **Due:**
    - Project 3: Check-in– show WIP

Class 11 (11/20)

- Walk-Cycles in Animation
- Lab 1:
    - Create a walk cycle animation in-class
- Planning final project – Richard William's "Thief and the Cobbler" as a case study in scope/time management
- Pre-production: Story development, character design, concept art, production plans and treatment – Part 3
    - Concept Art – Developing the "look" of your animation
- Assigned:
    - Final Project Pre-Production
- In-class Critique Project 3
- **Due:**
    - Project 3: Digital Puppet Animation

Class 12 (11/27)

- Pre-production process and animatics
- In-class small group review of pre-production materials and production schedule
- In-class final project pitches
- Lab:
  - Continue working on final projects
- Assigned:
  - Final Project
- **Due:**
  - Final Project Pre-Production

Class 13 (12/4)

- Animation Topic – TBD by class
- Next steps in Animation
- Plug-ins for After Effects
- Lab:
  - Continue working on final projects
- **Due:**
  - Final Project: Check-in– show WIP

Final Exam Period (12/11) – Same time and place as normally meet 7 p.m.

- **Due:**
  - Final Project
- Presentation and critique of final projects by class