

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF ANIMATION (CTAN 544)

Fall 2010, Tuesdays, 10am–12:30pm, SCB 205

Instructor: Lisa Mann <emann@usc.edu>

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Required textbook: The Animation Book by Kit Laybourne

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

CTAN 544 is a core lecture class with an accompanying production lab exploring the fundamental principals of animation, including timing, composition, the quality of movement, and transitions. The class begins with “cameraless” filmmaking techniques such as flipbooks and scratching on film, and then progresses to under-the-camera, stop-motion techniques such as claymation, sand animation, cut-outs, paint-on-glass, puppet, light animation, and rotoscope. Each week, we will focus on a particular technique and during weekly lab sessions, students will have an opportunity to explore this technique by recording their animation one frame on a digital camera Oxberry animation stand. The following Tuesday in class, we will project and critique the lab assignments. There is also a class field trip to a local museum to look at contemporary art and complete an accompanying animation assignment.

For the Final Class Project, you will create a 1-minute animation with a soundtrack and a title, choosing one of the following choices:

- A. Work in small groups of 2 or 3 to create large scale animations using props and even people.
- B. Work independently using any of the techniques or a combination of techniques we experimented with this semester.

### GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Completion of all weekly assignments = 50%

Class attendance = 10%

(A student may have one excused absence. Three unexcused absences mean the student fails the class. Students are marked late if they arrive after 10:10. Three late marks are equal to one absence.)

Weekly participation in class discussion = 10% (at least one comment per class)

Museum field trip assignment = 5%

Rotoscope assignment = 5%

Journals (notes and drawings both) = 5%

Final presentation = 15%

Museum Field Trip to the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (9/13 or 9/20)

Dennis Hopper Double Standard: A comprehensive retrospective exhibition of the artist's photography, sculptures, and assemblages.

1. Aug. 24: Introduction to Animation Techniques

Class objectives and expectations

Screening:

Sledgehammer, Peter Gabriel

Viewmaster, George Griffin

We Got Time film by David Wilson, music by Moray McLaren

Your Face, Bill Plympton

Assignment: 2 zoetrope strips (1 walk cycle and 1 metamorphosis) and 2 flip books, 50 pages each (1 metamorphosis and 1 journey), due next week in class.

Read: The Animation Book, Chapter 2; and pps. 179–192

2. Aug. 31: Timing (The Reality of 24 frames per second)

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Early Abstractions 1–5, 7 and 10, Harry Smith

Begone Dull Care, Norman McClaren

Mothlight, Stan Brakhage (16mm)

Assignment: Draw directly on 10' of clear film leader. Experiment with timing and rhythms.

Read: Maureen Furness and William Moritz hand-outs.

3. Sept. 7: Choreography and Composition

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Discuss Animation language

Blinkety Blank, Norman McClaren

Free Radicals, Len Lye

Two Sisters, Caroline Leaf

Assignment: Scratch directly onto 10' black leader. Explore directional movement and composition.

4. Sept. 14: Bringing Objects to Life

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Jabberwocky, Jan Svankmejer

Alice, sock clip, Jan Svankmejer

Kaboom, Spaghetti Western, Pes

La Cigogne aux Pattes de Bois, (The Wood Stork in Legs),  
Catherine Ginope

Assignment: Each Student will animate under the camera during their one-hour lab session. This week, you will animate a single, 3D, found object of your choice, giving it emotions and a personality.

Read The Animation Book, Chapter 4

5. Sept. 21: Replacement Animation and Animated Transitions: Special Properties of Animation

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Dimensions of Dialogue, Jan Svankmejer

Game Over, Cake Countdown, Pes

Assignment: Animate food and include at least one replacement animation. Work with the students who come before and after you to make smooth animated transitions. This is a group Exquisite Corpse assignment without cuts. You will use the HD video camera for this assignment.

Also this week: Organize live action shoot for the Rotoscope Project.

Introduction to rotoscoping assignment: create and shoot at least 10 seconds on the Oxberry.

Screening:

Milk of Amnesia, Jeffrey Noyes,

Shadrach

The Fly, FerInc Rofus

Snack and Drink, Bob Sabiston and Tommy Pallotta

Fell in Love with a Girl, Michel Gondry, White Stripes music

Read: The Animation Book, Chapter 13

6. Sept. 28: Cut-outs: The Medium for your Message

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Terry Gilliam's Monty Python shorts

Frank Film, Frank Morris

Crimenals, Greg Araya

Oh, Mandy, the Spinto Band, Waverly Films

Fast Film, Virgil Widrich

Assignment: Students will animate cut-outs to make a convincing political statement, create a surreal world, or explore comic possibilities. Incorporate at least one cut-out puppet and attempt a replacement style transition. Use found images or create your own. Text is optional.

Read: The Animation Book, Chapter 5

Also this week: Screen the live action footage and decide as a group how to structure the rotoscope project and edit as necessary.

7. Oct. 5: Exploring the Possibilities of Clay: Transformation and Metamorphosis

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Darkness Light Darkness, Jan Svankmeyer

The Arnold Waltz, Craig Bartlett

Home Things, Jose Miguel Ribeiro

Mona Lisa Descending the Staircase, Joan Gratz

Pro and Con, excerpt, Joan Gratz

Assignment: Explore the special qualities of clay, including texture, weight, elasticity, and "morphability." Incorporate one morph and one replacement animation. Also try to incorporate a special effect, like water or fire.

Read: The Animation Book, pps. 150–154

8. Oct. 12: Sand: Animated Chiaroscuro

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Particle Man, Christine Ferriter

Tracks, Corrie Francis

The Owl Who Married the Goose, Caroline Leaf

Dramolet, Brothers Quay

Toshkaprod, Kseniya Simonova

Assignment: Explore sand's amazing qualities. Working with contrast and light, negative and positive, to create at least two environments/figures and animate the transitions between them. Continue working at your desk on the roto project. Finish all artwork by Nov. 6!

Read: The Animation Book, Chapter 11.

9. Oct. 19: Charcoal, Pastel, and Painting-on-Glass

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

William Kentridge excerpts

The Street, Caroline Leaf

The Cow, Alexander Petrov

A Conversation with Harris, Sheila Sofian

Assignment: Using charcoal, pastel, or paint, create spatial depth and animated the character moving through the frame.

10. Oct. 26: 3-D Puppets: Creating Another Reality

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Street of Crocodiles, Brothers Quay

Lint People, Helder Sun

Lolly's Box, Valerie LaPointe (FL 2006)

This Is Where We Live, Apt Studio and Asylum Films

Assignment: Students will build a simple set and a simple 3-D puppet and animate using a video camera on a tripod. Focus on creating an original environment. (Use lunchbox for this assignment.)

Read: The Animation Book, pps. 154–161

11. Nov. 2: Rhythm, Pattern, and Structure

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Photocopy Cha Cha, Chel White

Creation, Thomas Meyer-Hermann

Five Improvisations, Paul Glabicki

Repete, Michaela Pavlatova

Assignment: Choose any technique on the Oxberry to bring your version of Dennis Hopper's artwork to life through movement.

12. Nov. 9: Pixilation: People Animation

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Hardest Button to Button, White Stripes

Human Skateboard, Pes

Gisele Kerosene

Kindle ads

13. Nov. 16: Final Projects: Big Spaces, Big Props

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Cardboard, Sjors Vervoort

Big Bang Big Boom, Blu

Sony Bravia Playdoh Bunny

Deadline, Savannah College of Art and Design

Assignment: Use your lab time to shoot your rotoscope project. Begin work on your final large scale group project. Conceptualize, storyboard, and do pre-production, and shoot. You are also required to record a soundtrack. Due date is Dec. 14.

14. Nov. 23: Light Animation

Screening of Rotoscope project

Pika Pika

Sprint commercials

In-class light assignment

Thanksgiving Break: no regular labs this week.

Plus: Find an example of contemporary stop motion video that impresses/inspires you on You Tube and send me the URL by Monday Nov. 29 or bring to class next week.

15. Nov. 30: The Relevance of Stop Motion

Screening and discussion:

Previous week's assignment

Contemporary commercial applications of stop motion

**DUE: JOURNALS ARE TO BE COLLECTED TODAY and returned same day.**

Assignment:

Sign up for camera time to shoot your final project. Remember you are required to record a soundtrack, original music or sound FX.

16. Dec. 14: Final Project Presentations!

Presentations and critiques

\*\*\* NOTE: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP.

Please be sure that the letter is delivered to the Professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

#### MISSING AN EXAM OR FINAL PRESENTATION, INCOMPLETES:

The only acceptable excuses for missing an exam or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the professor before the exam

and present verifiable evidence in order for a make-up to be scheduled.

Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor or teaching assistant before final grades are due.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical performance from USC students. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one instructor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. If you have any doubts or questions about these policies, consult "SCAMPUS" and/or confer with the Professor or your T.A.