

CTIN 290: Digital Media Workshop

Time:	Monday 3:00 pm to 5:50 pm Wednesdays 4:00 pm to 5:50 pm
Location:	SCI L114
Instructor:	Andreas Kratky
Student Assistant:	Christian Bingham
Units:	4
Prerequisites:	none
Office Hours:	Monday 6:00 to 7:30 pm. SCI 201Q
Contact:	akratky@cinema.usc.edu

Course Description

The goal of Digital Media Workshop is to guide students through a variety of moving image aesthetics and methodologies in order to highlight how the language of cinema shapes contemporary digital and interactive media practices. This course embraces foundation SCA filmmaking curriculum, with a forward-looking view toward the future of visual media design across formats and platforms.

Formally and topically, lectures and assignments emphasize cinematic structures relevant to undergraduates interested in interactive media production. This includes, for example, understanding the role of blocking, lighting, composition, and editing plays in cinematic communication. The class will extend beyond traditional visualization methods to include fundamentals for real-time 3D environments. Finally, students will learn the expressive means sound design affords for both linear and nonlinear projects.

The first third of the semester will focus on filmmaking practices. And the latter 9 weeks of the semester concentrate on discussions and workshops for real-time 3D projects.

Consistently, we will address two types of communication; we will ask how time-based media communicates to the viewer or player, and we will challenge each other to express ideas and criticism clearly and eloquently during all discussions.

Learning Objectives

Visual and interactive storytelling

- Harness cinematic language in order to communicate through visual, aural and interactive techniques.
- Articulate how individual cinematic structures build theme and story.
- Explore characterization, arc and tone.
- Create rich and meaningful sound designs.
- Articulate aesthetic and conceptual relationships between cinematic and interactive language.

Digital media development

- Texture 3D models.
- Design stories embedded in virtual spaces.
- Design and develop 3D interactive worlds with an expressive emphasis on player point-of-view.

Production methods

- Collaborate on shared creative visions.
- Learn the role of group-planning documents.
- Learn how to give and take critique.
- Formally playtest interactive projects; tally and analyze data.

Readings

- *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud
- *Sculpting in Time*, Andrei Tarkowsky
- *The Vatican to Vegas*, Introduction, Norman Klein
- *The Art of Game Design*, Chapter 2, Jesse Schell
- “And I Was In A Maze”, Umberto Eco
- “Arrested Development: Why Machinima Can’t (or Shouldn’t) Grow Up”, Katie Salen
- “The Death of the Artist - And the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur”, William Deresiewicz

Assignments

There are 5 projects.

The first two assignments are "real camera" projects. Formally, Project 1 is composed of a **sequence of stills**. Location sound is optional. Students will be expected to discuss their use of composition and montage in critique.

Project 2 depicts a **character** who must make a difficult decision. Students are expected to explore the role that pacing plays in storytelling.

These first two assignments challenge students to practice visual storytelling through composition, editing, and sound. During critique, students will be expected to articulate how they embraced technical and aesthetic constraints to their expressive advantage.

During week 7, students will begin creating real-time 3D projects in Unity3D. Project 3 frames the player as a **performer** ("Play the Play"). This assignment asks students to consider the relationship between experience design and narrative authorship. How is anticipating a film audience's comprehension like designing for the player? This project focuses on the differences between film-space and interactive space. We will use stereoscopic, spherical panorama images, played back in the Oculus Rift.

Project 4 is a **dream**. This project explores the boundaries between narrative and dream logic. Students will build their own dream world and weigh the benefits of both film and interactive storytelling techniques. A particular emphasis on sound design will be expected. Students may incorporate the Oculus Rift.

Project 5 is a **labyrinth**. Students will be expected to articulate how their project is a "maze of associations". Inspired by a myriad of perspectives on labyrinths that we will read, view, and play, students are encouraged to incorporate "improbable" or "impossible" spaces.

Students will work alone on projects 1 and 4, and they will be in pairs for 2, 3, and 5. This arrangement ensures that every student learns the technical and formal essentials before separating roles.

Grading

5 Projects, Final	10% each = 50%
10 Project Milestones	3% each = 30%
1 Play and Present	10% = 10%
Participation:	10% = 10%

Course Outline:

1. Week

- Jan 10, 2018: Lecture and discussion of concepts of visual storytelling and montage
We will screen examples and discuss the relationship between the camera and the screen image. What does the viewer see and how is meaning expressed?
Camera 1: Introduction of camera operation

Also, we will discuss Project 1, which is due in Week 3.

2. Week

- Jan 15, 2018: Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Jan 17, 2018: Review of camera 1 assignment

Discussion of shot composition, shot types and how they contribute to meaning and expression

In-class Workshop: Camera 1 exercise (complete shot list)

Reading (due for Jan 17): Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*

We will discuss the principles of diegesis and storytelling. Further, what is the relationship between what the character knows and what the audience knows? The filmmaker chooses what the viewer sees.

3. Week

- Jan 22, 2018: Introduction to montage
The film cut has meaning; it follows rules of continuity and at the same time it provides a substantial change in content. How do sequence and rhythm operate? Screening of relevant examples.

Reading (due for Jan 2): Steven Katz, *Film Directing*

Due: Project 1 Milestone. Footage (digital stills) ready for review. Upload in a viewable folder and share link with Christian.

In Class Workshop: Complete project structure questions for Project 1

- Jan 24, 2018: **First project due**
Presentation and discussion of Project 1

4. Week

- Jan 29, 2018: Camera Workshop: Camera mechanics, lenses

Discussion of Project 2

In Class Workshop: Shoot a non-narrative sequence

Due: Play and Present (Group 1)

- Jan 31, 2018: The narrative structure of film: In dramatic narrative film, the protagonist is put in conflict and then must go through a change. As viewers, we anticipate where the character will take us. And if we are surprised by an outcome, we gain insight into that character, often by way of reflecting on prior scenes. Screening of relevant examples.

Reading (due for Jan 31): Andrei Tarkowsky, *Sculpting in Time*

In Class Workshop: Preparation of project 2 in Class: Form Teams and Brainstorm. Teams Draft Planning Documents

5. Week

- Feb 5, 2018: Introduction to cinematic lighting: How can we use light to direct the viewer's attention, how does it contribute to meaning?

In Class Workshop: Lighting exercise in stage 1, SCE (wear closed-toes shoes and bring leather gloves)

- Feb 7, 2018: Considering the camera and editing techniques reviewed in previous classes, what is the expressive power of the long take? After viewing scenes with no formal cuts, we will discuss this signature approach in modernist filmmaking. Films can simultaneously provide a fictional story while being about those cinematic modes of production that created that very fiction. Screening of relevant examples.

Due: Play and Present (Group 2)

Due: Project 2, revised planning documents

6. Week

- Feb 12, 2018: Screening of Moonlight (2016)

- Feb 14, 2018: Discussion of cinematic space

Due: Play and Present (Group 3)

Due: Project 2, review and discussion of “beta”-edits

7. Week

- Feb 19, 2018: President’s Day

- Feb 21, 2018: **Second project due**

Screening and discussion of the second project

8. Week

- Feb 26, 2018: Discussion of cinematic space and interactive space; introduction to stereoscopic spherical panoramas; and introduction to the Oculus Rift

Discussion of project 3

Reading (due for Feb 26): Norman Klein, *From Vatican to Vegas*

Due: Play and Present (Group 4)

- Feb 28, 2018: **In Class Workshop:** Unity3D Workshop - reviewing a template for panoramic stereoscopic images.

9. Week

- Mar 5, 2018: Introduction to sound design: How does sound design shape our emotional experience? And what happens when we become conscious of sound? Screening of relevant examples.

- Mar 7, 2018: Film language: Since the earliest days of cinema, filmmakers have defied the rules of cinematic language, including the approaches we have studied in previous classes. Is the experimental film best understood in contrast to convention? Does the audience need to have a sense of the avant-garde filmmaker’s intentions? And what happens to radical techniques after audiences get used to them?

Due: Project 3 milestone: Planning documents

Springbreak

10. Week

- Mar 19, 2018: **Third project due**

Screening and discussion of third project

- Mar 21, 2018: Remediation: Digital media has made an old artistic approach - remediation - easy to create. Remediation is the representation of one medium in another. In fact, it is a defining characteristic of contemporary media of every kind. Further, there is an impression that, historically, every new medium absorbs the previous. For example, cinema incorporates theater, literature, and music. And now videogames remediate cinema. But if we look closely at examples, the reality of remediation is not so straightforward.

Discussion: Remediation

- of Cinema (Doom, 1993; Half Life 2, 2004)
- of Television (EA's Madden)
- of The Video Player (Spaceballs, 1987)
- of 3D Modeling (Yokohama International Port)
- of Painting (Braid, 2008; The Cat That Got the Milk, 2012)

Discussion of Project 4

In Class Workshop: Unity3D

Due: Play and Present (Group 5)

11. Week

- Mar 26, 2018: Discussion of Expressionism and Abstraction and screening of relevant examples

In Class Workshop: Unity3D (continued)

Reading (due Apr 2): *The Art of Game Design*, Jesse Schell

Workshop: Schell Questions

Due: Project 4 milestone: Design documents

Workshop: The Game Macro

- Mar 28, 2018: Screening: Spirited Away (2002)

12. Week

- Apr 2, 2018: Animation logic: Popular feature animation from studios like Disney and Pixar are aligned with dramatic narrative discussed in the previous class. But the history of animation is replete with a separate approach to story. Such examples of "experimental animation" draw from elemental stories of folklore and fairy tale, and feature "scripted journeys". The character is controlled by surrounding forces, and viewers project their own sensibilities onto the character. The videogame designer has much to learn from this history. Screening of relevant examples.

We will study a primary influence on videogames - the scripted space (the painted dome, the mall, casinos, theme parks). Additionally, what

storytelling approaches do we recognize from our discussion of animation as stories-of-elemental-determinism from Week 8? Who is the main character - the player/protagonist or the world?

Due: Project 4 milestone: Vertical Slice

- Apr 4, 2018: **Fourth project due**
Presentation and discussion of project 4

13. Week

- Apr 9, 2018: We will continue our discussion of scripted spaces by distinguishing three types of labyrinths - unicursal, maze, and network. Historically, what types of stories feature labyrinths, and how is that related to the experience of navigating them? Screening of relevant examples.

Discussion of project 5, which is due Week 15.
Formation of teams, brainstorming

Reading (due Apr 9): *And I Was In A Maze*, Umberto Eco

- Apr 11, 2018: **Due:** Project 5 milestone: Planning documents

In-class Workshop: Make Media Leaps

Due: Play and Present (Group 6)

14. Week

- Apr 16, 2018: **Due:** Project 5 milestone: Alpha
- Apr 18, 2018: What happens when we make movies using videogames? Machinima is one type of such remediation. How has it worked out?

Screenings: Machinima as Infinite Irony

- Personal Diary (Back and Forth, 2006)
- Transcendent Exploits (1K II Project, 2006)
- Unplay (My Trip to Liberty City, 2003; Rehearsals for Retirement, 2007)
- Surrounded and Alone (She Puppet, 2001)

Reading (due Apr 18): "Arrested Development: Why Machinima Can't (or Shouldn't) Grow Up", Katie Salen

15. Week

- Apr 23, 2018: **Fifth project due**
Screening and discussion of fifth project
- Apr 25, 2018: Continued screening and discussion of fifth project
Class round-up

Missing an Assignment Deadline, Incompletes:

The only acceptable excuses for missing an assignment deadline or taking an incomplete in the course are personal illness or a family emergency. Students must inform the instructor **before the assignment due date** and present verifiable evidence in order for a deadline extension to be granted. Students who wish to take incompletes must also present documentation of the problem to the instructor or student assistant before final grades are due. An Incomplete can only be assigned after the week 12 withdrawal deadline.

For assignments turned in after the assignment deadline without prior permission from the instructor, a penalty will be imposed equal to 10% of the total available points for the assignment, for each day or part of a day that the assignment is late, up to a maximum of seven days.

Attendance Policy:

Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students arriving more than five minutes late to three classes, more than ten minutes late to a single class, or leaving early, will be marked as having an unexcused absence from class, unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructor. The following guidelines are from the Interactive Media & Games Division handbook regarding absences and grading and apply to all students.

Guidelines for absences affecting grading

- Two unexcused absences: lowers grade one full grade point (for example, from A to B)
- Three unexcused absences: lowers grade two full grade points
- Four or more unexcused absences: request to withdraw from course (instructor's discretion)

Excused absences are:

- Illness (with a doctor's verification)
- Family or personal emergency (with verification)

Social media, including text messaging and internet messaging, are excluded from class unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. A 0.5% grade reduction will result from each occurrence of a student being found using them.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems:

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

Syllabus Updates:

This syllabus is liable to change up to the beginning of class and possibly over the semester. Please check the posted syllabus regularly, and note all changes that are shared by the instructor in class.