



USC School of Cinematic Arts

CTIN 594a Master Thesis I

Units: 2

Fall 2021 - Thursdays - 10:00 AM - 1:50 PM

Location: SCI 306

Prerequisites: CTIN-542 and 548

Instructors:

Martzi Campos

mccampos@usc.edu

Cell: 650-452-3848

Office Hours: By appointment

Laird Malamed (remote instructor)

lairdo@cinema.usc.edu

Cell: 310-903-0886

Virtual Office Hours: Generally Monday 3 - 4 pm PDT;
Friday 3 - 4 pm PDT (please let me know if you want to
meet) and by request at other times as more convenient
including weekends.

Class Student Assistant:

Lizby Dingus

dingus@usc.edu

IT Help: USC Cinema Creative Computing

Contact Info: creativetech@cinema.usc.edu

Access to campus requires numerous prerequisites and is subject to changes at any time based on USC and Los Angeles city/county regulations. Everyone's patiences and flexibility is appreciated.

Course Description

Martzi and Laird are excited to welcome you to year 3 of your MFA work and to see your amazing thesis projects develop and flourish.

CTIN-594a Masters Thesis is a studio class designed to provide the framework, guidance and feedback to assist in the development and production of the MFA thesis final project, begun in 542/548. During this 5th semester of the MFA, students will complete the major design and first playable phase of their project. They will demonstrate their projects at a faculty open house in December.

MFA candidates are expected to finalize their thesis goals, set a schedule, manage a team (if applicable) and produce regular, playable builds for review by their thesis committees, instructors and cohort. Feedback will be provided in a variety of formats from verbal, written to user studies. 594a expects the students to utilize and synthesize all of the ideas, techniques and experiences from their first 4 semesters. By using these skills, they will successfully develop their projects.

Key deliverables during the term include

1. Updated and final thesis idea and pillars
2. Schedule for the fall and spring semesters leading to thesis show in May 2022
3. The establishment and management of a team to assist in production
4. Multiple playable builds of their projects, culminating in a polished first playable/vertical slice or even Alpha.
5. A written introspection about their project at midterm
6. Participation in a winter "open house" (which may be in person or virtual or a hybrid)

The class is a combination of guest visits by faculty specialists and project reviews driven by student work sharing and ample feedback from each other. Attendance is required (unless agreed upon in advance due to urgent requirements). Openness and honesty are key drivers.

Learning Objectives

The key learning objective is how to lead a two semester project, being objective as to its successful and non-successful elements, adjusting as necessary while still retaining the thesis goal. An additional goal is the ability to communicate about the projects in verbal and written form whether in long or short time scales.

As a reminder, the success MFA degree requires the completion of these elements:

1. Completed Thesis Interactive Project
2. A written paper discussing the thesis and implications from the project
3. An Oral Defense presentation to the faculty and students
4. Participation in the Spring thesis show

5. Completion of all other requirements, in good standing and the minimum GPA as documents by the department and Graduate School

Being able to receive feedback and distill patterns to drive improvements in key areas.

Being able to give feedback that is objective, example driven and relates to the project goals as a whole. We will be giving feedback on your feedback!

Note: Participation in USC Games Expo is not a requirement (nor a guarantee) for the 2022 graduating class. Further details to be shared.

Schedule

Fall 2021 has only 13 sessions due to various breaks. Class begins on Thursday, August 26. The final class is Thursday, December 2. We will have our winter show during the last class.

Class attendance is mandatory.

All of us experienced much of the past 18-months as an online experience. This is well over half of the time this class has had in Graduate School. As we return to campus (hopefully), we have to remember how to do it! Please be patient with everyone.

Additionally, everyone will be expected to show their TrojanCheck code upon entering class until such time as USC removes the daily health check in.

Note: Guest Speakers Order is Subject to Change

Week	Date	Class Overview
1	8/26/21	Introductions / The Thesis / Logistics / Student mini-pitch updates
1.5	8/27/21	AGP-MFA Team crewing / recruiting event, 6 PM PDT
2	9/2/21	Project Set Up: David White, Production / Matt Whiting, Programming
3	9/9/21	Thesis Committees Finalized / Scott Easley, Art Pipelines and Prep
3.5	9/10/21	AGP-MFA Team crewing / recruiting event, 6 PM PDT
4	9/16/21	Prior Art Document Due
5	9/23/21	Lesley Mathieson, Design / Dennis Wixon, User Studies
6	9/30/21	Jesse Vigil, Audio Design
7	10/7/21	Midterm Progress Paper Due / Tracy Fullerton (11:30-12:30)
8	10/14/21	Updated Schedule Due / NO CLASS - FALL BREAK

9	10/21/21	Re-Mini Pitch / Danny Bilson
10	10/28/21	TBD
11	11/4/21	Winter Open House Planning
12	11/11/21	TBD
13	11/18/21	Winter Open House Final Logistics
14	11/25/21	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING
15	12/2/21	Winter Open House and wrap up

The class will be recorded if required by USC.

We will host a shared folder for student work and class information.

Formal Check-ins

In addition - At least once in the semester, each student should schedule a formal check in with both Martzi and with Laird (separately) to discuss your projects. Anytime between weeks 4 and 10 make the most sense.

You should be meeting with all of your thesis advisors on a regular basis (weekly or biweekly).

Grading

CTIN-594a is a complete/incomplete credit course. You will be given credit for the class (as well as the corresponding 594b in Spring 21) upon the approval of your masters thesis. You will receive feedback on your deliverables, project critiques and your ability to give feedback.

(Note that graduate students must maintain a B average (3.0 GPA) as per USC Graduate School requirements which is based on your other coursework. Please see Sam if you are concerned about this requirement.)

Assignment Submission Policy

Generally, written assignments will be submitted via the shared Google Docs Drive. Please be aware that the entire class can view these files, so please do not share materials in this location you wish to keep private.

Oral assignments (project updates, pitches, etc) will be presented in class.

Attendance Policy

Punctual attendance at all classes is mandatory. Students arriving (or logging in for Zoom classes) 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.

Excused absences include:

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

We all understand emergencies arise, and breaks will be provided during class to handle the usual deluge of electronic messages. Please inform an instructor or SA of urgent situations.

Given the online nature of the class, we recognize the strain of multiple hours per day with VC. As such, if you need a break, please let your instructors know and take it. We will have break time as part of our classes.

We also realize that since we have devices all around us, the distraction is real. We recommend trying to close down all forms of other comms during class, and silencing alerts from social media, email etc.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In making games and interactive media in a professional and ethical way, it is important that you consider diversity and inclusion. When looking at your projects, you should consider who is depicted and how this work will impact others. What kinds of individuals and communities are represented in your work? What point of view does your work express? This class may assist you in learning how to make work that includes diverse viewpoints, and may discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of games and interactive media.

Safer Spaces

In this class, we make a commitment to foster a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. This means that we will issue content warnings as appropriate, use preferred pronouns, and respect self-identifications. While debate and discussion are welcome, please remain aware of the implications of your words and the images that you include in your work. If the instructor or another student points out that something you have said or shared with the group might be offensive, avoid being defensive; this is a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn together. If you have a concern about any aspect of the class, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the instructor, you are also welcome to speak with either the undergraduate or graduate advisor for the division, who can discuss the issue with you directly or point you toward other on- and off-campus resources for addressing your concern.

Harassment, sexual misconduct, interpersonal violence, and stalking are not tolerated by the university. All faculty and most staff are considered Responsible Employees by the university and must forward all information they receive about these types of situations to the Title IX Coordinator.

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for assisting students with supportive accommodations, including academic accommodations, as well as investigating these incidents if the reporting student wants an investigation. The Title IX office is also responsible for coordinating supportive measures for transgender and nonbinary students such as faculty notifications, and more. If you need supportive accommodations you may contact the Title IX Coordinator directly (titleix@usc.edu or 213-821-8298) without sharing any personal information with me. If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) provides 24/7 confidential support for students (213-740-9355 (WELL); press 0 after hours).

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

<p>PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE IN THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
