

# USC Roski

## ART 314 ILLUSTRATION FOR ART & DESIGN

**Fall 2023**

**Fri 12:00-2:40 PM**

**Units: 2**

**Location: WAH 118**

**Instructor: Angie Wang**

**Office Hours:** By appointment (in class or via email)

**Contact Info:** [artdirector.angiewang@gmail.com](mailto:artdirector.angiewang@gmail.com)

## Course Description

In this class, we explore the principles of illustration, an art form that prioritizes communicating a concept clearly, effectively, and *intriguingly* through drawing.

This class introduces the most important aspects of the image-making craft, including idea generation, formal concerns (composition, technique, style, etc), and relation to the larger world of art, politics, and culture. We will explore the creation of images that are able to convey a depth of meaning—drawing from our own experiences and perspectives to communicate ideas and emotions, while experimenting with different genres, mediums, and stylistic approaches. In small and large group critiques, we will practice analyzing how an image's composition, style, metaphors, and visual language help to code or convey content. We will also simulate the life of an illustrator who completes and turns in real-world assignments.

## Learning Objectives

1. Confidently interpret an idea into a visual format using research, metaphor, composition, and rendering
2. Develop one's artistic voice, while experimenting with different styles, approaches, and techniques
3. Engage one's strengths and interests in the field of illustration to understand what kind of work one is interested in producing

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-Requisite(s):** None

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None

**Recommended Preparation:** Any drawing, painting, graphic design, or creative writing classes.

## Course Requirements

Please come equipped with the tools of your preferred artistic medium, whether that's digital or traditional.

## Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Since all homework assignments will be delivered digitally as high resolution TIFs, PSDs, MP4s, or GIFs, a computer or tablet (iPad Pro, Surface Pro, etc) and basic knowledge of Adobe Photoshop, Procreate, Adobe Illustrator, and/or equivalents (GIMP, Clip Studio) will be necessary. If students choose to work on the assignments using traditional media, some familiarity with scanning at high resolutions or taking photographs will be needed.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

All homework in this class will be assigned as part of Life Sim.

*You're an illustrator trying to find independence and stability. You've found a place to live that isn't too pricey if you share it with roommates, but between rent, food, utility bills, health insurance, car payments, and student loans, your cost of living is roughly \$1500 per month.*

*Luckily, every week you receive freelance illustration assignments from various art directors who are fans of your work. They are excited to see what you'll create for them.*

Life Sim is based on real emails, real budgets, and real briefs. You will sign up at the beginning of each class for a category of illustration you'd like to create artwork in; I will contact you as Art Director Angie and assign you an illustration to draw in that category. Once you receive the assignment (which I will send by Saturday afternoon), you **must reply by Sunday night at midnight PST** or the opportunity will expire. Once you reply, you will draw 3-4 sketches and turn them in by the sketch deadline (5 PM on the day indicated in the email) and then, once Art Director Angie approves one of the sketches, you will take that sketch to final before 5 PM on the due date, making any requested revisions. There may be revisions requested after the

final is turned in, for which you will have an extension of 24 hours to complete. The assignment will not be considered complete unless all steps are completed in this order, and on time.

At the end of the semester, you will come away with 6-10 illustrations, which will give you space to learn about metaphor and meaning, and help you hone in on your voice and your own strengths and weaknesses, as well as an understanding of how you would like to relate to the world as an artist.

60% of your grade is based on your Life Sim balance at the end of the semester. You need to make \$1500 a month--your hypothetical cost of living--or \$6000 by the end of the semester. Please refer to the grading section for details on how grading works if you fall short. Life Sim assignments will usually be worth anywhere from \$600 to \$1200 each, with some exceptions, and turnaround will be anywhere from 5 days to two weeks.

Once you have accepted an assignment you are expected to complete it, but you may turn down an assignment in reply to the original query. Part of the Life Sim is learning time management, and signing up for/accepting enough work to cover your bills is your responsibility; I entrust you with agency over your time management. But *please* don't put yourself in a situation where it's the end of the semester, and you've made \$2200 out of the \$6000 total needed and your imaginary roommates have kicked you out for non-payment of rent and you've moved back into your imaginary childhood bedroom, and in the actual world you've failed the class.

#### **Midterm Project:**

For the midterm project, you will make a full illustration on a theme to be determined by the entire class.

We will discuss the midterm topic at around the halfway point of the semester. Everyone in the class will participate in brainstorming potential topics. I'll narrow it down to several options, and we will all vote on the topic that will be the theme for everyone in class to interpret. This should be an exercise in approaching a theme in a way that resonates for yourself while maintaining a sense of personal ownership and agency over the illustration.

Sketches and/or works in progress will be brought to class for large group critique before going to final.

#### **Final Project:**

The final project is a chance for you to create a completely self-directed illustration project. We will begin brainstorming towards the end of the semester and we'll spend class time working on it until the last class.

It could be a capstone piece for your portfolio to be used in promo materials you send out, a small illustrated zine about all the cars you've ever loved, a pitch with sample spreads for a children's book you want to create, a 5-second looping animated GIF about your experiences with meditation, scientific illustrations of an imaginary creature, several key Major Arcana tarot card designs, a website exploring LGBTQ+ history, a faux-tapestry of your original characters exploring an alien landscape, a visual encapsulation of the feeling of summer... anything. Be ambitious, but have fun.

Once you have your idea, I will give feedback and/or the green light. During the sketch stage, you will also receive input from the class at the large group critique. The final versions will be due over email.

We will hold an exhibition of all the finished projects in our last class (during final exam week). I will bring my hotpot and induction cooktop and make it a party.

## Grading

Your final grade will be based on four factors: participation in class discussions and exercises, Life Sim homework assignment completion, your midterm project, and your final project.

### Grading scale:

A	Minimum 95%
A-	Minimum 90%
B+	Minimum 87%
B	Minimum 83%
B-	Minimum 80%
C+	Minimum 77%
C	Minimum 73%
C-	Minimum 70%
D+	Minimum 67%
D	Minimum 60%
F	Below 60%

### Grading percentages:

15% Participation
60% Life Sim
10% Midterm
15% Final

Life Sim grading is based on timeliness and completion. Over the course of the semester, you will need to complete enough assignments to reach the \$6000 in rent, etc that constitute your \$1500/mo survival costs.

The reason Life Sim is graded entirely on completion is because I trust your own judgment and professionalism when it comes to the quality of your pieces. This is intended to help you develop and rely on your own sense of what looks “right” for you, as well as to give you space for experimentation without fear of a bad grade, and because it’s an accurate reflection of the life of a freelance illustrator.

If you fall short of \$6000, every \$250 short of \$6000 = 5% of your grade lost. For example, if you made only \$5000 in Life Sim but got full marks on participation, midterm, and final, you would get 80%/100%, a B-. If you made \$4000 in Life Sim but got full marks on participation, midterm, and final, you would get 60%/100%, a D. Want to know your grade progress? Add up the fees from the assignments you have completed; you should be making over \$1500 every 4 weeks of class. You can also email me at any time to find out your progress.

If you are late on a Life Sim assignment, you will lose 5% of your grade. This cannot be made up by taking extra assignments.

The Midterm and Final grades will be based on your showstopper midterm and final projects, which should showcase your effort and thought put into creating a project that reflects your interests and personality.

## Assignment Submission Policy

All Life Sim final art will be delivered digitally, so if you prefer to work in traditional media, be prepared to scan your work in. Dimensions will be in the assignment brief. Files should be flattened high-resolution (300 dpi+) PSD or TIF files--or, if animated, GIF files under 2 MB or MP4 files under 7 MB. If the assignment is not in the correct dimensions, I will ask for revisions until it is; no assignment will be accepted unless it conforms to the dimensions requested in the brief.

Either attach the file in your email thread with Art Director Angie or use Dropbox, Google Drive, or whatever file transfer service you prefer.

This is also a group critique class, and each student is expected to prepare previews of their Life Sim homework, wherever they are in the process--sketches, WIP, finals--to discuss with other students in small group critique, and each student is also expected to contribute to discussion of each other's works.

## Additional Policies

If you miss a class, you will miss the Life Sim sign-up for the week.

If you are late/absent but email me with an explanation, I will assign you an illustration in the Personal/Uncommissioned category, but you will not be able to participate in the usual commissioned Life Sim homework for that week. If you do not email me with an explanation, I will not assign you make-up work.

After 2 absences, I will have a stern talk (!) with you and I'll also dock your grade by 5% per unexplained absence after the initial 2. Class participation--connecting with your fellow artists, pushing yourself with drawing exercises outside of your comfort zone, learning to identify tired approaches versus strong and interesting approaches, seeing your work in the context of your peers--is necessary.

Even more important than coming to every class on time: send in your sketches and final illustrations **no later than 5 PM PST** on the day they are due. It is of critical importance to be on time with your illustrations. In the working world, magazine issues close, books have production schedules and printing deadlines, TV shows need the art so they can send it to Korea for animation and the production coordinator can go home to her family, art directors stay late panicking and trying to find a photo to replace your late illustration in the newspaper, or the client pays rush fees to the printer because your late illustration delayed everything. It costs other professionals money, time, and stress when you're late.

Submission is based on server timestamp. When working on final files, try to give yourself enough time to account for technical issues and always make backups as you work.

If you are late turning in the final illustration for Life Sim, you will lose 5% of your total grade. I will not remind or nag you--I will write down that this assignment came in late in my Life Sim spreadsheet, and at the end of the semester, I will count up the late assignments and deduct from your grade accordingly. I don't do this because I love arbitrary rules and hate you. The deductions from your grade stand as representations of the quiet professional black marks against you in the real world for being late--the clients that don't complain but don't come back, the reputation that spreads when art directors or other artists discuss you, the shrinking of work opportunities, etc.

I would strongly prefer for you to turn in something half-baked on time than something great a couple days late. Turning in iffy pieces is part of this process of experimenting and learning time management. Just try to excel on the next one!

I will be checking my inbox regularly and will try to answer promptly, but I can't guarantee checking my email outside the hours of 9am to 5pm on weekdays.

## Code of Conduct

Only constructive critique will be allowed. Any insults or damaging or malevolent comments will invite consideration for immediate expulsion from the class. In addition, no racist, misogynist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or otherwise bigoted remarks or work will be allowed in this course. If I judge a comment or work to be harmful in this way, I will have a serious talk with you; if it happens more than once, expulsion from the class will be considered.

Be respectful of your fellow students. Refer to them with the correct names and pronouns.

I expect all assignments in this class to have been created by you, and you alone, from concept to finish. This does mean **no AI**, and I will ask to see your layers and process if necessary. If I suspect AI and you're unable to show me your layers or reproduce your process, this entails the loss of the assignment's income and having you redo the assignment, *plus* 10% off your final grade for the class after the first infraction, and an

auto-fail after the second infraction. Honestly, if you're using AI to generate your art, I can't help you much and you're not really getting anything out of this class and wasting your time and money. As for those of you who *can* draw and are just using AI for touch-ups... look, obviously I can't enforce this rule, but just do it on the honor system, okay? I don't know, it's a weird new world.

Tracing or reusing any part of someone else's artwork without their permission and credit is plagiarism. Copying a concept or composition without giving credit to the other artist is plagiarism. Master copies, with proper credit and for practice, are not plagiarism but they are not allowed in this specific course because the point of this class is to challenge yourself to create original artwork. If you have plagiarized someone else's work, you will lose that Life Sim assignment's income, we will have a very uncomfortable chat about your work, and 10% will be knocked off your semester grade—this is all for the first plagiarism infraction. You'll get an auto-fail in the class for the second.

Please don't toe the line of "maybe it's okay if I copy *this* part, but I'll change *this* part," or "it's fanart so it's okay if I trace," or "I copied someone else's art but I didn't trace it, so it's fine." **If you turn in your piece and I have to explain to you *why* your piece was plagiarized, it will automatically count as plagiarism and will be treated as such.** If in doubt, **ask me before you turn in your work**, and I will be able to clarify for you what changes are needed, if any. As long as you ask me for help and make any changes I request, I won't consider it plagiarism and won't think any less of you, as we are all here to learn. But if you haven't checked with me and I find out that plagiarism has occurred, you will face the consequences listed above.

Auto-plagiarism, or "double-dipping" by turning in assignments for this class that you made for other classes, is also a form of academic dishonesty, and will incur the loss of the Life Sim assignment's income and 5% knocked off your final grade for each infraction, and an uncomfortable talk with me. Again, just ask me before you turn it in so I can give you the green light or not.

For any other code of conduct issues that may arise that are not covered here, I will create a written amendment to the syllabus that I expect you to sign to be able to continue taking the class, and the rest of the class will receive notice of the amendment as well. You will be bound by the rules and consequences in the amendment for any further infractions.

## **Last Notes**

Please take professional pride in creating your illustrations, even if you're not excited about the subject assigned. For your Life Sim grade, I will be grading based on completion and timeliness of assignments, but I would still like you to turn in pieces that show your thought and effort. Those are the qualities that you need in the world as a working illustrator (or in any profession, really)—qualities that are much more important than any grade.

If what you're turning in isn't up to your standards or isn't a piece you are proud of, I understand that some pieces just don't come out as well as you'd like, so just try your best on the next assignment.

## Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is tentative and may be subject to change over the course of the semester.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> F 8/25	Introductions, orientation, illustration as a communication art  Skill: Research, brainstorming and mind maps  Exercise: Sketches & thumbnails	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 2</b> F 9/1	Skill: Instructor inspiration technique analysis, taking sketches to final, rendering  Exercise: 6 shapes  Exercise: Final	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 3</b> F 9/8	Skill: Advanced brainstorming and conceptualization (principles of visual metaphor)  Exercise: Guessing game	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 4</b> F 9/15	Skill: Advanced rendering (analysis and breakdown of techniques)  Exercise: Illustration 2 ways, part 1	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 5</b> F 9/22	Skill: Advanced rendering (analysis and breakdown of techniques)  Exercise: Illustration 2 ways, part 2	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 6</b> F 9/29	Discussion: Midterm topic	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email

	Skill: Abstraction, mark-making, emotion  Exercise: Abstract piece		
<b>Week 7</b> F 10/6	Class critique: WIP midterm sketches	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 8</b> F 10/20	Class critique: Midterm	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 9</b> F 10/27	Skill: Voice development and focus  Discussion: Write down themes in your work and then discuss in small group  Exercise: Anonymous piece in your own voice	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 10</b> F 11/3	Skill: Voice experimentation  Discussion: How do you want to evolve your work?  Exercise: Anonymous piece in a disguised voice	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 11</b> F 11/17	Discussion: Career day! Ethics/responsibility, community, labor, jobs	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Week 12</b> F 12/1	Class critique: WIP final project sketches	Life Sim	Indicated in Life Sim email
<b>Final</b>	Final project class critique & exhibition		



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Come to all classes,  
and come on time.



Reply to my Life  
Sim emails and  
Complete your  
sketches and finals  
before deadlines.



Put effort into your  
midterm and final  
projects.

Bring your WIPs  
and final illustrations  
to class for critique.

And have fun making  
cool pictures!



...that's pretty much it.

## 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](https://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](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

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

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

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://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 Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://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.

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

[usc-advocate.symlicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symlicity.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 (formerly DSP) - (213) 740-0776*

[osas.usc.edu/](https://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.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.