SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS
CTPR 405   SPRING 2025
VISUAL STRUCTURE FOR INTERACTIVE GAMES & ANIMATION
SYLLABUS

THIS CLASS DOES NOT ALLOW AUDITING

PROFESSOR: BRUCE BLOCK   bab@usc.edu
CLASSROOM: SCA 112
Time: Monday 5:00PM – 7:50PM
SA: TBA
UNITS: 2
OFFICE HOURS: Monday mornings by appointment only; in-person or Zoom.

NOTES: Auditing CTPR 405 is not permitted. A student who has previously taken CTPR 406 or CTPR 506 cannot enroll in CTPR 405.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A writer is concerned with story structure. A musician is concerned with musical structure. And an artist/picture maker working digitally or traditionally must be concerned with the visual structure of their pictorial work. Visual structure is the 'language' available to any artist/picture maker and because the work is not presented as a single image, but rather on a time-based sequential platform (interactive game consoles, the Internet, digital video, or theatrical venues) the challenges are more complex. The key to controlling the structure of sequentially presented computer imagery or traditionally animated pictures is an understanding of the basic visual components that are the foundational building blocks of visual design. The class lectures explain and demonstrate how visual structure can be controlled in interactive games and digital or traditional animation with greater attention to detail, complexity and aesthetic manipulation when compared to their live-action counterpart.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Through lectures, discussions, assignments and visual examples, students learn how to merge the story and visual structures to create their own unique work in animation or interactive games. This course explains each visual component, demonstrates how these components communicate with an audience or game player, and reveals how each component is controlled to communicate moods, emotions and ideas.

PREREQUISITES:

This class does not have prerequisites or major restrictions. This class is open to SCA students in the John C. Hench Division of Animation, the Interactive Media & Games Division and the general USC student population who want to understand the relationship between story structure and visual structure in digital and traditional animation and gaming production. Auditing is not permitted.

TESTS, ASSIGNMENTS AND LECTURES:

The final grade reflects each student's understanding of the basic visual components as demonstrated in their individual picture assignments and their group video project.

Picture assignments (total of 16 pictures) are given during the semester. Working individually, each student creates a series of original pictures to demonstrate the student's understanding of a visual component. Pictures are due six days after they are assigned. Students are required to re-do their picture assignment if a submitted example lacks a full realization of the visual component being illustrated.

Students, working in groups of four, produce a video project. These videos are screened in class and discussed in terms of visual and story structure. Students select/form groups of four from the class cohort. Students not selected by their peers will be placed in a group by the instructor. The video is produced as a group project without additional help. Each group produces a video project (1-3 minutes) to demonstrate their ability to design a visual structure that supports a story. Production and post-production facilities are limited to the students' own resources. Sound is not a requirement. Video is due April 21, 2025.

Students must take notes during the class lectures which include drawings and diagrams. Video and/or audio recording including photography of any kind, are prohibited in class.

READING & REFERENCES:

The textbook for the class is *The Visual Story* by Bruce Block (third edition). The lectures are divided into topics that coincide with the book's chapters.

GRADING:

Mid-term grade is based on picture assignments 1-3. Final course grade is based on the 16 picture assignments (60%) and the video project (40%). The class does not allow make-up tests or extra credit assignments. Auditing is not permitted.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional absence. Three late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

CLASS SCHEDULE:
Listing of material for each class is approximate since discussion lengths may vary. Screenings may be added to some classes.

CLASS 1: Orientation and overview of the visual components. Basic visual terms are defined.
　　　　　Space is introduced and organized into categories.
　　　　　Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 and 3, The Visual Story

CLASS 2: HOLIDAY. No class.

CLASS 3: Discussion of Space continues.
        Picture Assignment #1: Space.
        Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 and 9, The Visual Story
        Students form groups for their video project.
        Video Assignment: The group video project is assigned. Video is due April 21, 2025.

CLASS 4: Visual structure. The relationship between visual and story structures is discussed.

CLASS 5: HOLIDAY   No class.
        Reading Assignment: Chapter 4, The Visual Story

CLASS 6: Line & Shape. Linear motif and shape motif are discussed.
        Picture Assignment #2: Line Orientation.
        Picture Assignment #3: Line Quality.

CLASS 7: Line & Shape discussions continue and complete.
        Picture assignments 1, 2, and 3 are due before class begins.
        Mid-term exam. Grade is based on Photo Assignments 1-3. Late photos will not be accepted.

CLASS 8: SPRING BREAK
        Reading Assignment: Chapter 5, 6, The Visual Story

CLASS 9: Color structure, systems and controls are discussed.
        Picture Assignment #4: Hue.

CLASS 10: Tone. Discussions of tonal control in relation to color.
         Picture Assignment #5: Saturation.
         Reading Assignment: Chapter 7, The Visual Story

CLASS 11: Movement. The three types of movement are discussed and defined.
         Picture Assignment #6: Tone
         Picture Assignment #7: Movement.
         Reading Assignment: Chapter 8, The Visual Story

CLASS 12: Rhythm. Visual rhythm is discussed.
         Picture Assignment #8: Rhythm.

CLASS 13: Lecture review and feature film screening.

CLASS 14: Screening and discussion of student group video projects.

CLASS 15: Screening and discussion of student group video projects.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Please ask the professor if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution. In this class, you are expected to submit assignments that demonstrate your individual mastery of the course concepts.
Unless specifically designated as a 'group project,' all assignments are expected to be completed individually.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies
USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor.

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
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
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
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
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
Non-emergency assistance or information.

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

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.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - *(323) 442-2850 or* otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.