



Course titles and numbers VIST 406-501 – Visual Studies Studio IV. (1-5). Credit 3.

Term Spring 2014

Meeting times and location TR 2:20-3:10 in ARCC 307; TR 3:10-4:50 in ARCC 306B.

Course Description Specific to the Visual Storytelling Studio

The purpose of the visual storytelling studio is to facilitate and encourage the development of knowledge and creativity required for the use of computer graphics for animation and visual effects. This is a project-based learning experience. Students from multiple class years and majors are included to create a classroom that reflects the working environment found in professional studios, large and small.

Development of both hard and soft skills is the expected outcome. This course will be co-located with VIST 206, VIST 305, VIST 405, and FILM 489. Specific requirements for projects will vary according to the course in which each student is enrolled, but the projects will have a similar focus. Group projects may emerge. It is expected that students will learn from and help one another. Peer-to-peer learning is one of the most effective features of the studio environment. Though this studio will not focus on team activities, a burden of leadership falls on those who have knowledge and skills. The primary purpose for mixing students from various disciplines and levels together is to create opportunities for students to learn from peers and to learn from the act of teaching your peers.

The semester is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the structure of stories, how stories are visually communicated, and methods for developing and dissecting visual stories. The second section focuses on character, and the role of action, expressed intention, timing, and the principles of animation. The third section focuses on the impact of visual style on storytelling including color, texture, light, pattern, and shape language. Finally, students will be expected to pull the three areas together to create the framework for an animated short.

There will be three workshops during the semester led by professional artists. The three workshops will align in time and subject matter with the first three sections of the course. These workshops will occur within the context of normal studio hours.

Technology plays a vital role in visual storytelling for animation and visual effects production. There are no specific software packages required for the projects and exercises in this course. However, access to and ability to employ certain kinds of software is required. All required kinds of software will be available through the Visualization Laboratory, available through student licensing agreements with software publishers, or available as open-source software.

Official Course Description

VIST 406: Theory and practice in the development of the digital image; non-traditional modeling methods; non-photo-realistic rendering; integration of traditional and digital media in the creation of visual works. Prerequisites: VIST 305, CARC 301 or VIST 494.

Learning Outcomes

- Analyze story and action needs to determine techniques, both computer graphics and practical, required to meet the visual imagery target.

- Organize resources, personnel, and schedule to determine the most effective processes, both computer graphics and practical, to meet the visual imagery target within the existing constraints.
- Create a plan for the development and application of techniques specific to a technical aspect of computer graphics in animation: pipeline, technical animation, effects animation, shading, or compositing.
- Create a plan for the development and application of techniques specific to a technical aspect of computer graphics in animation: art, modeling, animation, layout, or lighting.
- Apply programmable and procedural techniques in the creation of repeatable actions to assist in development and delivery of modeling, rigging, motion generation, lighting setup, effects, compositing and rendering.
- Appraise, compare, revise, and integrate the work of others.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively for creative problem solving with collaborators.

Instructor Information

VIST 406-501

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Graduate Assistant Instructor

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Teaching Assistant	Gretchen Freitag, Graduate Assistant
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Recommended Information Resources

SECTION 1: STORY TELLING

- *Ideas for the Animated Short: Finding and Building Stories* by Karen Sullivan, et al. Published by Taylor & Francis (2013). ISBN-13: 9780240818726.
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/ideas-for-the-animated-short-karen-sullivan/1116874419?ean=9780240818726>
- *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 3rd Edition* by Christopher Vogler (2007) Published by Michael Wiese Productions (2007). ISBN-13: 9781932907360.
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/writers-journey-christopher-vogler/1100497088?ean=9781932907360>
- *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen* by Steven D. Katz. Published by Michael Wiese Productions (1991). ISBN-13: 9780941188104.
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/film-directing-shot-by-shot-steve-katz/1111981470?ean=9780941188104>

SECTION 2: ANIMATION

- *The World History of Animation* by Stephen Cavalier. Published by University of California Press (2011). ISBN-13: 978-0520261129. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/world-history-of-animation-stephen-cavalier/1102230225?ean=9780520261129>
- *The Animator's Survival Kit, 2nd Edition* by Richard Williams. Published by Faber and Faber. (2009). <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Animators-Survival-Kit/Richard-Williams/e/9780571238347?itm=1&usri=Animators+Survival+Kit>
- Gnomon Workshop video tutorials available through the Texas A&M University Library.

SECTION 3: VISUAL DESIGN

- *The Visual Story, 2nd Edition* by Bruce Block. Published by Taylor and Francis, Inc. (2007). ISBN 0240807790. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-visual-story-bruce-block/1111451710?ean=9780080551692>
- *Walt Disney Animation Studios The Archive Series: Layout & Background* by Disney Press (2011). ISBN 9781423138662. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/walt-disney-animation-studios-the-archive-series-disney-press/1030008500?ean=9781423138662>

GENERAL

- *Learning Python: Powerful Object-Oriented Programming* by Mark Lutz. Published by O'Reilly (2009). <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/learning-python-mark-lutz/1100193238?ean=9780596158064&itm=1&usri=learning+python>
- *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink. Published by Riverhead Trade (2011). ISBN-10: 1594484805. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/drive-daniel-h-pink/1100819915?ean=9781594484803>

Technical Requirements

Successful completion of the projects for this course will require access to graphical computing workstations, software for 2D painting and 3D animation, and connectivity with the internet. The 3D animation software must, minimally, have the following components:

- Modeling of 3D geometry as polygons, NURBS, or sub-division surfaces.
- Forward and inverse kinematics.
- Key-framing, including the manipulation of interpolation method used between key-frames.
- Indirect node connections for translation, rotation, and scale.
- Deformation of surfaces driven via the transformation of connected nodes.
- Permit the use of scripting as a substitute for interactive commands. Scripted commands must be able to be saved to file, edited, and re-loaded from the interface.
- Capacity for particle animation/simulation.
- Rendering of cast shadows and motion blur.
- Rendered image output.

It is likely that the construction of practical models, as required for the group project, will require use of the College of Architecture's Wood Shop. Details about the tools available and how to access those resources can be found here: <http://www.arch.tamu.edu/inside/services/woodshop/>

Photography of practical models will likely require access to the Visualization Laboratory's stage(s) and use of lighting and camera equipment. A safety training course is required and will be coordinated by the instructors and teaching assistant.

Grading Policy

Students will be assessed based upon their class level. Assessment criteria for group projects will include individual technical and artistic contributions, participation, peer assessment, and overall project success. Assessment criteria for individual projects will be based upon technical and

artistic merit relative to the given criteria.

This is a project-oriented course. Assignments will be completed using a combination of physical drawings and models as well as digital cameras and computers. The specific definition and requirements for each project will be provided in written form in class. Each project will be given a number grade between 0 (lowest) and 100 (highest). The number grade is based upon a combination of the aesthetic (1/3), technical (1/3), and communication/presentation expertise (1/3). Iterative improvement is essential to successful development and completion of ideas therefore participation in regular reviews of work is required.

Each project's value in relationship to the composition of the final grade is:

- 15% Project #1 (project grade * 0.15)
- 15% Project #2 (project grade * 0.15)
- 15% Project #3 (project grade * 0.15)
- 5% Exercises (each of 6 exercise grades * 0.025)
- 10% Dailies contributions (assessment grade * 0.1)
- 25% Final Project (project grade * 0.2)
- 10% Participation (faculty assessment * 0.05)
- 5% Peer Assessment

100 Total Points Possible

A final letter grade is determined as follows:

A = 90 – 100 **B** = 80 – 89 **C** = 70 – 79 **D** = 60 – 69 **F** = below 60

Opportunities for extra credit will be provided periodically during the course of the semester. Each opportunity will be available to all students and have a relationship to the focus of this course.

Course Topics, Calendar of Activities, Major Assignment Dates

(All information below is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topics
1	Tues. 1/13	Course introduction; Lecture: Introduction to Visual Storytelling
	Thurs. 1/15	Lecture: History of Animation, Part 1
2	Tues. 1/21	<i>Due: Exercise #1</i> ; Lecture: Indirect Storytelling & Believable Characters
	Thurs. 1/23	<i>Due: Exercise #2</i> ; Lecture: Narrative Structure
3	Tues. 1/28	Storytelling Workshop
	Thurs. 1/30	Lecture: History of Animation, Part 2
4	Tues. 2/4	<i>DUE: Project #1 – Story Pitch</i>
	Thurs. 2/6	Lecture: Principles of Animation
5	Tues. 2/11	Lecture: History of Animation, Part 3;
	Thurs. 2/13	Animation Workshop
6	Tues. 2/18	Lecture: Force, Kinematics, and Articulation
	Thurs. 2/20	Lecture: Action and Performance
7	Tues. 2/25	Dailies reviews of Project #2.
	Thurs. 2/27	<i>DUE: Project #2 – Animation</i>
8	Tues. 3/4	Lecture: Light, Shadow, Color, Texture and Shape
	Thurs. 3/6	Lecture: History of Animation, Part 4.
9	3/10-3/14	SPRING BREAK
10	Tues. 3/18	Lecture: Composition, Space, and Depth
	Thurs. 3/20	Lecture: Reference Material

11	Tues. 3/25	Visual Development Workshop
	Thurs. 3/27	Lecture: Mood & Continuity
12	Tues. 4/1	Dailies reviews of Project #3.
	Thurs. 4/3	<i>DUE: Project #3 – Look Development</i>
13	Tues. 4/8	Lecture: Reducing Complexity
	Thurs. 4/10	Lecture: History of Animation, Part 5.
14	Tues. 4/15	In class reviews.
	Thurs. 4/17	Dailies reviews of Final Project.
15	Tues. 4/22	In class reviews.
	Thurs. 4/24	<i>DUE: Final Project</i>
	Wed. 4/30	VIST Spring Show

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>

Academic Integrity

For additional information please visit: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

Defacement of Property

"It is unlawful for any person to damage or deface any of the buildings, statues, monuments, trees, shrubs, grasses, or flowers on the grounds of any state institutions of higher education (Texas Education Code Section 51.204)"

The words damage or deface refer specifically to any and all actions, whether direct or indirect, that either diminish the value or mar the appearance of the physical environment.