CS27 Spring 2014

PiDA

Course Description

Students complete projects using digital arts techniques. Projects include computer animations, interactive graphics projects and installations, digital photography. Students can use commercial software, create new applications for commercial software, or develop new software or tools.

While we allow for any digital art project, most students will focus on the production of a short animated movie.

Lectures will be split on those where we will present conceptual topics on animated movie making and digital art, those where we will discuss your work, and those where we will work together in the lab.

Coursework

The class will focus on the production of digital arts projects. Students can suggest their own projects, which may include animated movies, computer games, digital photography or interactive art installations. Since we expect most students to pursue the production of an animated short as their main project, the class instruction and schedule will focus on that. If students are interested in other projects, please contact the instructor right away so we can arrange it. From now on, we will describe the course as a short animated movie production.

In producing a short animated movie, we will focus on production methods and group work. In a sense, we will replicate at a tiny scale, the structure of a large production house (except you will play all of the different roles). Each short should be *at most 90 seconds long and contain no more than two animated characters* (but have have many objects in the set). Remember that the goal is a short *high quality* production, as opposed to a long rough piece. We suggest you start with a 60 seconds idea.

For each animated short, we will go though the various stages of a production pipeline with grading milestone at each stage and for the final submitted piece. See the calendar and schedule for details.

- story and storyboarding
- character/scene modeling
- character/scene shading
- character rigging and set dressing
- layout and posing
- animation
- lighting
- rendering
- editing and postproduction

Projects are to be *completed in groups of three* students. Given the time allotted, this will give you the possibility of creating higher quality animations, together with a sense of how movie productions work. At different times during the projects, group members will focus on various aspects of the production, but overall team work will be necessary to finish the project on time and with high quality.

Projects will have (almost) weekly milestones, where you will hand in project materials (as specified) and presentation files. We will keep these materials and make them available to others in the class. This is to help each other work/learn together!

Presentations

You will be presenting your work in front of class. Each group member will present parts of the project as it

develops. We'll have specific milestones each week, which will be graded based on quality of the work and presentations. The milestones are hard deadlines and missing a deadline will result in a lowered grade. There are no exceptions.

Presentations are for you to give a status report of your project, and for the class to learn from your work and help you with their comments and suggestions. There is no better way of learning than sharing discussion with your peers! It the time where you will show your work, how well it fits your vision and what are the aesthetics and technical challenges you have faced. Each presentation should contain slides to show what you accomplished and motivate further discussion. Presentations serve the final purpose of mimicking "reviews" in production environments. At the same time, you will graded on the presentation and the project milestone handed in together with it. All presentations are to be done in Keynote or Powerpoint and screen capture movies, with use of demos to further discuss the work. I will also ask you to compare your work directly with the concepts taught during the lectures (this is better than a midterm and final :-).

Class Participation

Class and group participation is fundamental. Think what would happen if nobody talked to each other in a company like Pixar. Yes, the movie would not be made. In our class, participation is necessary to learn, help your friends make their short better and help you by getting feedback by a lively audience. You will be graded on your class participation.

Lab

We have reserved lab hours for the class, where we will be present to help with your work. While you are free to work at home, we strongly suggest you work in the lab with your group. In our experience, overlapping on the project is the only way to do it. Details to come.

Grading, Late Assignments and Extra credit

The final grade from this class will be decided by your class participation (10%), your presentations (30%) and your project (60%). Almost every week, we will have project milestones that are separately graded. For each milestone, you are to hand in the milestone material (like a storyboard, Maya files or Quicktime movies) and a presentation file. There will be a final presentation where you will present and show your final project. This presentation will be open to everybody (including your friends, family, pets, etc. :-). The project grade will be roughly 70% milestones and 30% final submission. Your final presentation will not be graded, but it is for you and your friends to have fun and watch the cool animation you made (but will still require a presentation).

Note that I am including here rough percentage of the final grade as indication only. These will likely change and it is likely that I will weight things differently at the end of the class.

While the project is done in a group, we will grade individually. First, each presentation will be given by different team member (in a round robin scheme). Second, while each presentation has to show the work of the whole group, you will explain what was done by who. Third, I'll ask questions related to the material covered in class during your presentation. Finally, each group will submit a team evaluation at the end of the term.

We will not accept late submissions for any of the assignments nor the final project. Exception to this rule might be made in special circumstances only if the professor is informed way in advance of the deadline and at her sole discretion. Unless otherwise stated, material is due the morning before your presentation at 11am.

Working Together and Academic Integrity

You are encouraged to talk with other students about the topics discussed in class as well as your project. The goal is to get a deeper understanding of the material, further develop ideas related to your project and learn together. You were in different modeling and animation classes and bring with you different knowledge. Online tutorials can also provide help as you work and Lynda.com is another asset you should plan to use.

Once it gets to preparing your presentation and your project, you should only work by yourself and with your team members.

You are welcome to use external sources of material when performing your project, provided this does not violate others' copyright and you cite your sources specifically as specified in the Dartmouth College Computing Policies. In this case, please consult me before doing so.

If you have any questions as to whether some action would be acceptable under the Academic Honor Code,

please speak to me or another member of the course staff, and we will be glad to help clarify things. It is always easier to ask beforehand than to have trouble later.

Disabilities

I encourage any students with disabilities, including "invisible" disabilities such as chronic diseases and learning disabilities, to discuss appropriate accommodations with me, which might help you with this class, either after class or during office hours. Dartmouth College has an active program to help students with disabilities, and I am happy to do whatever I can to help out, as appropriate.

The Student Disabilities Coordinator, Nancy Pompian, can be reached at 6-2014 if you have any questions. Any student with a documented disability requiring academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me by the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential. It is important, however, that you talk to me soon, so that I can make whatever arrangements might be needed in a timely fashion.