386-02 Advanced Post-Production II
Fall 2011 (30 aug 11–13 dec 11) | Tues. 5:00pm–7:50pm | Myrtle Hall 4E-4

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Syllabus revised: 16 nov 11

Course Description: "Designed for students with prior basic editing experience, this class delves into advanced options offered by computerized editing systems. The creative, technical, and theoretical concerns of editing will be covered in this course."

Grading: 40% aesthetic experimentation
40% technical skill
20% class participation

Session 1: 30 aug 11

Screenings: Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (exc.), Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (exc.), Patrick Jean's *Pixels*.
Concepts: Review how a computer works with image and sound. Discuss the stages of production and workflow; software design and interface metaphors; montage and narrative structure. Introduce Final Cut and After Effects. Discuss how to use the class server to deliver assignments.

Assignment 1, Photo-Roman (5%): Shoot, collage, or appropriate a series of photographs that create a narrative using characters. Use Final Cut to edit the still images to a soundtrack and export a Quicktime file.
Suggestions: A journey from A to B, evoking a specific mood, two characters in conflict.

Session 2: 6 sep 11

Due: Assignment 1, Photo-Roman.
Bring to Class: a dialogue clip.

Screenings: Jennifer Shiman's *30-Second Bunnies Theatre: Jaws*, *Titanic*, and *Aliens*.
Concepts: Review Photoshop, focusing on assembling assets for cutout animation characters. Discuss strategies for moving assets between Photoshop, Final Cut, and After Effects. Import assets into After Effects and use its keyframing model to create expressive character animation. Illustrate how classical animation principles apply equally to drawn and cutout animation. Introduce masking and the Time Remap feature.

Assignment 2, Lip-Sync (10%): Design a series of mouth shapes (and other facial features as needed) contained in a well-organized PSD file. Animate lip-sync dialogue to an audio track of your choice. You can build on Assignment 1, or start from scratch.
Suggestions: record your own dialogue, or use clips from *moviesoundclips.net*

Session 3: 13 sep 11

Due: Assignment 2, Lip-Sync.
Bring to Class: a music clip

Screenings: Run Wrake's *Rabbit*, Oskar Fischinger's *Allegretto*.
Concepts: Explore strategies for organizing layers, including precomps, proxies, and parenting. Explore related features like composite modes and adjustment layers. Use the Time Remap feature to control playback within a comp. Introduce basic Expressions and demonstrate how audio can be used to control animation in After Effects.

Assignment 3, Visual Music (15%): Create an abstract animation timed to sound. Begin by designing simple elements in Photoshop, then steadily build up a library of compositions.
Suggestions: experiment with rhythm, motion, repetition, and color choices that complement your music selection.

Session 4: 20 sep 11 (light attendance expected due to Ottawa Animation Festival)

Bring to Class: test footage you'd like to experiment with

Screenings: Run Wrake's *The Control Master*, Robert Hodgins' *Lovely Head*, Freida Abtan's *Hands of the Dancer* (exc.).
Concepts: Explore some unusual applications of the effects possible in After Effects, including the Puppet tool, particles, the Motion Sketch tool, displacement mapping, stereo 3D, and additional uses for Expressions. Previews of 2.5D layer animation and match-moving with Mocha.

Session 5: 27 sep 11
Due: Assignment 3, Visual Music.
Bring to Class: Concept sketch for a background environment.

Screenings: Martha Colburn's *Myth Labs*, Sol Friedman's *Junko's Shamisen*.
Concepts: Introduce the After Effects camera and its rigging requirements. Discuss the difficulties in coordinating camera movements across programs, with special emphasis on Flash and Toon Boom. Demonstrate lights, shadows, and parallax backgrounds. Discuss exporting scenarios from classical animation programs and common pitfalls.

Assignment 4, Working in 2.5D (10%): Create a classically animated element in Flash or Toon Boom. Build a 2.5D background environment for it in After Effects. Use a soundtrack, parallax layers, and at least one change of camera angle.
Suggestions: To give yourself maximum freedom in shot choices, plan to build a bigger background than you think you'll need, at least 6MP.

Session 6: 4 oct 11

Due: Assignment 4, Working in 2.5D.
Bring to Class: A video clip of a live actor for practicing rotoscoping (can be low-quality).

Screenings: Ralph Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings* (exc.), Peter Jackson's *The Two Towers* (exc.), Raoul Servais' *Harpya*.
Concepts: Explore techniques for rotoscoping, including keyframed masks, the paint tools, the roto brush, the puppet tool, and masks painted in classical animation programs. Discuss motion capture's relation to rotoscoping, with a brief demonstration of the Kinect camera recording After Effects keyframes. Discuss background plates and techniques for replacing live actors in a scene.

Assignment 5, Rotoscoping (10%): Film or appropriate a clip with a live actor to use as a basis for rotoscoping. Animate a character based on the actor's performance.
Suggestions: If you're filming your own footage and are feeling ambitious, try getting a background plate and replacing your actor in the scene. You'll need to lock down the camera if you aren't ready to experiment with match-moving.

Session 7: 11 oct 11

Due: Assignment 5, Rotoscoping.
Bring to Class: Concept sketch for a Rube Goldberg machine.

Screenings: Jossie Malis' *Bendito Machine: Episodes I–III* (exc.), OK Go's *This Too Shall Pass*.
Concepts: Explore building a complex 2.5D environment with advanced camera techniques. Discuss the potential pitfalls of realizing a complete model of the environment, and find ways to fix this by planning out shots based on the camera's point of view. Discuss the uses of live-action plates for special effects such as smoke, water, and fire, and their advantages and disadvantages vs. procedural effects.

Assignment 6, Rube Goldberg Machine (15%): Create an extremely complex machine to accomplish a simple task, and navigate through it with an unbroken tracking shot using the After Effects camera. Any combination of animation and live-action elements can be used, as long as the primary camera movement is animated.
Suggestions: Try to cheat. When you're planning your shots, try building in moments where you can cut without the audience noticing.

Session 8: Make-up session, 13 oct 11 (Thurs. 5:00pm–7:50pm)

Bring to Class: Prepare a live-action video clip and an animated element to bring to class.

Screenings: Neill Blomkamp, *Alive in Joburg.*
Concepts: Use Mocha to experiment with match-moving—tracking live-action footage and inserting animated elements that move correctly relative to the photographed objects in the shot.

Suggestions: Interacting with an animated character, altered landscapes, photorealistic VFX.

18 oct 11 — no class

25 oct 11 — no class

Session 9: 1 nov 11
Late work from Sessions 2–7 handed in after this date will not be graded.

Due: Assignment 6, Rube Goldberg Machine (and all late work).
Bring to Class: audio clip with music or dialogue, text to animate.

Screenings: Saul Bass' title sequence for *North by Northwest*, John and James Whitney's *Lapis* (exc.), Josh
                  Raskin's *I Met the Walrus*.
Concepts: Explore various techniques for animating text in After Effects, including paths, animatable properties, and the possibilities opened up by Expressions. Divide into groups and discuss logistics of final group project.

Assignment 7, Kinectic Typography (5%): Animate your text using at least five different technical approaches, and any combination of animation and live-action elements.
Suggestions: Try not to rely only on the canned text effects—try stretching your Expressions skills or acquiring some interesting live-action elements to change things up a bit.

Session 10: 8 nov 11

Due: Assignment 7, Kinetic Typography.
Bring to Class: Concept sketches for final group project.

Screenings: Tiny Inventions' *Something Left, Something Taken*.
Concepts: Review the stages of production and discuss the challenges of pre-production. Briefly discuss screenplay formatting and approaches to creating storyboards. Explore which animation techniques are best suited to each project. Review the uses of a shot list in tracking your progress. Class discussion of each final group project.

Assignment 8, Screenplay and Storyboards: Write a screenplay, if your film involves dialogue. Create a set of storyboards, scanned and ready to use in an animatic.
Suggestions: Remember that storyboards are practical tools; they don't need to be works of art, but they have to unambiguously communicate what's going on in each shot. (Pay special attention to distinguishing your characters from each other.)

Session 11: 15 nov 11

Due: Assignment 8, Screenplay and Storyboards.

Concepts: Review sound editing strategies; look at Logic, Final Cut, and Audacity. Demonstrate methods of moving projects between programs using OMF and XML files. Discuss the stages of audio production, and demonstrate some essential audio editing techniques. Class discussion of project workflows, identifying potential pitfalls.

Assignment 9, Voice Track and Animatic: Record your voice actors and any other sound elements that will be critical to sync, and cut your storyboards to the sound in Final Cut.
Suggestions: Getting a clean, usable voice recording is easier than ever with current technology, but it's absolutely essential to get right. Be careful!

Session 12: 22 nov 11

Due: Assignment 9, Voice Track and Animatic.

Concepts: Discuss how to move a project from Final Cut to After Effects.

Assignment 10, Rough Animation: Create a complete rough animation based on your animatic, concentrating on broad strokes and large character movements. Lab time, with individual assistance on projects.

Session 13: 29 nov 11

Due: Assignment 10, Rough Animation.
Bring to class: All final soundtrack elements.

Concepts: Review sound mixes in progress. Discuss the technical challenges of distribution, including anamorphic formats, broadcast standards, and festival exhibition. Lab time, with individual assistance on projects.

Assignment 11, Sound Mix: Rough animation with finished sync sound track.
Suggestions: A little extra detail invested in your sound effects can have a disproportionately great payoff in the emotional impact of your film.

6 dec 11 — no class

Session 14: Make-up session, 8 dec 11 (Thurs. 5:00pm–7:50pm)

Due: Assignment 11, Sound Mix.

Concepts: Class discussion of projects in progress. Review how to move a project from After Effects to Final Cut. Discuss how to "finesse" our work and see what technical difficulties remain.

Assignment 12, Fine Animation (30%): Do a detailed last pass over the project, looking to correct mistakes, tweak effects and colors, and improve character performances.

Session 15: 13 dec 11
Late work from Sessions 8–13 handed in after this date will not be graded.

Due: Assignment 12, Fine Animation (and all late work).
Concepts: Class critique of final group projects.