

Art as System

ART 103

Spring 2026 Section 02 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/22/2026

Course Information

Art 103-Section 02

Class time: Fridays 09:00 AM - 03:00 PM

Class Location: ART 241 (Art & Design bldg, 2nd floor)

Office Hours: by appointment only

Office Hour Location: Zoom link TBA

Art as System is a hands-on studio course centered on experimentation, visual programming, and collaborative making. The class emphasizes learning through doing: testing ideas, building iteratively, and refining work through workshops, discussion, and critique. From the first session, students begin creating visuals in TouchDesigner using foundational tools, then gradually build complexity and confidence over time.

Projects explore responsive and interactive approaches to digital image-making, including sound, cameras, movement, and live controls. The course also introduces projection mapping as a way to activate physical space, and may incorporate basic fabrication or mixed-media methods to support installation-based work. Students complete a series of short projects throughout the semester, building a body of work and practical workflows. Additional tools (such as MadMapper, Adobe software, or Blender) may be introduced as needed in support of course projects.

The semester concludes with a collaborative final project presented as a class exhibition. Students contribute to different roles across the production process, gaining experience with both technical development and teamwork.

Course Description and Requisites

Experimental applications in the use of systems-based approach for art making. Focus on various CNC 3D printing/cutting methods, parametric art, CAD/CAM techniques, physical computing integration and collaborative art models.

Misc/Lab: Activity 6 hours.

Prerequisite(s): ART 75 and ART 101

Grading: Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance, Participation & Classroom Behavior Policy

Per SJSU policy guidelines, attendance (roll-call) itself is not graded. However, active engagement and in-class participation are. Active engagement, class participation, and timely communication together count for **20% of the final grade**, which is within reasonable grading limits.

Absences and Communication

Under [SJSU's Student Excused Absences Policy \(S22-2\)](#), students must inform the instructor of a foreseeable absence in advance, or unforeseeable absences as soon as possible—ideally within 48 hours.

If you miss a class, it is your primary responsibility to find out from your classmate(s) what was covered and what is due next. I am happy to help but consider taking this opportunity to network and make friends!

Failure to communicate repeated absences and a plan to make up for missed work within a reasonable timeframe can result in grade forfeiture.

Group Work and Individual Accountability

Group projects require equitable participation. If a student consistently fails to communicate, attend, or contribute meaningfully to their group's work after a formal warning, the instructor may remove that student from the group to preserve fairness.

A removed student is not guaranteed reassignment or an individual project alternative. In most cases, this will result in forfeiture of the project grade unless exceptional circumstances are present (e.g., verified emergency, accessibility accommodation).

Remaining group members will be graded independently based on their own individual participation and overall progress within the project.

Students will receive verbal and written notices before any removal. This policy does not affect overall course enrollment status; full removal from class or academic sanctions can only occur through formal university disciplinary procedures.

Device and Classroom Behavior

Headphones / Earbuds

Not permitted during lectures, tutorials or group discussions.

Wearing headphones suggests a student's attention is on unrelated material rather than the class activity, which is considered unprofessional classroom conduct and is disrespectful to classmates and the instructor.

Permitted only when explicitly announced by the instructor, during designated workshop hours.

Phones, Tablets, and Laptops

Phones must remain off desks or face down. Brief, discreet checks are acceptable; however, prolonged visible phone use during instruction is disruptive and will result in participation deductions. Laptops and tablets must be used exclusively for class-related work during instruction time. Using devices for unrelated browsing, messaging, entertainment, or work from other classes reflects disengagement and will lower the participation grade.

Observation and Documentation

The instructor may observe and record participation quality throughout the semester using class notes and attendance logs. Instances of disengagement may be documented privately, without calling out the student, to maintain class flow. Repeated patterns will be reflected in the participation grade. If an urgent matter requires phone use, the call or message must be taken outside the classroom.

Students with accessibility or emergency-related device needs must arrange this privately with the instructor in advance.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to abide by the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy (S07-2). Any instance of plagiarism, cheating, or submission of work not created by the student will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as LLMs (ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Claude, Grok, etc.), image generators, or similar technologies is strictly prohibited unless it is explicitly permitted for a specific assignment. When AI use is authorized, students must clearly and visibly label the portions of their work that involve AI assistance, including a brief but clear description of how the tool was used. Failure to properly disclose or misrepresent AI-generated work will be treated as an academic integrity violation.

Accessibility and Accommodations

San José State University is committed to providing equitable access to education for all students. Students with documented disabilities, ongoing medical conditions, or accessibility needs must contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC) to request official accommodations.

While the instructor will always strive to be flexible and understanding, accommodations can only be formally implemented once AEC documentation is received. This ensures that all adjustments – such as flexibility with attendance, assignment extensions, or participation requirements – are handled consistently, fairly, and in accordance with university policy and federal law (ADA/Section 504).

Temporary or short-term medical circumstances (such as recovery from surgery or injury) are encouraged to reach out to the instructor directly for guidance.

The AEC can be contacted at aec-info@sjsu.edu, by phone at (408) 924-6000, or via the website www.sjsu.edu/aec.

Program Information

Department Name: Art and Art History

Department Office: ART 116

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/art

Department Email: art@sjsu.edu

Department phone number: 408-924-4325

Course Materials

Hardware + Software Requirements

This course is designed to be accessible to students with a wide range of technical backgrounds. You do not need an advanced setup to succeed, but you do need consistent access to a computer with sufficient disk space that can run the required software reliably. If you are unsure whether your device meets the scope of the projects, reach out during the first week and we'll figure it out together.

In classroom 241 we will have access to our DMA lab computers for students who need access to a reliable computer during class. However, it is highly recommended students have access to an equally reliable computer to be able to complete assignments outside of class.

Recommended Computer Specs

Minimum (functional enough):

- A computer capable of running modern creative software (tablets and Chromebooks will not suffice)
- **8 GB RAM**
- Integrated graphics *may* work for lighter projects

Recommended (best experience):

- **16 GB RAM**
- A dedicated GPU (NVIDIA or AMD)
- Comfortable free storage space for media files and project folders

Software

Students will use the following software throughout the semester:

- **TouchDesigner** (primary tool for the course)
- **Adobe Photoshop & Illustrator** (2D & vector assets preparation)
- **Blender** (3D assets and animation)
- **OBS Studio** (documentation / screen recording)

Devices

- **Webcam** (external or built-in)
- **Microphone** (external or built-in)
- MIDI controller or game controller (optional)

Online accounts:

- A **GitHub** account will be required for uploading final .tox files
- Google Workspace account (accessible through SJSU login)

Writing and Research Support

Students seeking help with writing, citation, or project documentation may use:

- **SJSU Writing Center:** One-on-one and online tutoring for writing assignments and artist statements.
www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter
- **MLK Library Research Guides:** Specialized research tools for Art, Design, and Digital Media.
- **Canvas Resources Page:** Supplementary guides for formatting, portfolio presentation, and reflective writing will be posted throughout the semester.

Books and Readings

There is **no required textbook** for this course. All readings will be provided as PDFs or online links posted on Canvas. These readings are selected to introduce students to digital media theory, design process, and contemporary creative practices.

Note: Additional materials or resources may be introduced later in the semester as the course develops. Any new requirements will be announced in advance and will prioritize accessibility, affordability, and fairness for all students.

Canvas

If you need technical support with Canvas, please click on the word "Help" in left-side menu bar of your Canvas screen. From there, you will be able to access a list of resources to help you with Canvas. Please check the [Guide on How to get help with Canvas](#).

If you haven't worked with Canvas before or want a refresher, look here:

- [Canvas Student Guide \(Instructure.com\)](#)
(Links to an external site.
<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>)
- [Canvas Video Guide \(Instructure.com\)](#)
(Links to an external site.
<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3891>)
- [Post a Picture in a Canvas Discussion](#)

✓ Grading Information

Assignments in this course are primarily project-based. Students will complete approximately **7 projects** over the semester, with the exact pacing and scope adjusted as needed based on class progress and learning goals. Each project is graded on a **0–10 point** scale and will make up the majority of the final grade.

In addition to the main projects, students will complete smaller supporting assignments throughout the semester. These may include short written or research-based tasks, completing forms or documentation, check-ins, and other course activities that support the studio workflow.

Final grades are calculated by weighted categories:

- **Participation & in-class engagement:** 20%
- **Projects (approx. 7 total):** 70% (*each project roughly 10% of the overall grade*)
- **Miscellaneous assignments:** 10% (*combined total*)

Each assignment will have a posted deadline. Submissions will remain open for late work, but late submissions will receive a small point deduction: **0.25 points per day late**.

For example:

If a project is worth **10 points** and is submitted **4 days late**, it will be graded out of **9 points** ($0.25 \times 4 = 1$).

If an assignment is worth **5 points** and is submitted 16 days late, it will *at best* receive **1 point** ($16 \times 0.25 = 4$).

Exceptions may be considered only in special circumstances, and only when communicated clearly and in a timely manner **before** the posted deadline if a student anticipates they will not be able to submit on time. Requests made far past the deadline (beyond a reasonable grace period) may not be eligible for full grading.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Course Structure + Weekly Flow (*Subject to Change*)

Refer to [this spreadsheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KXt3hzlFMhla1RU5bpaNCFUzLtdqCbHbLrlGkwmLsyE/edit?usp=sharing) for the semester schedule. Please note that the course timeline will remain flexible based on class needs at the instructor's discretion, and adjustments may be made as we go. This schedule is a tentative plan for the semester, and students should refer to the sheet regularly for the most up-to-date version. Any changes will be reviewed and announced both in class and through Canvas announcements.

This course is built as a hands-on studio and technical workshop. Each session combines short lectures, guided demonstrations, and supported build time. While the schedule below outlines the intended arc of the semester, the exact pacing, tools, and project focus may shift based on class needs, equipment access, and how quickly we move through material as a group.

Weekly Session Format

Most class meetings follow a consistent rhythm:

- **Lecture / Discussion:** Introductions to concepts, vocabulary, and examples from digital media, real-time systems, and interactive art.
- **Live Demo / Tutorial:** Step-by-step walkthroughs in TouchDesigner and supporting tools.
- **Workshop / Lab Time:** Students work on projects during class with instructor feedback, troubleshooting, and peer support.
- **Wrap + Next Steps:** Quick progress check-ins, notes for next session, and optional prep suggestions.

Semester Project Arc (*Flexible Overview*)

The semester is organized around a sequence of short projects that build skills gradually, moving from foundational tool fluency into more responsive and interactive systems. Projects are designed to be modular, meaning students can evolve earlier work into later assignments, or bring their own themes and media into the pipeline.

Typical progression includes:

- **Weeks 1–2: Setup + Foundations**

- Course overview, workflow expectations, and introductory software setup.
- Orientation to real-time media systems and basic TouchDesigner literacy.
- Student introductions and informal presentations of past/current work.

- **Weeks 3–9: Skill-Building Projects (Short Cycles)**

During this portion of the semester, projects focus on developing confidence and technical range through guided prompts. Topics may include:

- Motion graphics and compositing
- Pattern generation and procedural visuals
- Timing, looping, and sequencing
- Intro 3D and animated systems
- Audio-reactive and motion-reactive visuals
- Camera inputs and basic interaction strategies

- Some weeks will prioritize new material, while others will intentionally slow down to reinforce fundamentals, complete builds, and improve project quality through iteration.

- **Mid-Semester Break**

After the break, the course shifts toward integration and longer-form development.

- **Weeks 10–12: Integration + Personal Direction**

Students begin combining tools and techniques into more complete systems, with increased freedom to connect projects to their own interests. This phase may include independent tutorials, experimentation, and guided research that supports each student's direction.

- **Weeks 12–15: Collaborative Final Project + Show Planning**

The final portion of the semester is oriented around a collaborative group outcome (format may vary). Students may contribute to a shared class build, presentation, or installation-style experience that brings digital work into a physical or exhibition context. Roles and responsibilities will be distributed based on interest and skill growth, and the exact production plan will be confirmed later in the semester.

Notes on Flexibility + Pacing

Because this course is workshop-driven, we will adjust pacing when needed. Some topics may be expanded if students benefit from more time, while others may be streamlined to prioritize clarity and usable outcomes. The goal is for everyone to finish the semester with stronger technical confidence, a more fluent workflow, and a set of finished works suitable for documentation and portfolio use.

