

**Luke Jaeger**  
**Teaching Philosophy — Introductory Animation**

My aim is to educate and not simply train artists.

Animation gives the artist a level of control over the film's appearance that is exhilarating and sometimes terrifying. As an artist I cultivate a diverse mix of influences, interests and practices, and I encourage students to do the same. With eclecticism comes responsibility: artists who cast a wide net must also learn what to discard. Ultimately, this knowledge comes from exploring fully whatever one finds compelling without worrying too much about how it all fits into a master plan.

At the same time, learning the craft is essential. Basic principles of drawing, photography, and physics are all fundamental to animation. So is an understanding of film editing and story structure — the grammar rules which apply to all film genres, animated or not.

It's also vital for students to gain a sense of animation's history and diversity by viewing various forms of animation from around the world. Classroom viewing of films exposes students to a range of techniques and aesthetics and stimulates thinking about how a particular genre of animation may be tied to the culture or historical circumstances that gave rise to it.

American "classic" cartoons have much to teach us about our own genres and ideas, as well as exhibiting virtuosic levels of craft. Many cartoons from the American studio era contain images which strike contemporary audiences as ugly or demeaning stereotypes. I believe it is important, for all kinds of reasons, to view these films and discuss their historical context and legacy instead of sweeping them under the rug.

I make no attempt to impose on students my particular aesthetic or theoretical stance. I merely try to provide a map of the territory in which they can formulate their own. Artists need to know not only what they want to say, but also to whom they are speaking. Sometimes this requires thinking about the power dynamics encoded within filmmaking and film viewing, the histories of which are bound up with highly commercialized, labor- or capital-intensive modes of production.

I leave it to the students to generate their own content, then encourage them to question their choices in order to make each project succeed on its own terms. Conventions and "rules" must be identified and understood in order to be broken — or followed.