**The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)**

**UG Course Syllabus Template**

[Course Title] Introduction to Experimental Animation

[Course Code]UCUG 1503

[No. of Credits] 3

[Any pre-/co-requisites]No

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**Office Hours:**

Mondays,Wednesdays: 9-11AM, 2-3PM;

Location: E2-506

**Course Description**

This introductory course aims at guiding students to explore the art of animation through producing drawing, cut-ups, roto-scoping, photographic and object animation with digital and traditional tools. By introducing non-mainstream techniques and mediums for creating time-based imagery, students will learn both practical skills and theories of animation as a visual art form for artistic expression and communication. Through brief lecturing, students will acquaint themselves with the history and development of experimental animation and its influences to moving image arts in general. The hands-on activities will allow students to explore freely the principles of animation starting from manual techniques such as simple flip-books and zoetropes. Students will also learn to create animation from common computer software, such as Photoshop and Aftereffect.

**Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe and appreciate the history and development of experimental animation.

2. Identify and explain the stylistic and narrative elements of experimental animation.

3. Create an experimental animation artwork using a combination of digital and traditional tools

**Weekly schedule & Weekly ILOs**

[Include a weekly schedule and corresponding ILOs for clear, week-by-week guidance.]

| Week | Topics | Weekly ILOs |
|---|---|---|
| 1-0129 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Introduction and discussion about the strategy of learning historical context of animation aesthetics** | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2 |

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| | History of animation as inspiration to animation production.<br>Discussion of styles, styles of storytelling, relationship of story and visual.<br>Screening of some featured animated shorts and discussion on the form, visual structure, and narrative structure.<br>Introduction to class engagement, grading criteria, in-class projects, and final projects.<br><br>• What is experimental and mainstream animation<br>• What are the tools and materials for experimental animation<br>• Introduction on zoetrope and praxinoscope<br>• Terms need to know, e.g. frame rates, aspect ratio, etc.<br><br>Introduction to coming in-class projects. | |
| 2-<br>0205 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**The Discovery of Animation**<br>Introduction to early "animation toy": Phenakistiscope, zeotrope, praxinoscope<br>Georges Melies and his "trick films"<br>Emile Cohl, James Stuart Blackton, Winsor McCay.<br>Relationship between art creation and techniques, experimental animation and commercial animation.<br>Introduction to The Fleischers Brothers, techniques of rotoscope and rotograph.<br><br>Launch the group project_1： object animation.<br><br>STUDIO:<br>**Animation Principals**<br>Introduction to 12 principals of animation.<br>Learn the principles via metamorphosis workshop<br><br>Project 1 forming groups.<br><br>ASSIGNMENT:<br>- Launch Project 1_Object Animation.<br>- Bring one coin or a bottle cap to next class.<br>- Watch tutorials and practice "Stop Motion Studio". | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2 |
| 3-<br>0226 | STUDIO 1:<br>Screening of project examples<br>Discussion & storyboarding for project_1. Come up with ideas, shooting plan, etc.<br><br>Object animation test and demo with a coin or bottle cap.<br><br>ASSIGNMENT:<br>Watch Adobe Premier tutorials.<br>Groups who are ready for the shooting could bring materials to class for shooting next class.<br><br>STUDIO 2:<br>Project 1_Object Animation Progress update sharing. Project execution. | CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 4-<br>0305 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Inventing Techniques: Cutouts**<br>Quirino Cristiani<br>Lotte Reiniger and Prince Achmed (1926)<br>Berthold Bartosch and The Idea (1932)<br><br>STUDIO:<br>Adobe Premiere Basics.<br>Continue working on project_1 - object animation.<br>Students will have time to finish shooting part or work on the post- | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2 |

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| | production in class. | |
| 5-0312 | **Project 1_Object Animation Showcase**<br><br>LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Absolute Animation: Mystical visions**<br>Leopold Survage, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Stanton Macdonald-Wright Walther Ruttmann, Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter<br>Oscar Fischinger, Harry Smith, James Whitney, Jordan Belson<br><br>Next generation of absolute animation artists:<br>Mary Ellen Bute, Len Lye, Norman McLaren<br>Development of early computer graphics<br><br>READING –<br>"Influence and Inspiration: The Great Tradition of Visual Music" by William Moritz<br>http://www.iotacenter.org/visualmusic/articles/moritz/influenceinspiration<br>"Oskar Fischinger: Artist of the Century" by William Moritz<br>http://www.iotacenter.org/visualmusic/articles/moritz/fischartist<br>"The Unknown Art of Jordan Belson" by Ying Tang<br>http://pages.uoregon.edu/tanying/JBart.html<br>"Enlightenment" by William Moritz<br>http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/WMEnlightenment.html<br>"Jordan Belson the Last of the Great Masters" by William Moritz<br>http://www.iotacenter.org/visualmusic/articles/moritz/belsonmaster<br><br>Launch Group project_2: pixilation group project<br><br>STUDIO:<br>**Pixilation demo**<br>**Group discussion for project_2,** come up with ideas, shooting plan, etc. | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 6-0319 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Stop-motion animation**<br>Inventing Techniques: Puppets<br>Arthur Melbourne Cooper, Ladislas Starewich, Willis O'Brien, George Paul, Ray Harryhausen, The Brothers Quay, Barry Purvis<br>ASSIGNMENT:<br>Watching class recording about animation pipeline by Jake Zhang<br><br>STUDIO:<br>**Workshop – project_2: pixilation project**<br>Students will work in group or individually to generate pixilation animation to present simple story or movement. | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 7-0326 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Drawing animation**<br>Alexandre Alexeieff, Claire Parker, Jacques Drouin, Caroline Leaf, Anthony Gross, Robert Breer, Frederic Back, Caroline Leaf, William Kentridge<br><br>STUDIO:<br>Adobe Photoshop & After Effect workshop 1: Digital Cut-out ---set up | CILO-1,<br>CILO-2 |
| 8-0402 | STUDIO:<br>Adobe Photoshop & After Effect workshop 2: Digital Cut-out ---animation<br><br>• **Project 2_ pixilation Showcase**<br>LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Launch the creative project**<br>Introduction to animation ideation & storytelling<br>Check point: | CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |

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| | Week 8: in-class discussion on ideas<br>Week 9: Presentation ideas, storyboards and production plan<br>Week 12: work-in-progress sharing<br>Week 14: Final production | |
| 9-0409 | STUDIO:<br>Adobe Photoshop & After Effect workshop 3: Digital Cut-out ---composition and lighting.<br>In-class storytelling workshop if time allows.<br><br>LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Final project idea and 1st storyboard presentation**<br>Each student or group will present their updated storyboards, updated work-in-progress, visual treatment and other visual development materials.<br>In-class activity: "Storytelling help each session"<br>Project pipeline and production pipeline. | CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 10-0416 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>Film Language and storyboarding<br>STUDIO:<br>In-class help session for improving final project's storyboard.<br>One-on-one group meeting and help session. | CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 11-0423 | STUDIO:<br>**Audio-video in-class challenge**<br>LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>Final Project work-in-progress sharing session.<br><br>ASSIGNMENT:<br>Final research paper:<br>Your research project will involve selecting an animated film or filmmaker, and then placing your chosen subject within its individual historical context. For example: Why was this work made? What was the filmmaker's source of inspiration? What was the relationship between the filmmaker and his/her contemporaries.<br>Minimum length of the paper is 4 pages, double-spaced, not including images or web. A bibliography is required. | CILO-2,<br>CILO-3 |
| 12-0430 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>How do you submit your work to film festivals and competitions?<br>Trends of topics related to animation: AI animation, VR animation, immersive authoring for content creation, etc.<br>How to apply animation-making in research?<br><br>STUDIO:<br>Problem-solving session for creative projects.<br>Rendering with Adobe Media Encoder. | CILO-2, CILO-3 |
| 13-0514 | LECTURE&DISCUSSION<br>**Final Project Presentation**<br>Students present their final cut of their animations.<br>Critique and comment | CILO-3 |

**Assessment and Grading**

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

**Assessments:**

[List specific assessed tasks, exams, quizzes, their weightage, and due dates; perhaps, add a summary table as below, to precede the details for each assessment.]

| Assessment Task | Contribution to Overall Course grade (%) | Due date |
|---|---|---|
| Project 1_Object Animation | 15% | 06/03/2026 * |
| Project 2_ pixilation project | 15% | 27/03/2026 * |
| Creative Project | 30% | 22/05/2026 * |
| Creative Project_presentation | 10% | 14/05/2026* |
| Final Research Paper | 25% | 22/05/2026 |
| Participation (Attendance + engagement in in-class activities and discussions) | 5% | +---------- |

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* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

**Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks**

[add to/delete table as appropriate]

| Assessed Task | Mapped ILOs | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| Project 1_Object Animation | CILO-2, CILO-3 | This task assesses students' ability to identify and explain the stylistic and narrative elements of experimental animation (CILO-2) as they need to plan and execute the object animation considering the visual and storytelling aspects. Also, it evaluates their capacity to develop abstract ideas into an actual animation work (CILO-3) by transforming their concepts into a physical object-based animation. |
| Project 2_ pixilation project | CILO-2, CILO-3 | The pixilation project requires students to apply their understanding of the stylistic and narrative elements (CILO-2) to create a unique animation using the pixilation technique. It also assesses their ability to develop creative ideas into a completed pixilation animation work (CILO-3), demonstrating their skills in translating concepts into a digital medium with specific techniques. |
| Creative Project | CILO-2, CILO-3 | Throughout the creative project, students are expected to deeply |

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| | | analyze and apply the stylistic and narrative elements of experimental animation (CILO-2) in their own unique creations. They must also showcase their proficiency in developing abstract or specific ideas into a comprehensive and refined animation work (CILO-3), integrating various techniques and concepts learned throughout the course. |
| Final Research Paper | CILO-1, CILO-2 | The research paper assesses students' ability to describe and appreciate the history and development of experimental animation (CILO-1) by researching and analyzing a particular animated film or filmmaker within its historical context. It also evaluates their capacity to identify and explain the stylistic and narrative elements (CILO-2) as they discuss the chosen subject's characteristics and its relationship with the broader field of experimental animation. |

**Grading Rubrics**

**Project 1 & 2 (Object Animation & Pixilation Project)**

| Grades | Creativity & Experimental Elements | Participation (individual) | Artistic Skills | Technical Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 90 - 100 | Created artwork is highly innovative and makes a significant original contribution to explore the unknown creative purpose. It showcases a high level of uniqueness and novelty. | Actively participated in-class workshop. Actively engaged in class discussion, brainstorming with classmates and professor, and provided extremely valuable insights and ideas. | Ideas are combined in highly original and surprising ways. Imaginative and personal touches are abundant throughout the work, demonstrating a high level of artistic proficiency. | Demonstrates an excellent blend of personal style and advanced technical knowledge. The animation is technically excellent and highly coherent. |
| 80 - 89 | Created artwork is interesting and makes an original contribution for its intended purpose. It | Participated in-class workshop regularly. Actively participated in class discussion | Ideas are combined in original ways, with interesting approaches and | Technically competent and coherent. Can handle the technical aspects |

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| | is well-polished and shows a good level of creativity. | and brainstorming. | effects. Shows a good understanding and application of artistic techniques. | of the animation effectively. |
| 70 - 79 | Created artwork has some interesting aspects and serves its intended purpose. Shows attempts to be imaginative but may lack some originality. | Participated in the workshop and engaged in some discussions. | Some ideas are combined in original ways, with appropriate use of different materials, techniques and ideas. | Shows some technical and animation making skills, but may lack some finesse. |
| 60 - 69 | Created artwork serves its intended purpose, though may not be imaginative or revealing. | Participated minimally in the workshop. | Ideas are combined in ways that are derived from the thinking of others. May have some issues with the combination of materials and techniques | Shows a few technical and animation making skills but may appear unfamiliar with some aspects. |
| 0 - 59 | Created artwork does not serve its intended purpose. Without direction or insight. | Rarely participated. | Ideas are copied or restated from references. Lacks vivid feelings and ideas. | Technically incompetent and incoherent. |

**Creative Project**

| Grades | Creativity & Experimental Elements | Story & Structure | Artistic Skills | Technical Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 90 - 100 | Created artwork is highly interesting and makes a significant original contribution to explore the unknown creative purpose. It showcases a high level of innovation and uniqueness. | Outstanding narrative with excellent use of structure throughout the artwork. It is engaging and well-structured. | Ideas are combined in extremely original and surprising ways. Imaginative and personal touches are abundant throughout the work, demonstrating a high level of artistic proficiency. | Demonstrates an effective blend of personal style and advanced technical knowledge. The animation is technically excellent and coherent. |

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| 80 - 89 | Created artwork is interesting and makes an original contribution for its intended purpose. It is well-polished and shows a good level of creativity. | Interesting narrative with good use of structure throughout most of the artwork. It has a clear flow. | Ideas are combined in original ways, with interesting approaches and effects. Shows a good understanding and application of artistic techniques. | Technically competent and coherent. Can handle the technical aspects of the animation effectively. |
| 70 - 79 | Created artwork has some interesting aspects and serves its intended purpose. Shows attempts to be imaginative but may lack some originality. | Show some interesting elements in the narrative and good use of structure. It has some coherence. | Some ideas are combined in original ways, with appropriate use of different materials, techniques and ideas. | Shows some technical and animation making skills, but may lack some finesse. |
| 60 - 69 | Created artwork serves its intended purpose, though may not be imaginative or revealing. | Show a few interesting elements in the narrative and structure. It may lack some depth. | Ideas are combined in ways that are derived from the thinking of others. May have some issues with the combination of materials and techniques. | Shows a few technical and animation making skills, but may appear unfamiliar with some aspects. |
| 0 - 59 | Created artwork does not serve its intended purpose. Without direction or insight. | Lack of interesting elements in the narrative and structure to hold the content. | Ideas are copied or restated from references. Lacks vivid feelings and ideas. | Technically incompetent and incoherent. |

**Final Research Paper**

| Grades | Analysis on the Subject (40%) | Reflection on the Subject (40%) | Writing Style & Language (20%) |
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| 90 - 100 | Successfully identify and explain the major aspects of the chosen subject. Shows in-depth understanding and independent thinking. | Show unique perspectives and critical points of view. It is insightful and thought-provoking. | Logically organized according to a clear plan. Exceptional command of language. It is well-written and easy to follow. |
| 80 - 89 | Identify and explain most of the important aspects of the chosen subject. Shows careful thought and adequate understanding. | Show some interesting observations and points of view. It adds value to the analysis. | Logical progression of ideas and supporting information. Good command of language. It is coherent. |
| 70 - 79 | Show attempts to identify and explain the key aspects of the chosen subject. Shows some understanding. | Show a few interesting observations and points of view. It shows some effort in reflection. | Show attempts in presenting ideas and information in a logical approach. Adequate command of language. It has some structure. |

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| 60 - 69 | Inaccurate in description of the subject. Show some basic understanding. | Shows general ideas on the subject. It lacks depth. | Vague in conveying viewpoint and purpose. Inadequate command of language. It may be confusing. |
| 0 - 59 | Inaccurate in description of the subject. Fail to identify and explain the key aspects. | Unable to show valid ideas or the points of view on the subject. | Lacks a clear point of view and logical sequence of information. Inadequate command of language. |

**Final Grade Descriptors:**

| Grades | Short Description | Elaboration on subject grading description |
|---|---|---|
| A | Excellent Performance | Demonstrates a profound understanding of experimental animation history and development, being able to precisely describe key events, artists, and techniques, and their impacts. Can expertly identify and comprehensively explain the stylistic and narrative elements of various animations, showing acute insights. Displays exceptional creativity in developing abstract ideas into highly innovative and refined animation works, with seamless integration of diverse techniques and concepts. Exhibits strong collaboration skills during group projects and actively contributes to class discussions, often presenting unique perspectives. The work consistently exceeds the basic requirements and showcases a high level of scholarship and professional proficiency. |
| B | Good Performance | Shows a solid understanding of the main historical developments in experimental animation and can clearly discuss the relationships between different styles and techniques. Can accurately identify and effectively explain the stylistic and narrative features of animations, demonstrating good analytical skills. Proves competent in developing abstract ideas into well-structured and engaging animation works, applying learned techniques proficiently. Actively participates in class activities, works well with classmates, and shows motivation to improve. The work meets the requirements and reflects a good level of knowledge and practical ability. |
| C | Satisfactory Performance | Possesses a basic understanding of the core history of experimental animation and can mention some important milestones. Can identify and explain the general stylistic and narrative elements of animations, though with some limitations. Can develop simple abstract ideas into animation works that show a certain level of creativity and technical application. Makes efforts in class participation and attempts to solve problems encountered during projects. The work demonstrates an adequate level of knowledge and effort to achieve the learning goals. |
| D | Marginal Pass | Has a minimal understanding of the key historical points in experimental animation and can only briefly describe some basic concepts. Can identify some obvious stylistic and narrative elements but lacks in-depth analysis. Shows some potential in developing ideas into basic animation works but has difficulties |

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| | | in fully realizing them. Participates in class to a certain extent but may need more guidance. The work barely meets the minimum standards and indicates the need for further improvement in knowledge and skills. |
| F | Fail | Demonstrates a severe lack of understanding of experimental animation history and theory, unable to identify or explain key elements. Fails to develop meaningful ideas into animation works or shows extremely poor technical skills. Rarely participates in class or shows little effort in learning. The work does not meet the basic requirements for the course and indicates a significant gap in knowledge and skills. |

**Course AI Policy**

In this course, while the use of generative artificial intelligence tools is allowed under certain circumstances, it is of utmost importance that students adhere to strict academic integrity standards. If students choose to employ such tools, they are required to clearly credit the specific AI tools used. Moreover, it is the students' responsibility to guarantee that the final work submitted is entirely original and a true reflection of their own intellectual capabilities and understanding of the course material. The work must showcase their ability to apply knowledge creatively and independently, without any trace of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

**Communication and Feedback**

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include [specific details, e.g., strengths, areas for improvement]. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

**Resubmission Policy**

For the creative project and the final research paper, since their final submissions are due at the end of the semester, there will be no opportunity for resubmission. Students must submit their work before the specified deadlines.

For Project 1 and Project 2, provided that the original submissions are not late, students are allowed to submit an improved version before Last Day of Spring Term Classes 11:59PM and notify the instructor.

**Required Texts and Materials**

***The Animator's Survival Kit*** by Richard Williams

ISBN-13: 978- 0571202287

ISBN-10: 0571202284

**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to adhere to the university’s academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST(GZ)’s Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Regulations for Academic Integrity and Student Conduct for the University’s definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

**[Optional] Additional Resources**

Royalty free music

www.incompetech.com

https://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/music.html

Free Sound library

https://freesound.org/

https://www.zapsplat.com/

Free footage and images:

https://www.pexels.com/search/free%20download/