

MART 210: Digital Media Art Fundamentals (Summer 2018)

Ad. Prof. Jason Porter (jp14@email.sc.edu)

McMaster 310, M - F 9:00 - 11:30 am

Office Hours: Friday 9:30-11:30am - Location: Innovation Center Building 1213

THIS IS THE SYLLABUS. READ THE WHOLE THING.

Software doesn't matter.

Learning to make a strong mark on paper with pencil is not the same as writing or drawing, though it is an important first step. Similarly, this course introduces many basic techniques. *Do not mistake these techniques for the act of making art itself.* Art is first and foremost a process of mind over material.

The Media Arts are art forms that use digital tools and technologies to arrive at their end result. This includes (but is not limited to) filmmaking, interactive art, animation, video performance, documentary, games, graphics, robotics, simulation, bio-art, net art, and far more than can actually be named...

What You Can Learn

The goal of this foundational class is to prepare you for further advanced work in this field. Thus, there are several goals (some people call these "learning outcomes") that you must meet.

You will **demonstrate proficiency in digital art software and workflows** in the areas of graphics, digital video, and art computing, and you will **refine your sense of aesthetics** across these forms. You will prove you have done this through a series of practical projects and homework assignments that will test the specific processes and workflows for these skills.

You will **build a digital presence** to showcase your ideas and to communicate with the larger community. You will prove you have done this by hand-coding a web site to show your work and submit assignments.

You will **interpret and apply your understanding of principles** of digital art production and the historical, political, and economic exigencies that led to the state of the art. You will prove your understanding of these concepts through written exams.

This course meets the Carolina Core Learning Outcome for Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding.

The Professor

My name is Jason Porter. I have created art as an animator, illustrator, designer, and motion graphics artist for video games, film, and commercials. My current research is in interactive young children's literature. To find out more about my work, my website is jasonthewebsite.com

My office hours are the best way for you to come in and get help while working on your projects. The only way to reach me outside of class is by email at jp14@email.sc.edu.

Video Tutorials

An important information source for this course is a series of free tutorial videos that Professor Simon Tarr created for all the techniques needed in this class. They are available at OneFromZero.com (the direct link is also on Blackboard). These videos are required viewing. I'll expect you to know the information in them and to be able to perform the techniques covered in the videos.

Texts and Required Resources

There is no purchased textbook for this class. However, I may provide readings. When I assign an article to you, it's required reading.

During the semester, you will buy your own web domain name and a hosting service. This will cost a small amount of money that will vary depending on where you decide to host your web presence and what domain name you want. This cannot be replaced with free hosting services, and cannot be shared with other students.

The Work of the Class

Practical Projects (40 points)

There will be four individual projects, 10 points each, focusing on skills and processes that you need to master in graphics, video, and web. Projects will be assigned in advance of their deadlines and will take time to complete properly. They will be graded on their completeness, adherence to the assignment, and on the creative skill brought to bear on it.

Homework (36 points)

Homework will consist of small, short-term assignments to familiarize you with important workflows you'll encounter. They will be given only a day or two before they are due, are worth between 1 and 4 points each, and will be graded simply—all or nothing—based on whether you completed the work on time and according to the specifications. Homework turned in late is always scored as a zero. For some assignments, you may get an opportunity to resubmit with corrections, but only if you turned in the original work in on time. Many homework assignments will be cumulative and subsequent assignments

will depend on them, so if you lose points for missing a deadline or turning in out-of-spec work, you'll still be responsible for the work later.

Quizzes (6 points)

Quizzes will be short and given in class each Wednesday. If you miss one due to absence, you cannot re-take it.

Participation (3 points)

Speaking about your work as well as others are essential for success in the media arts. Your participation in class discussions and critiques will be expected.

Final Exam (15 points)

The final exam will be a cumulative test, open-note, given online, that cover any and all material covered in class and in assigned readings. These exams will not require media art tools or software. The exams will test higher-order thinking and understanding of concepts, not memorization.

Grades

You will always know what you have to do to get a certain grade on a project or homework. Specific rubrics for each element will be available on Blackboard when the assignments are given. Your scores for individual projects and homework will always be available to you on Blackboard, and you will always know where points were lost and for what reason.

When calculating your final grade, I will take your total points for each of the sections (projects, homework, and exams), and add them together to get a final total (out of a possible 100 points). Then I will modify that according to absences and extra credit, and assign a letter according to this scale: **A** (90-100), **B+** (86-89), **B** (80-85), **C+** (76-79), **C** (70-75), **D+** (66-69), **D** (60-65), **F** (0-59). If there are decimals, .500 and higher will round up to the next higher whole number.

You are not in competition with other students for grades. I will not negotiate grades after the fact, regardless of personal feelings, what you feel you deserve, the status of your financial aid or athletic eligibility, or how close you may think you are to the next grade level. I obey the law at all times and will never discuss your grades with anyone but you. I do not discuss grades over email, since that is not a secure medium.

I expect your best and most focused effort in your work at all times. This is a minimum, and it should go without mention. The fact that someone works hard in a college course doesn't have any bearing on how I score or evaluate work.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit.

Technology

Lab Computers and Gear

You can excel with provided lab facilities in Gambrell and McMaster buildings. There is more than enough hardware and software for all. Different labs have different hours; some are walk-in and others are reservation-only. Links to information about the labs are on Blackboard. When working in labs, you will not be able to use the same workstation every time you sit down to work. This is normal. Regardless of whether you use lab computers, your own computer or a combination, you must have external storage to store and move files. You should have a USB key drive (It must be at least 16 GB. Larger is better). Lab computers are cleaned regularly. If you leave files on them, you will lose them.

Your Own Computers and Gear

You do not need to buy software for this course. But if you want to use the professional software that we have in the labs, you can get a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud. This includes all the graphics, web design, and video applications you'll need, as well as 20GB of online storage.

If you use your own computer, make sure that it can do the jobs you need, with appropriate software and storage. Your work will be held to the same standards regardless of the computer you use.

Hardware or software issues are never an excuse for late, missing, or bad work. Technical problems are part of the process, and solving them as they come up while allowing you enough time to make the deadline is part of your coursework and learning process.

Blackboard

Most course mechanics (syllabus, assignments, handouts, exams, etc.) will be handled through Blackboard; your access is handled centrally through the University. If you work from a location off campus, you will need reliable broadband Internet access.

Other Web Tools

You will need a Vimeo or YouTube account (free versions are fine) to host videos. You will need a Facebook account to participate in the class groups that we will use for things not particularly well suited for Blackboard or email. Join the group page here:

There are also opportunities for freelance work, internships, and other time-sensitive program information at the Media Arts Facebook page at <http://facebook.com/uscmart>. You should be aware of information posted there.

How to Do Well

A Course Is Not Just the Time We Meet In Class

A course is a commitment to set aside a significant part of your semester to focus on something. Our class meetings are one part of that focused time. This course requires a lot of work outside of class meeting times. Most of your projects are done outside of meeting times. All the time developing the skills to accomplish those projects takes place outside of meeting times. This is normal, it is how the media art fields work, and it is the best way to gain new skills. If this does not appeal to you, you should drop the class and find something easier to do. If this is your major and you are not excited about putting in this kind of work, you should consider an easier major, because you will be unhappy in this field.

Practice

There are three main parts of art-making: think about the art you will make, refine the techniques of the art you will make, and then make the art. It's a repeating loop. Repeating means practice—putting in the time when it isn't glorious, romantic, or necessary. It means showing up and practicing your craft when there isn't something due. Art is a set of muscles that you strengthen over time by exercising them whether you want to or not. When the stars align and you feel creativity flow, you can take advantage of the moment with practiced training. When the mood isn't right, you can still get the job done because *That's What You Do*.

I will come back to this over and over. You will get sick of me coming back to it. You only really have two choices. You can doubt that I am right and ignore me, then discover at the end of the semester (or at the end of your degree, or after you can't land a job) that you need to practice regularly. Or you can accept that what I am saying is right, and get on with your work of practicing regularly right now.

If you do not practice, you will probably fail this course.

Attendance and Attending

Different classes may have different attendance policies, or none. This is the policy for this class. Please read it over a couple of times, because it is unforgiving. It is unforgiving on purpose.

You made a commitment to this course. You are not merely an ID number in this class. I expect you to be in class on time and to be truly present in every class. This is not unreasonable. However, life happens. Job opportunities, flu, weddings, car trouble, not wanting to go out in the rain, more illness, incarceration, baseball games. I get it. But understand this: you cannot get a high grade without perfect or near-perfect attendance.

I will take attendance. **You can miss a maximum of one day of class** without penalty. Beginning after that, and with each absence thereafter, you will lose 5 points of your final grade for each additional absence.

I will not determine "excusability." There is no difference between missing class due to illness, forgetfulness, student activities, athletics, comic cons, work schedules, jail, sweet internships, job interviews, etc.

If I do not take attendance on a given day, you are counted as present for that day whether you were there or not. If I do take attendance, and you're not there when it is taken, you're absent.

Punctuality is crucial, please arrive on time. If late arrival or early departure becomes frequent, then after a warning I will begin to deduct points.

You are responsible for material that you miss. Please consult with a classmate who can bring you up to speed. If you miss class on a date that something is due, that item is still due and you are still responsible for it.

Communicating

Email may have fallen out of fashion for many students. However, it's still a real communication method, and you need to use it. I will send email to the address associated with Blackboard. If you choose not to check or use your sc.edu email, be sure that it is forwarded to an account that you do check. "I didn't get the email," or "I haven't checked it this week," or "it must be in my spam folder" don't work with me. Be careful using Yahoo or AOL email to send important email to anyone. It is almost universally routed to junk mail.

Your first step for answering questions about coursework or assignments is always to check the course syllabus and postings on Blackboard. After that, you should use your connections with your classmates on the Facebook group for the class. If you have technical questions, the first thing you should always do is be sure you have watched the assigned tutorial videos or read the assigned material. I am not a substitute for due diligence or a shortcut to avoid doing the assigned research. Then, after you've Googled the question, you should contact me and/or come to my office hours. I'll be ready to help you get to the next level once you've gone through the basics!

One Strange Thing

No open laptops/tablets/phones during class. You'll take notes on paper.

Fine Print

Whose Stuff Is It?

The work you make in this class is yours. You hold the copyright; you can do whatever you want with it afterwards. You are, however, making the work under the auspices of this course. This must be noted when there are opportunities to give credit. The work you make in this course might be used in the future, without necessarily contacting you in advance (though we will always make a good faith effort to contact you). For example, I may show your work to future or prospective students, use it in whole or excerpted

in promotional material for Media Arts, include it in future compilations, and so forth (appropriate credit to you will always be given).

Odds and/or Ends

This course is a prerequisite for most of the classes in the media arts degree. I assume no prior experience. However, you should already have a grasp of basic computer skills. If you have experience in some of the processes we'll be using, good! That means you can go farther.

There will be no incomplete grades except for formally documented, University-approved emergencies, discussed with me. Prolonged illness should be verified by a physician, but does not obviate the attendance policy and may require you to withdraw from class.

Students who need accommodations to participate fully in class activities and fulfill class requirements, and who have certified their eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services, should make arrangements with me as soon as accommodations are registered through OSDS.

The full calendar with due dates is on Blackboard—access it there or subscribe to it digitally. The calendar and this syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be communicated in class. The most accurate information will always be on the Blackboard website. You are responsible, through attendance and attention, for your own awareness of changes to the syllabus or calendar.

After you receive any score, you have one week to raise questions about your understanding of your score. After that, it's written in stone. This is a classic cheating scam and I typically don't fall for it.

Make a paper copy of the last page of the syllabus, write your name legibly on it, and sign it. It's sort of the Van-Halen-brown-M&Ms (<http://bit.ly/2bgOlfS>) section of the syllabus that gives me a little assurance that you're paying attention to details. Your first homework points will be to turn it in by the deadline—before I read this sentence out loud on the first day of class. If you miss this and find out about it the hard way—good! You won't make that mistake again!

Academic Honesty

Note the following sections of University policy.

First:

“It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina to ... avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this rule or who knowingly assists another to violate this rule shall be subject to discipline” (Stud Affairs Policy 6.25).”

Second:

“Academic ethical behavior is essential for an institution dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and learning... All members of the University Community have a responsibility to uphold and maintain the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction, and evaluation; as well as adhering to the Honor Code” (USC Statement of Academic Integrity).”

Serious business. Even though we may be doing non-traditional academic work in an art program, it still applies. Be mindful. Things like: failing to credit material or contributions, using improperly acquired assets, turning in the same project for multiple classes, using someone else’s work, using University equipment for outside work for hire or local businesses, and so on—these are examples of such misrepresentations. They can result in failing the assignment, the class, having access to facilities revoked, and additional disciplinary action. If I acquire evidence that any violation of standards has occurred, it must be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Epilogue

As a Professor, I have an additional overarching goal for all students in every class I teach. That goal is for you to become self-sufficient, whether you are a practitioner or if you go on to become an artist. This is the most important thing that you can develop from any art or media program.

The aim of becoming autonomous and self-reliant will inform every element of this course.