

SM5344: ABSTRACT AND EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Abstract and Experimental Animation

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

5344

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

Through a series of screenings, workshops and lectures, this course introduces students to historical and contemporary approaches in abstract and experimental animation. A central premise of the course is that sound and music are key components of the moving image. Students will explore the concept of visual music, how rhythm, timing and counterpoint can structure or disrupt our reading of abstract motion. Another focal point is on the nexus between narrative and non-narrative modes of experimental animation, and how meanings can be negotiated through abstraction. In-class exercises and assigned projects will expose students to a range of tools and techniques which will enable them to design and produce abstract and experimental moving image works, as a form of artistic expression and as a conceptual tool for time-based media and beyond.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Gain an understanding of abstract and experimental moving image history and practices.		x	x	
2	Acquire animation skills and techniques through group work and creative exercises			x	
3	Interpret/express sound and music and/or meanings and concepts through abstract moving image		x	x	x
4	Experiment and take risks with digital and/or analog animation		x	x	x
5	Transform basic technical competence into a unique style or personal signature.			x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures and screenings	Explain key concepts and themes of abstract and experimental animation, screening of films examples with discussion	1	
2	Workshops	Introduce skills and techniques specific to abstract and experimental animation	2, 3	
3	Assignments and Exercises	Group projects to practice and creatively apply skills and techniques	2, 3	

4	Experimental Animation Projects	Short projects to refine skills and develop original personal expression	2, 3, 4, 5	
5	Readings		1	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Participation and performance	1, 2, 4	20	-	Yes
2	Experimental animation projects	2, 3, 4, 5	60	-	Yes
3	Presentation	2, 3, 4, 5	20	-	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Additional Information for ATs

The weightings and Usage of GenAI tools are subject to change. The latest course information will be announced during the lesson.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Participation and performance (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) - Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points

- In-depth pre- class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views
- Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

Good

(B+, B, B-) - Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points

- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret opinions effectively

Fair

(C+, C, C-) - Attentive in in- class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing

- Adequate pre- class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Fair ability in interpreting opinions

Marginal

(D) - Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people' s views

- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials

- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure

- (F) - Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
 - No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
 - Minimal ability in interpreting opinions
-

Assessment Task

Experimental animation projects (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Excellent

- (A+, A, A-) - Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature
- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Work raises questions and instils insights about the process of conception, creative strategisation and production
- Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter- disciplinary project
- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good

- (B+, B, B-) - Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

Fair

- (C+, C, C-) - Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Marginal

- (D) - Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Failure

- (F) - No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
 - Fail to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
 - Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available
-

Assessment Task

Presentation (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of 'discovery'

lies in the student's initiative to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) - Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter

- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative
- Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize

Good

(B+, B, B-) - Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter

- Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition
- Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management

Fair

(C+, C, C-) - Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter

- Fair organization, weak structure and composition
- Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management

Marginal

(D) - Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter

- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time- management

Failure

(F) - Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter

- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management

Assessment Task

Participation and performance (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) - Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points

- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

Good

(B+, B) - Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points

- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret opinions effectively

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) - Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views

- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure

- (F) - Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
- No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
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Assessment Task

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Criterion

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- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
 - Work raises questions and instils insights about the process of conception, creative strategisation and production
 - Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter- disciplinary project
 - Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good

- (B+, B) - Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
 - Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

Marginal

- (B-, C+, C) - Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
 - Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Failure

- (F) - No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fail to create project / work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
 - Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available
-

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Presentation (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

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- Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition
- Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) - Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter

- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time- management

Failure

(F) - Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter

- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Abstract animation, experimental animation, visual music, moving image art

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Russett, Robert & Starr, Cecile. Experimental Animation: An Illustrated Anthology. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1976.
2	Sitney, P. Adams. Visionary Film, The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000, Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 2002. Chapter on Absolute Animation, pp. 231–267.
3	Mollaghan, Aimee. The Visual Music Film. Palgrave Macmillan UK. 2015.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Rees, A. L. A History of Experimental Film and Video London: British Film Institute, 2011.
2	Youngblood, G. Expanded Cinema New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1970.
3	O’ Pray, Michael. Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions London: Wallflower Press, 2003.
4	Williams, Richard. The Animator's Survival Kit Faber and Faber, 2004.
5	Jennings, Gabrielle & Mondloch, Kate. Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art. University of California Press. 2015.