DPA 8600: Production Studio

Spring 2021
Section(s): 8600: 001
When: MW 16:00-18:45
Where: Live online zoom sessions, recorded and posted to ensemble
Instructor: Jerry Tessendorf
Email: jtessen@clemson.edu
Office: McAdams 302
Office Hours: Wednesdays 9am-12pm, link announced each day in canvas. Also by appointment.

TA:
TA Office Hours:
TA Email:

Webpage: https://people.cs.clemson.edu/~jtessen/dpa8600
Textbook: None
Videos Review sessions on zoom are recorded and located here: https://ensemble.clemson.edu/Playlist/Ra68Csb9
Syllabus pdf
Slack ???

Goals and Expectations

The goals of this course are:

- Provide the students with a better understanding of the production process
- Introduce the concepts and processes for creating and/or using multiple tools and disciplines in an integrated fashion
- Introduce the concepts and processes for a production pipeline
- Design, build, and execute short films and/or games in small teams at a very high level of quality
- Familiarize students with the review and iteration process
- Expand the students' experience with production communication
- Realistically simulate a production experience

Students will be expected to:

- Learn and master linux shell programming
- Learn and master the DPA production pipeline
- Learn to execute all of the stages of production with the DPA pipeline
- In some cases, learn the code structure and data content of the DPA production pipeline
- Work closely and intensively in small teams of students, with teaching assistant(s), staff, mentors, and professors
• Design and execute a short film or game in a small team
• Attend class in the DPA studio in the Fall on Monday/Wednesday for 4:00pm - 6:45pm.

Syllabus

The semester is focused purely on production of short films/games with high quality. For some reference and context, students should carefully study the wiki pages for the films "Robo+Repair", "QA-ARM-A", "Alien Oasis", and "Misfit Mice". In particular, the post-mortem notes for these shows are relevant. The DPA production pipeline and practices are evolving, so you should not expect to replicate these shows or their wiki pages. The teams are prohibited from depositing production data on any website other than the show page. Google, googledocs, wordpress, blogging sites, etc are prohibited because (1) it is good practice for the real world, and (2) it is valuable for students to control the presentation of these productions to potential employers, collaborators, and colleagues; and putting data on exterior websites eliminates that control.

The production teams must accomplish the following:

1. Assemble a production schedule

   This is one of the first tasks to be accomplished, and it will be revisited repeatedly throughout the production to revise it with actual progress and new estimates. This is a living document that must be constructed on the show page and must always available for inspection and modification. A googledocs or other online spreadsheet is not acceptable. The schedule must be maintained on the show home page throughout the production.

2. Divide up lead responsibilities

   Each team member must take the lead on several different departments. Being the lead does not imply that person is the primary worker in the department, although that may turn out to be the case. The lead is the person responsible for making sure all of the work of that department is accomplished on time with high quality. When there is a problem or question about a department, the lead person is the first person to handle that issue or question. The lead person may need to consult with others in the department to find out an answer or resolve an issue.

   The departments that need leads, and the responsibilities of those leads, are:

   Production Assistant
   - maintains the schedule, review notes, and show page; Tackles unexpected issues and resolves them. Makes sure that production items for review are ready at review time; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

   Quality Assurance
   - assign tasks to individual QA personnel; monitor progress of all QA activity;
troubleshoot difficult problems with QA personnel and artists; communicate production priorities to QA personnel; report QA status to production; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

**Story Design**
facilitates story idea discussions; assembles storyboards into animatics; maintains show page for story design; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

**Play Design (game)**
facilitates discussions on game structure and play character; assembles mock up of game play; maintains show page for play design; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

**LookDev**
facilitates character design discussion and research; builds and maintains show page on character design; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

**EnvDev**
facilitates environment design discussion and research; builds and maintains show page on environment design; communicates with supervisors about production issues.

**Modeling**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with modelers; validates published models for passage downstream; troubleshoots modeling issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for modeling.

**Surfacing**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with surfacers; validates published surfacing for passage downstream; troubleshoots surfacing issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for surfacing.

**Rigging**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with riggers; validates published rigs for passage downstream; troubleshoots rigging issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for rigging.

**Layout**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with layout artists; validates published scenes for passage downstream; troubleshoots layout issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for layout.

**Animation**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with animators; validates published animation for passage downstream; troubleshoots animation issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for animation.

**FX/Tech Anim**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with fx/tech anim artists; validates published elements for passage downstream; troubleshoots fx and tech anim issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for fx and tech anim.

**Lighting**
communicates priorities and daily tasks with lighters; troubleshoots lighting issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for lighting.

Compositing (short film)
communicates priorities and daily tasks with compositors; troubleshoots compositing issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for compositing.

Editing (short film)
communicates priorities and daily tasks with editors; troubleshoots editing issues; communicates with supervisors about production issues; maintains show page for editing.

3. Build a story

Build a story idea suitable for the length and high quality needed, and based on the story concept(s) under consideration. The short films will be 15 seconds in length, or exactly 15*24=360 frames. Because of the very short length, the story arc cannot execute all of the major components of a complete story. The story design here should be seen as a vignette, or an important moment of a larger story that the audience could imagine is happening. A successful short film is one in which the audience wants to watch the rest of the longer film that they imagine they have just seen a moment from.

4. Build animatics for the story from storyboards
5. Design the characters(s), environment(s), and prop(s).
6. Model and rig the environment and character(s) in the story
7. Layout

Execute a layout that tells the story better than the animatics. The layout should explore camera positions, angles, motion, focal length, dramatic style, and shot timing. Initially the environment and characters in the layout are blocked in, but as the layout development progresses, the quality of the environment and characters must improve in order to validate layout choices, and rough animation has to be included.

8. Animate the characters and environment.
9. Surface all elements
10. Develop and execute the fx elements and technical animation elements (hair, fur, cloth).
11. Light and composite the film using the renderfarm.
12. Edit and add sound effects and music to finish the short film.
13. Reviews and Communication

Conduct twice weekly reviews with the team members and faculty. All members of all teams will take review notes for all team members. Immediately following the review, the team will conduct a Status Update Meeting (SUM) to compare notes and create a single reconciled version, and set work priorities and assignments. The reconciled notes will be put on the show page by the PA, so that all parties can access them for their work.

Conduct regular meetings and communications sessions among the team
members, at least daily. Notes will be taken at these meetings and put on the show page for later use.

**Resources**

Each student will need to bring a pen or pencil and a paper notepad to every review. Extensive note taking will be necessary, for later use during the SUM immediately following. The notes may be taken directly onto computer if they feed directly into the production pipeline.

**Reviews**

Reviews of the project will be conducted in two ways:

1. In a group, twice weekly in on zoom session on Monday and Wednesday at 9:30am - 12:15pm, or possibly another time if needed for an external mentor.
2. Individually, as needed, on zoom with the student sharing the screen of their individual workstation. These reviews may be conducted by faculty, staff, teaching assistants, or mentors.

All reviews are a collaborative discussion in which everyone participating is free to comment and make suggestions. In extreme situations, the instructor's decisions overrule any other, but (almost) all artistic decisions will be made by the teams.

Reviews are conducted primarily on material (images and movies) that has been posted specifically for review.

Immediately following the M/W reviews, each team will conduct its own Status Update Meeting (SUM) to reconcile each individual's notes into a single set of notes that will be recorded by the PA on the show page. The purpose of these notes is to continue providing guidance to artists as they go forward from that meeting, and to provide context in future reviews about work that has been completed. During the SUM the team will also set priorities and work assignments going forward.

**Attendance**

Attendance will be an essential component of the quality of the projects. Production at a high level is an intensely collaborative activity, and despite the long and focused hours you will spend on the project, you will see that the quality of the work could be better still if you had more time to work on it. You will be engaged in active collaboration many times every day of the project, mostly unplanned. Unexpected emergencies occur continuously in production, and they affect the work of everyone on the team, and sometimes other teams. It is necessary to resolve these emergencies asap, and if you are unreachable and cannot be found, your team needs to know when to expect you back so that the best use can be made of everyone's time and resources.

**Completed Project Material**
The completed film or game is due Friday, April 16, 2021 by 11:59 PM. Some important guidelines:

For a short film, the following should appear in this order:

1. A title card 3 seconds long with a title for the short film
2. The short film itself
3. A card 3 seconds long with credit list of the students on your team, and the instructor's name with a title of "Faculty Advisor".
4. One or more cards, each 3 seconds long, listing any people and organizations you want to thank who help create the film, and containing the copyright statement

Copyright (c) 2021 by Clemson University

The film needs to be in the review system by the 23:59:59 deadline. More than one version can be there. If there is more than one version, you can send me an email pointing me to the one you want to call the official one. If you don't send me an email, I will make my best guess as to which one is the best to use.

The film must have all of your shots, with each shot in the best condition that you have by the deadline.

For a game, the following should appear in this order:

1. TBD

Remember to finish putting all review notes and milestones on your show page, and any other updates to the show page that you want considered.

If you have worked on pipeline improvements, you should email me with a description of them to make sure that I include them in your grade.

Grading

The grade consists of two parts:

1. Grade for team effort: 50%
2. Grade for individual effort: 50%

Team Effort

All members of a team receive the same point total for team effort, whether they officially worked on a milestone or not. While you may not be directly involved in a department, it is in your interest to participate in reviews and creative activity to make a better outcome for each step. Points for team effort are assigned for the following milestones:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storyboards/animatic</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modeling, rigging 20
Surfacing 20
FX 30
Animation 20
Lighting, compositing, QA 30
Editing, sound 10
Completed short 40
Total 200

Individual Effort

For each department that a team member contributes substantially to, they will receive up to 10 points. The amount rewarded is based on the overall magnitude of their contribution, i.e., the volume of work they do relative to the other team members, and the impact of their work. Each team member must work on at least 2 departments within the project.

POLICIES

Conduct Policy

Students are expected to be courteous and respectful in all interactions with fellow class members, TAs, and the instructor (whether this interaction occurs online, during class, or outside of class). Student misconduct will not be tolerated. Student misconduct includes, but not limited to, arguing with an instructor or TA about course policies, being rude or disrespectful towards a fellow class member or an instructor, sleeping in class, disrupting class, using a computer or other device during class without authorization from the instructor, showing up to class late or leaving class early without permission from the instructor, and refusing to follow course policies or instructions stated by an instructor. The instructor and TAs have the right to assign seats or to ask students to move to another seat if they feel it is necessary, and refusing to sit in an assigned seat will also be considered as an act of student misconduct. NO tobacco products or electronic cigarettes are allowed to be used during class or labs, including cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, dip, etc. For the first case of student misconduct, students may have points deducted from their Quiz grades or their final grade might be lowered by one full letter grade (i.e., an A becomes a B, B becomes a C, etc.) at the instructor's discretion. In extreme cases, or if the misconduct persists, a grade of F will be assigned to the student, and the student will not be allowed to attend class thereafter.

Academic Honesty

"As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a high seminary of learning. Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that
academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form."

When, in the opinion of a course instructor, there is evidence that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor must make a formal written charge of academic dishonesty, including a description of the misconduct to Dr. Jeff Appling, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The reporting instructor may, at his/her discretion, inform each involved student privately of the nature of the alleged charge. In cases of plagiarism (I.B.2.) instructors may use the Plagiarism Resolution Form available from the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Steps to help prevent academic dishonesty are:

1. Familiarize yourself with the regulations.
2. Refuse to assist students who want to cheat.
3. Protect your work! Do not allow anyone to copy any part of your work, and report anyone who tries to copy from you to the instructor or TA.
4. Do not copy any code from any unauthorized source. An unauthorized source includes, but not limited to, any webpage, online source, document, book, or person not affiliated with our course.
5. If you have any doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask your instructor before you turn in an assignment.

Furthermore, selling, posting, or giving away course content such as slides, notes, or any information about exams, quizzes, assignments, projects, or lectures is considered an act of academic dishonesty (unauthorized assistance) unless you have written permission from the instructor. All work submitted for grades should be your own work, and you cannot copy, paraphrase, or modify any work from any source not explicitly permitted by the instructor. The instructor has the right to run programs to detect evidence of unauthorized assistance (usually in the form of copying from another person or unauthorized source) in any assignment submitted by a student in this semester, previous semesters, or future semesters. Cheating has severe consequences, please do your own work!

Class Accommodation and Accessibility

Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Students who experience a barrier to full access to a class should let the professor know, and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling 864-656-6848, by emailing studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu, or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building. Appointments are strongly encouraged, drop-ins will be seen if possible, but there could be a significant wait due to scheduled appointments. Students who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access
further information here: http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/sds/.

Inclement Weather Policy

If a class is cancelled due to inclement weather, the instructor will make alternative arrangements for submitting work that was due that day. Usually the work will be due the next class, unless specified otherwise.  

Academic Continuity Plan for this course

Clemson has developed an Academic Continuity Plan for academic operations. Should university administration officially determine that the physical classroom facility is not available to conduct classes in, class will be conducted in a virtual (online) format. The University issues official disruption notifications through email /www/text notification/Social Media. When notified, students will use Clemson Canvas to find important information about the class. Teachers will also provide students with information on what to do in this case.

Late Instructor Policy

If the instructor or a lab instructor is late to class or labs, then students should wait at least 15 minutes and check the course announcements before leaving.

Clemson University Title IX (Sexual Harassment)

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This policy is located at http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/. Ms. Alesia Smith is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator and the Executive Director of Equity Compliance. Her office is located at 110 Holtzendorff Hall, 864.656.3181 (voice) or 864.656.0899 (TDD).

Syllabus Policy

Students are responsible for learning and following all policies stated in this syllabus. This course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. Tentative course schedule will be frequently updated.

END