



HIST 389: History of Animation

History 389
Fall 2005
Innovation 204
W 4:30-7:00
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History of Animation

Wednesday,
 August 31 — Housekeeping & Introductions

Friday,
 September 2 — **BLOG URL DUE**

Wednesday,
 September 7 — **BLOG POST #1 DUE**
 Lecture: Principles of Animation
 Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 1
 Screening: **Eadward Muybridge Series**, 1877-1885; **Lumiere Programs**, 1895-1897; **A Trip to the Moon**, 1902, Melies; **Humorous Phases of Funny Faces**, 1907, Blackton; Emil Cohl; **Joyuous Microbes**, 1909, Emil Cohl; **Automated Moving Company**, 1910, Emil Cohl; **Neo-Impressionist Painter**, 1910, Emil Cohl; **Professor Bonehead**, 1913, Emil Cohl

Tuesday,
 September 13 — **LAST DAY TO ADD CLASSES**

Wednesday,
 September 14 — **BLOG POST #2 DUE**
 Lecture: Early Pioneers
 Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 2
 Screening: **Little Nemo**, 1911, Winsor McCay; **The Story of a Mosquito**, 1912, Winsor McCay; **Gertie the Dinosaur**, 1914, Winsor McCay; **Sinking of the Lusitania**, 1918, Winsor McCay; **The Phable of the Phat Woman**, 1915, Raoul Barre; **Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse at the Circus**, 1916, George Herriman & Leon Searl; **Bobby Bumps Starts a Lodge**, 1918, John Bray; **Felix in Hollywood**, 1923, Earl Hurd; **Felix Dopes It Out**, 1924, Messmer/Sullivan; **Comicalamities** 1928, Messmer/Sullivan

Wednesday,
 September 21 — **BLOG POST #3 DUE**
 Lecture: European Pictorial Animation
 Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 3
 Screening: **The Adventures of Prince Achmed**, 1926, Lotte Reiniger;
Lotte Reiniger: Homage to the Inventor of the Silhouette Film, 1999, Katja Raganelli

Wednesday,
September 28

— **BLOG POST #4 DUE**

Lecture: Max, Dave and Joe Fleischer

Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 4

Screening: **Bimbo's Initiation** (Bimbo and Betty Boop), 1931;

Boop-Oop-a-Doop (Betty Boop), 1932; **Betty Boop's Penthouse** (Betty Boop), 1932; **Snow White** (Betty Boop), 1933; **Little Swee' Pea** (Popeye), 1936; **Popeye Meets Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves**, 1937; **Superman**, 1941

Wednesday,
October 5

— **BLOG POST #5 DUE**

Lecture: Disney & Warner Brothers

Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 5

Screening: **Steamboat Willie** (Mickey Mouse), 1928; **Skelton Dance**

(Silly Symphony); **The Three Little Pigs** (Silly Symphony), 1933; **Music Land** (Silly Symphony), 1935; **Porky in Wackyland** (Porky Pig), 1938; **Dough for Do-Do** (Porky Pig), 1949, Bob Clampett; **You Ought To Be In Pictures** (Daffy and Porky), 1940, **Duck AMuck** (Daffy Duck), 1953, **Presto-O-Chango** (Bugs Bunny), 1939, Chuck Jones; **Wackiki Wabbit** (Bugs Bunny), 1943, Chuck Jones; **Rabbit of Seville** (Bugs Bunny), 1950, Chuck Jones; **What's Opera Doc?** (Bugs Bunny), 1956, Chuck Jones, **Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs**, 1942, Bob Clampett

Tuesday,
October 12

— **BLOG POST #6 DUE**

Lecture: Walt Disney: The Business & Art

Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 6

Screening: **Snow White**, 1937

History as Animation

Wednesday,
October 19

— **BLOG POST #7 DUE**

Lecture: War II, & Aftermath

Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 6; The Testimony of Walter E. Disney Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (online)

Screening: **Private Snafu: Spies**, 1943,

Chuck Jones; **Donald Gets Drafted** (Donald Duck), 1942, Walt Disney; **Fall In-Fall Out** (Donald Duck), 1943, Walt

Disney; **Der Fuehrer's Face** (Donald Duck), 1943, Walt Disney; **Education**

for Death, 1943, Walt Disney; **Out of**

the Frying Pan into the Firing Line

(Minnie Mouse & Pluto), 1942, Walt

Disney; **History of German Animation**,

2000, Gerd Gockell



Wednesday,
October 26

— **BLOG POST #8 DUE**

Lecture: The Cold War & TV

Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 7

Screening: **Jet Fuel Formula** (Rocky & Bullwinkle), 1961, Jay Ward;

TV Animation Advertisements, 1950–1960, Various

- Wednesday,
November 2 — **BLOG POST #9 DUE**
Lecture: Bluth & American History
Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 8
Screening: **An American Tale**, Don Bluth, 1986
- Wednesday,
November 9 — **BLOG POST #10 DUE**
Lecture: Disney & American History
Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 9
Screening: **Pocahontas**, Disney, 1995
- Wednesday,
November 16 — **ANIMATIONS DUE**
Lecture: Dreamworks & American History
Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 10
Screening: **Spirit: Stallion of the Cimmaron**, Dreamworks, 2002
- Wednesday,
November 23 — **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Vacation)**
- Computer Animation Etc**
- Wednesday,
November 30 — **BLOG POST #11 DUE**
Lecture: Pixar: The Business & Art
Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 11
Screening: **Toy Story 2**, Pixar, 1999
- Wednesday,
December 7 — **BLOG POST #12 DUE**
Lecture: Claymation, Stop Action, Puppets, and Weird Stuff
Reading: Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*, Chap. 12
Screening: **The Nightmare Before Christmas**, Tim Burton
- Tuesday,
December 13 — **BLOG POST #13 DUE**
SELF-EVALUATION DUE

COURSE

Who did not cry when Bambi's mother died? Animation has the ability to make us cry and laugh, create worlds we have not imagined, defy the laws of physics, and sell raisins. In addition to a history of animation and its practitioners and development, the course also explores what happens to history when it is animated and how animation has been used during the twentieth century to interpret the past. The course also pays attention to the aesthetic of the animated image as well as the unique ability of the image to communicate. Finally, the offering will explore the tools, technology used in animation, and the various techniques: claymation, cel animation, CGI, and so forth. Participants will view animations (all right, cartoons) from various studios, feature-length animated films, and experimental shorts as well as try their hands at a simple (or sophisticated) animation.



BOOK

The following book is required for the course. It is available in the Campus Bookstore.

Leonard Matlin, *Of Mice and Magic*

BLOG

One of the requirements for the course is maintenance of a blog. There are several possibilities. First, there is Blogger <<http://www.blogger.com>>, a free service from Google. And we know free is good. Simply register and begin setting up your blog. Second, for those who want even more ease of use, there is TypePad <<http://www.typepad.com>>, but TypePad costs, albeit not much for a semester. The advantage in using TypePad is its photo album feature, a nice option in a visual history course. Finally, there are a number of blog software programs available—both open source and commercial—that allow you to design your own blog.

A word about design. There are a number of designs suitable for history but please avoid anything on a black or dark background with light or white type. Known as “reversing out” among graphic designers, this format is very difficult to read. If you elect to use TypePad, avoid the special interest design or media designs unless you will be using the features of a media design template extensively. Be sure to enable comments and the RSS feed so that you can access your classmates’ blogs using a newsreader. This will save you an enormous amount of time. Or, you can simply use the “Students” list on the website.

POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is critical in this class because the majority of the animations shown in class come from my personal collection. The library does not own them, so they cannot be put on reserve, and I am not putting DVDs or VHS tapes from my collection on reserve. (I have an irrational fear of a sticky popsicle stick stuck to my collector's edition *Snow White*.) So, you are expected to attend class unless some dire emergency arises—something on the order of a cosmic intervention. Because the class makes relatively few reading demands, participation by virtue of attendance is very important. You cannot participate if you are not in class.

Email

Please check your GMU mailbox periodically or arrange for your GMU mailbox material to be forwarded to your preferred email address. In addition, be sure that your mailbox has not exceeded its capacity so that your mail bounces back to me. If I send out announcements, I use the GMU mailing class mailing lists per university regulations. If you need to email me, please put HIST 389 in the subject line and sign your full name. This will help my spam detector route you to the proper folder, guarantee that I read your email, and ensure that I know who you are.

A Note on Computer Use

Computers are a great boon to the graduate student. But, as with any technology, you must take steps to minimize the problems that computers inevitably cause. Do not expect to get through the semester without having at least one computer crisis. Prepare for this well in advance. Back up your work constantly and have alternative plans for obtaining computer use, if your primary options fail you. I will never accept computer problems as excuses for missed assignments. You must also keep backup copies of submitted assignments—either in electronic form or hard copy.

Similarly, computers and email permit around-the-clock communication. If you have questions or need to apprise me of an emergency situation, contact me via email: <ppetrik@gmu.edu> Should you need to discuss an issue with the instructor, contact me via email or by phone to make an appointment. Do not, however, expect an immediate response. Many of your questions can be answered by consulting the web site at: <<http://www.archiva.net>>. Your best chance of reaching me immediately by email is during my office hours or late at night.

Grades

Grades, including +s and -s, will be assigned in the following manner. REMEMBER THEY REPRESENT AN EVALUATION, NOT A REWARD. To rephrase Smith-Barney (now Salomon Smith Barney), the investment folk, we do grades the old-fashioned way—earn them.

A—Outstanding work, complete mastery of the material presented, combined with some originality.

B—A solid command of the material with some gaps or mistakes in a basically sound essay or discussion.

C—Some knowledge of the material; mistakes and confusion are acceptable if mixed with some understanding. Not a reward for attendance or effort.

D—An incomplete and minimal knowledge of the material, major confusions and errors.

F—A failure to present the material in a reasonably accurate and comprehensible manner.

I—There are no “incompletes” given in this course except in cases of bona fide and documented instances in accordance with the regulations of the university.

P—For a “pass” a “C” average is required.

If you receive a grade or criticism that seems unfair or if you desire further explanation, please feel free to discuss the matter with me by making an appointment. My policy is not to discuss grades via email.

REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for the course are as follows: (1) Class Participation (20%); (2) Blog (40%); (3) Animation (20%); and (4) Comments (20%); (5) a self-evaluation (one-page, typed, single-spaced) assessing your performance in the course (not graded but required).

Blog

Each week you are expected to make a three-paragraph (or so) entry in your blog for that week. These must be posted on your blog the *day before class*. These may take many different forms. Your post may be a standard review in that it recaps the reading's thesis, articulates the kind of evidence that the author draws on, and makes some critical comment. A post might do an analysis of a particular scene in an animation. How does the animator accomplish a certain technical or narrative task? A post may be a more "free-form" response in which you mount a critique of a screening. Or a post might go further afield and entertain an idea that you have spun out of the reading or film screenings. A post may even review an animation website or compile a brief "webography" on a particular animation topic. You can even write about animated films that are not on the syllabus. (In fact, you are encouraged to view animations either via DVD rental or in the theater.) The blog posts will, to be frank, drive you nuts, but they will hone your writing skills and help you engage the material. Be aware that animation is visual, and images are necessary if you are referring to them in your post, so learning how to screen grabs may be important for you. Finally, although the blog posts are intended to be informal discussions, they are to be grammatically correct and proof-read.



Online writing and reading differs from print for a variety of reasons. Clarity is the name of the game. Each post must conform to the following format:

1. Post number
2. Post title
3. Underlined or bolded thesis sentence
4. Space between paragraphs
5. Titles of books should be italicized, titles of articles or documents should put in quotation marks, and so on.
6. Use text links to comments should use the author's name. Do not simply use a URL.
7. Use text links to sources on the web. Do not simply use a URL.
8. A reference to a reading—the class text, an outside reading, a decent article on the web—with appropriate citation
- 9.

Blog Comments

Each week you are expected to comment on two of your classmates blogs in your comment group. These comments are to be substantive, engage the the blog post, and be something other than, "Snow White rocks!" or "The Brothers Quay are really weird." Try for a paragraph. You are also free to comment on the writing if writing problems are getting in the way of your understanding what the writer is trying to say.

Animation

There is nothing like creating an animation to understand what animation entails. Each class member (or team of two) will be responsible for creating an animation. Animations can be very simple or very sophisticated. The point is to try and work at producing something interesting even if you believe that you are not artistically inclined. At minimum, your animation should be 36 frames and loop; at maximum, anything goes. You are free to use any medium that suits you,

although computer generated animations will probably be the easiest for most. I will be demonstrating various approaches and suggesting different ways of accomplishing this project in class. You should, however, plan on starting early because animation—if nothing else—is time consuming. I hope that we will have enough good animations so that we can exhibit the best examples or have our own animation festival.

Participation

See attendance. In many classes, we will be doing some kind of activity, learning a technique, experimenting, engaging in some sort of group activity, or analyzing the animations or historical context in which they were created.

SELF-EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Oftentimes, a letter grade does not reflect the effort that students put into a course, the amount a student has learned, or the skills that a student has acquired. A self-evaluation is one way of remedying this deficiency by illustrating and documenting your participation in the course from your perspective. This is the time to argue for yourself and put your best foot forward. In fact, it is in your interest to do the best job that you can on this assignment. The self-evaluation should be a one-page, typed single-spaced paper in which you address the following topics:

- I. Evaluation of your participation in the class
 - A. attendance
 - B. time devoted to the materials
 1. reading
 2. blog
 3. blog comments
 4. animation
 - C. class participation
 1. class participation
 - D. the ways in which you think you improved or not
 - E. the problems you encountered in your effort to complete the class assignments to your satisfaction.
 - F. what you would have done differently
 - G. some of the skills or knowledge that you acquired
- II. A general assessment of how you will apply what you have gained (or not) from the class in the future