

VISUAL STORYTELLING - AN214, 3 Units, Wednesdays 4-10 pm LCAD Fall 2012
Instructor: Marshall Vandruff www.marshallart.com mv@marshallart.com

COURSE OBJECTIVE: To develop stories into pictures. This requires:

- 1) Understanding character development and story structure
- 2) Composing images and arranging them in a sequence to present a coherent and emotionally effective story

COURSE CONTENT: This is a foundational course on storytelling with pictures.

We will collect anecdotes and imagery, study master story artists, and apply the principles to our projects. We will also work on public speaking skills in that students will “pitch” their story to the class.

EVALUATION: I do not include “+” and “-” marks in grading. The point division is as follows:

ATTENDANCE (Being in class and involved when class is in session.)	60 points
CLASS PROJECTS	40 points
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS FOR COURSE	100 points

Class does not meet during Thanksgiving Week, November 21, 2012

PROJECTS & ASSIGNMENTS:

DUE Weekly: Mini-assignments that count as 40 of 60 attendance points

DUE Oct 17: MID-TERM Presentation Board of Development Work: characters, settings, panels, etc. (18 points)

DUE Dec 12: FINAL Pitch of Visual Story: presented on screen (22 points)

Your story can be black&white, color, black/grey/white, or any combination.

It can be funny or serious, fast or slow-paced, with or without dialogue, in any style you choose.

It can be in any format - graphic novel, children’s book, storyboard, animatic, or new media

The objective criteria is that it be a story with pictures. The subjective criteria is that it be good.

Projects are due on the dates due - treat the class as if you were delivering to a studio, a publisher or an agency. If you’re absent, deliver the work or send it via e-mail before class (at appropriate resolution and compressed).

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS (none required): My Visual Storytelling book reviews are at marshallart.com. Click on REVIEWS at top, then on Visual Storytelling tab at left. Here is a short version:

STORY by Robert McKee

MAKING MOVIES by Sidney Lumet

UNDERSTANDING COMICS by Scott McCloud

UNDERSTANDING MOVIES by Louis D. Gianetti

THE FIVE C’S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY by Joseph V. Mascelli

THE ART OF DRAMATIC WRITING by Lajos Egri

MAKING A GOOD SCRIPT GREAT by Linda Seger

CREATIVE FILMMAKING FROM THE INSIDE OUT by Dannenbaum, Hodge & Mayer

ACTING WITHOUT AGONY by Don Richardson

REBEL WITHOUT A CREW by Robert Rodriguez. Inspiring! A model for success.

MOVIES TO WATCH (as homework, by Sept 12):

THE KILLING - Directed by Stanley Kubrick

THE VERDICT - Directed by Sydney Lumet

MIDNIGHT RUN - Directed by Martin Brest

REAR WINDOW - Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

VISUAL STORYTELLING FALL SEMESTER PLAN:

INTRODUCTION

Aug 29: Visual Storytelling vs Exposition

Assignment: Four-panel dream

PLAYERS

Sept 5: CHARACTER TYPES - How much can we tell about this person by looking?

Assignments: Family or friends caricatured or simplified

Sept 12: CHARACTER CASTING - What conflicts can we anticipate? Contrasts *Among* Characters.

Assignment: Character ensemble line-up

PROBLEMS

Sept 19: STORY STRUCTURE - Choreographing the Dance of Advantages

Assignment: Reversal chart or “good news, bad news” game

PAYOFFS

Sept 26: CHARACTER COMPLEXITY - What surprise happens from look to action?

Oct 3: CHARACTER TRANSITIONS - What change happens? Contrasts *Within* Characters

Oct 10: STORY UNITY & DIVERSITY - Weaving a tight story. Working backward.

Oct 17: MID-TERM - Presentation board of work so far and prep for final project (See technical criteria on next page)

THE PLAY

STAGING, DIALOGUE & SUBTEXT

Assignment: Three twenty-minute thumbnailing sessions

PICTURES

Oct 24: THE CAMERA

Assignment: Simple, unambiguous, wordless images that read clearly to a sixth-grader

Oct 31: STORY AND VISUAL METAPHOR

Nov 7: THE IMAGE

Nov 14: SHOT STRUCTURE

Nov 21: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

THE PITCH

Nov 28: TENSION & TIMING

Dec 5: THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN PITCHING A STORY

Dec 12: FINAL PITCHES DUE (2-5 minutes).

Leave 8.5 x 11” prints & digital documentation (see criteria on next page)

During the semester, I will show several clips from rated R films. If you are sensitive to specific imagery, please tell me so I can warn you away from those bits.

MID TERM PORTFOLIO DISPLAYS

A board no smaller than 12" x 18", no larger than 30" x 48", that shows your work in a way that sells your story.

FINAL PITCHES

You have between two and five minutes to involve, entertain, and satisfy us as your audience.

This is the story you've developed this semester. Make it good for us. Be prepared, not only with your work, but with the technical challenges of presenting your story from the computer, and on the monitor, in our room. Practice!

DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION *(This applies to both mid-term and final projects):*

Include enough imagery for me to present it to my employers as a digital version of your project.

Resolution should be high enough to see each image adequately on a screen, and to zoom in if you have included detail worth showing.

JPEG files (in a folder), or a PDF. Compress them appropriately so that they look good, but don't hog disk space.

Name the files, folder, or pdf with your name, semester & year included. Make it easy for your recipient to organize.

If in doubt, especially if you are not digitally competent, ask before the due date

PRINTS *(This applies to both mid-term and final projects):*

8.5" x 11" "Leave Behind". It can be horizontal or vertical. Make it a sample sheet of your project.

For the mid-term, it can be a honed-down version of your portfolio display that includes the best.

For the final pitch, it can be a page of postage-stamp thumbnails for each panel or shot. Make the shots or panels big enough to read, but not so big that you have to print multiple 8.5 x 11 pages. Fit them all onto one page... if you can, but if you need to print more than one page (for example, if you have eighty panels) use what you need.

Include your name, semester & year, and contact info as if for a client.

GRADING CRITERIA

A = EXCELLENT

In-class and homework assignments show that you are either brilliant or an extraordinarily hard worker, but preferably both. "A" students are obviously "A" students. If you want an "A", do work that makes the teacher who didn't give you an "A" look like a schmuck. In fact, don't even look to the teacher to give you an "A" - that's backward thinking. Look at yourself as someone who earned the "A" by going so many extra miles that you'd get an "A" from even the most bitter and hard-bitten curmudgeon of a teacher.

B = VERY GOOD

In-class and homework assignments prove you are competent. Maybe you'll be a pro. You did the job. Good show. You can get better, but you did well and I congratulate you. "B" is good. Pat yourself on the back. If those who misunderstand that "B" means "good" say "Why not an A?", look them in the eye and say "I did well - thank you very much" and walk away. If they persist, call me.

C = GOOD/ AVERAGE

In-class and homework assignments show that you did the job, but it wasn't anything to get excited about. You could have done better. Perhaps you should have done better. But life is rough and sometimes we can't get it all together and sometimes class can't be the priority. But you hung in there. You passed. See if you can do better next time. Even if you can't, I'm glad you hung in there. Let's get together for coffee and talk about life. I understand. It's rough.

D = BELOW AVERAGE/ BARELY PASSING

You didn't do a good job. It may be nothing personal - or it may - I don't know. But you didn't do a good job. You didn't do a terrible job either, but let's be realistic. You're going into the arts. Most people don't get hired in the arts. If you got a D in my class, I hope you will treat your hoped-for profession with more commitment or skill than you did in here if you got a D. Otherwise, you're flushing away all that money you spend to go to a school of this caliber.

F = FAILING

"Failing" may seem like a harsh term. It is. You failed. But failure is not the end. You know the stories. Einstein. Disney. Poe. No wait - forget about Poe. Just think of Einstein and Disney. They failed but they didn't sit around whining about it. They got up and did it better. I hope you do the same, But for this class, you didn't pull it off. Sorry. I just hope that you failed this class because you were pouring your energy into a paying art job for a real client that will make your career shine. If not, good luck.

BEHAVIOR/ CONDUCT

Some students make the class suck. Don't be one of those students. Be a good student.

Some students don't listen to anyone but themselves. When you are in class, listen. You may think "Why should I listen to people I think are dimwits?" The reason is that sometimes dimwits say brilliant things. And even if they don't, you would do well to pay attention to them for research. They can be characters in your stories.

Don't leave trash around. Laguna College is a nice environment. People all over the world wish they could be here. You're here. They're not. Put your trash in a can so it can be sent to their property.

Don't steal. If you do steal and I catch you, I'll narc. I won't feel bad about it either. Stealing is wrong. Instead of stealing, let's sing songs before class. I mean it. If you'll join me, I'll lead. If you'll lead, I'll join. Somehow, when you sing with someone, you don't feel as tempted to steal their stuff.

Smoke only in designated areas. Better yet not to smoke at all. But if you're the kind of person who makes life difficult for those around you, who every relationship ends in pain because of the kind of person you are becoming with your daily choices, smoke. Smoke often. Check in with me so I can make sure you don't slack off on your smoking.

Have a nice semester.