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DIG 4354 3D Character Animation

Fall 2025

Course Meetings: 3CAC: M/W Period 5-6/6, 3CAO: Online

Course Modality: [F2F] Face to Face/[OA] Online Asynchronous (for students registered in an online section)

Course Description

This course teaches students practical techniques for implementing three-dimensional digital character animations into digital animation. Students will develop skills in these advanced animation principles by learning and practicing character development, pipeline management, procedural framework simulation, and basic rigging. Students will also perform frame-by-frame studies of traditional and contemporary motion picture animation. By the end of the course, students will be able to fluently use both industry-standard and open-source tools to animate basic 3D object and 3D bipedal motion as well as perform key-framing in 3D.

Course Prerequisites

DAS Major with DIG 4306C or Instructor Permission

Learning Outcomes

Through directed projects in each learning objective, students will be able to:

- Practice timing, slow ins and slow outs, blocking, breakdowns, spline, as well as polish passes for arcs and secondary action.
- Translate straight ahead and pose to pose 3D animation.
- Analyze and implement shot based character development and appeal, acting reference filming, and follow through and overlapping action.
- Evaluate and apply real life reference into action lines and using pushed poses, incorporating squash and stretch and exaggeration.
- Expand upon foundations of solid drawing, anticipation, and staging to create dynamic shot compositions.

Materials & Books

Required

- Autodesk Maya 2024 or 2025 Educational Version (Free for students) [DOWNLOAD](#)
- Adobe Photoshop CC
- Adobe After Effects CC
- Adobe Media Encoder
- QuickTime 7
- Two-monitor setup (ONLINE students only)
- 3 Button Mouse

Supplemental

- TBD

Technology Requirements

- See “Course Technology” section of syllabus

Course Schedule

This schedule is only a guide and is subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments and readings are due the day they are listed on the syllabus, not the following day.

Week	Subject	Assignment Quizzes	Assignments Due
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orientation Module<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Instructor Introduction-Course Format Week 1 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Bouncing Ball with Tail Animation Assignment Description-Project-1 What's in the Box?-Rig principles	Discussion: Student Introduction Assignment 1: Bouncing Ball with Tail Animation Project 1 Part A: “What’s in the Box?” Story Synopsis and Thumbnails.	Discussion: Student Introduction Assignment 1: Bouncing Ball with Tail Animation
2	Week 2 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The 7 Acting Principles-Basic Planning Documents-Basic Box Rigging and Character Constraints-Character Pose Angles from Reference-Project 1 Part B Assignment Description	Project 1 Part B: “What’s in the Box?” Reference Footage and Blocking Posing Exercise 1: Full Body Dynamic Poses	Project 1 Part A: “What’s in the Box?” Story Synopsis and Thumbnails. Posing Exercise 1: Full Body Dynamic Poses
3	Week 3 Module	Project 1 Part C: “What’s in the Box?” Refined Blocking and	Project 1 Part B: “What’s in

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advanced Blocking Pass, Constraints, and IK/FK Switching Review -Breakdown Pass Fundamentals -Using Deformers on Rigs -Project 1 Part C Overview -Understanding Facial Posing 	Breakdown Passes	the Box?" Reference Footage and Blocking
4	Week 4 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Polish Pass -Project 2 Intro -Project 1 Part D Overview 	Project 2 Part A "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Story Synopsis and Thumbnails Project 1 Part D: "What's in the Box?" Polish Pass Posing Exercise 2 Facial Poses	Project 1 Part C: "What's in the Box?" Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes Posing Exercise 2 Facial Poses
5	Week 5 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emotional Ranges 	Project 2 Part B "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Reference Footage and Blocking	Project 2 Part A "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Story Synopsis and Thumbnails Project 1 Part D: "What's in the Box?" Polish Pass
6	Week 6 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Character Motivations and Goals -Understanding Hand and Finger Poses -Project 2 Part C Overview 	Project 2 Part C "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes Posing Exercise 3 Hand and Finger Poses	Project 2 Part B "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Reference Footage and Blocking Posing Exercise 3 Hand and Finger Poses
7	Week 7 Module <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Studying Live Action Acting -Project 3 Intro -Project 2 Part D Overview 	Project 3 Part A "Cartoony Sound Reaction" Story Synopsis and Thumbnails Project 2 Part D "Realistic Dialogue	Project 2 Part C "Realistic Dialogue Animation" Refined Blocking and

		Animation” Polish Pass	Breakdown Passes
8	Week 8 Module -Character Reactions -Cartoony Poses -Project 3 Part B Overview	Project 3 Part B “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Reference Footage and Blocking Posing Exercise 4 Cartoony Poses	Project 3 Part A “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Story Synopsis and Thumbnails Project 2 Part D “Realistic Dialogue Animation” Polish Pass
9	Week 9 Module -Smear Frames and Multi-limb Animation -Using Bendy Controllers -Project 3 Part C Overview	Project 3 Part C “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes	Project 3 Part B “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Reference Footage and Blocking Posing Exercise 4 Cartoony Poses
10	Week 10 Module -Cartoony Polish Pass -Project 3 Part D Overview	Project 3 Part D “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Polish Pass Posing Exercise 5 Putting it All Together	Project 3 Part C “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes Posing Exercise 5 Putting it All Together
11	Week 11 Module -11 Second Club Competition	Project 4 Part A “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Story Synopsis and Thumbnails	Project 3 Part D “Cartoony Sound Reaction” Polish Pass

12	Week 12 Module -Compiling and Editing Reference -Demo Reel Fundamentals -Assessing Areas to Work on in the Future -Project 4 Part B Overview	Project 4 Part B “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Reference Footage and Blocking Discussion: Demo Reel/Strengths and Weaknesses	Project 4 Part A “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Story Synopsis and Thumbnails Discussion: Demo Reel/Strengths and Weaknesses
13	Week 13 Module -Animation Layers and Complex Edits -Project 4 Part C Overview	Project 4 Part C “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes	Project 4 Part B “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Reference Footage and Blocking
14	Week 14 Modules -Polishing a Scene -Curating Feedback -Project 4 Part D Overview	Project 4 Part D “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Polish Pass	Project 4 Part C “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Refined Blocking and Breakdown Passes Project 4 Part D “11 Second Club Animation Competition” Polish Pass
15	Week 15 Module -Lighting and Rendering Refresher -Rigging, nCloth, and Topology -Final Project Overview	Final Project “Refine and Render” Discussion: Rigging, nCloth, and Topology	Final Project “Refine and Render” Discussion: Rigging,

			nCloth, and Topology
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Grading Criteria

Assignment / Assessment	Total Points	% of Grade
Participation – Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions and provide timely peer reviews on the work of others on Canvas.	100	10
Assignment 1 Bouncing Ball with Tail Animation Students will animate the provided rig of a bouncing ball with a tail navigating through an obstacle course.	100	10
Project 1 What's in the Box? [4 Parts] - Students will animate a character interacting with and opening a box. Particular attention will be paid to the physicality of the performance and the emotional responses of the character at the beginning, middle, and end of the piece.	100	17.5
Project 2 Realistic Dialogue [4 Parts] – Students will animate a piece of dialogue with 2 characters utilizing acting principles with focus on realistic movement and emotions.	100	17.5
Project 3 Cartoonish Reaction [4 Parts] – Students will animate a character reacting to a sound in a cartoonish way. Characters will be utilizing extreme exaggeration and motion with focus on arcs and solid posing.	100	17.5
Project 4 11 Second Club Animation Competition [4 Parts] – Students will participate in the November 11 Second Club Animation Competition using their provided audio for the month.	100	17.5
Final Project – This turn-in will be a fully rendered version of one of the 4 weekly projects with sound effects and title cards.	100	10

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	% Equivalency
A	94 – 100%
A-	90 – 93%
B+	87 – 89%
B	84 – 86%
B-	80 – 83%
C+	77 – 79%
C	74 – 76%
C-	70 – 73%
D+	67 – 69%
D	64 – 66%
D-	60 – 63%
E, I, NG, S-U, WF	0 – 59%

More information on grades and grading policies is here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Materials, Supply, and Equipment Fees

Material and supply and equipment use fee information are available from the academic departments or from the schedule of courses (Florida Statutes 1009.24). The total course fee for this class is \$0.00. The total course fee for each course is listed on the UF Schedule of Courses. (<https://registrar.ufl.edu/soc/>)

Course Policies

Attendance Policy, Class Expectations, and Make-Up Policy

The instructor is responsible for communicating the specific details of what percentage of your grade (if any) will be assigned to participation, and how class participation will be measured and graded. The UF Digital Worlds Institute is committed to the idea that regular student engagement is essential to successful scholastic achievement. No matter if the class is held in a traditional classroom, an online classroom, or a combination of the two, interaction with your peers and the instructor will empower you to greater achievement.

The success of this course is based on discussion and class participation. Attendance is vital. Your first unexcused absence from class will be permitted without penalty. The second unexcused absence will lower your final grade by 5%. The third unexcused absence will lower your final grade by 15%. The fourth unexcused absence will lower your final grade by 30%. Two (2) late arrivals and/or early departures to/from class will count as one (1) absence.

In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition, or debate. Students must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence when possible. No documentation is needed for an absence due to religious observation.

Students may only participate in classes if they are registered officially or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. The Office of the University Registrar provides official class rolls to instructors.

Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first-class meeting.

Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to engage in class include illness; Title IX-related situations; serious accidents or emergencies affecting the student, their roommates, or their family; special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences); military obligation; severe weather conditions that prevent class participation; religious holidays; participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competition, debate); and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Other reasons (e.g., a job interview or club activity) may be deemed acceptable if approved by the instructor.

For all planned absences, a student in a situation that allows an excused absence from a class, or any required class activity must inform the instructor as early as possible prior to the class. For all unplanned absences because of accidents or emergency situations, students should contact their instructor as soon as conditions permit.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during absence from class or inability to engage in class activities because of the reasons outlined above.

If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and they have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course or laboratory.

The university recognizes the right of the instructor to make attendance mandatory and require documentation for absences (except for religious holidays), missed work, or inability to fully engage in class. After due warning, an instructor can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Course Communications

Students can communicate directly with the instructor regarding the course material through the course management system (CANVAS) using "Canvas Mail".

Class Mental Wellness




The student will be asked to seek U matter, We care advisement during the term if the student GPA drops below 2.0 in the class or if the student is in some other jeopardy of continuance due to excessive absence or lateness.

Course Modality

Course modality is the way in which a class is offered/delivered to students by the instructor. All students, regardless of the modality, will achieve the same learning objectives. Students can check their class schedules or reference the top of this syllabus to see the format(s) available for each of their individual classes. The modality of a course does not vary during a semester, and students are expected to adhere to the instructor-defined attendance guidelines for that format. Use the guide below to familiarize yourself with the various ways classes are offered at the Digital Worlds Institute.

This course is an **F2F and OA** modality. See chart below.

Know Your Course Modality

		
Face-to-Face (F2F)	Online Asynchronous (OA)	Online Synchronous (OS)
Students attend class F2F in a classroom. Class sessions may be recorded for students to view later.	Students watch the posted recording of the class session or studio recording online at their convenience.	Students participate in a class in real-time through Zoom.
Hybrid refers to a course that is partially Face-to-Face (F2F) and Online Asynchronous (OA)		
In a HyFlex Model , students have the flexibility of moving across all three modalities as needed or desired.		

Course Technology

The students will be required to have access to and use a personal computer with access to the Internet. Word editing software will be required for written assignments.

The University of Florida and Digital Worlds requires that students have access to and ongoing use of a laptop/mobile computer for DIG courses in order to be able to function in the current learning environment. Digital Worlds requires each DAS major's laptop computer to meet certain minimum specs for heavy graphics use, the requirements

documented below must be met. <https://digitalworlds.ufl.edu/programs/ba-in-digital-arts-sciences/technology-requirements/>.

Course Communications

Students can communicate directly with the instructor regarding the course material through the course management system (CANVAS) using "Canvas E-Mail".

Course Recordings

Class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Creation of Original Content Ethics

For original projects and all assignment deliverables, students should remember that representations of acts of violence, coarse and offensive language, sexual behavior, bodily function and ability, neurodiversity, and personal identity are likely to cause extreme audience response, regardless of the creator's intentions. In addition, the recreation of such actions and subjects for fictional purposes may unintentionally traumatize or negatively impact those who collaborate in the creation of the images. While the university encourages students to explore themes and tell stories that may include this difficult subject matter, they should be cautioned against modes or styles of representation that might be considered unnecessarily offensive or potentially triggering. Instructors, faculty, and university administrators reserve the right to not show or share any student work they feel is inappropriate for their classroom or for public exhibition, as there may be concerns about the impact of such work on the community. Please consult with the faculty when producing work that might be considered controversial, and to err on the side of being cautious when it comes to making decisions about a project's content - in other words, make the PG-13 version of your story, not the R version, and certainly not the "unrated" version. This is also to help students understand that most professional creative situations have strict guidelines and limitations on such content and how it is produced: your ability to tell stories effectively with "less" is a strong professional skill that will aid in the dissemination of your work to a broader audience.

Course Technology Support

UF Computing Help Desk

For support related to account services, technical consulting, mobile device services, software services, administrative support, application support center, and learning support services, please contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 352-392-4357 or helpdesk@ufl.edu.

University Policies

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Netiquette Communication Courtesy

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats, more information can be found at: <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/ferpa-confidentiality-student-records/>

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

Campus and Academic Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the

emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

[Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

[Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

Online Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents the instructor's current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.