

motion design

instructor: michael mcdermott

email: mmcderm8@gmu.edu

phone: 202.556.0839

office hours: by appointment

website: gmugd.github.io/motion25-spring

delivery and timing

We will meet once a week in person on Thursdays from 1:30 to 4:10 in room 1021 in the Art and Design Building. The classes are required and during our sessions we will discuss work, complete demos, and further our motion design knowledge. The class is scheduled to run for 15 weeks and you can expect to work for 6 hours outside of class each week.

prerequisites

AVT 217: Intro to Web Design and AVT 311: Graphic Design Principles and Methods

course description

Motion Design introduces the theories, techniques and practices of motion design and the integration of design, image, sound, video, and animation.

overview

This is not a software training course. Although there will be occasional in-class software demos, a majority of the software skills will need to be self taught. Through the exercises, in-class workshops, projects, and critiques the students will learn the fundamental principles of time-based design grounded in traditional design principles.

Participants should finish the course with a working knowledge of motion design principles and methods as well as a better understanding of the production side of the medium.

objectives

- Improve general design skills
- Understand the process of planning for motion
- Understand the technical aspects of motion design
- Analyze how motion can enhance a narrative
- Understand how static design principles apply to a motion-based medium

programs

You must have After Effects to participate in this course. We will also use Photoshop and Illustrator to produce assets and other files throughout the semester. See Technology Requirements on the last page for more information.

OTHER

Zoom, internet browser, and a Vimeo account.

content

This course consists of many shorter exercises, a few longer projects, weekly prompts, and in class discussions. The exercises are to begin to familiarize students with specific concepts and ideas and the projects are a synthesis of the concepts and ideas we will cover. Weekly prompts will encourage you to critically engage with motion design you encounter outside of class.

projects

PROJECT 1: MOVING POSTER

Posters are traditionally a static medium but with more and more poster displays going digital and AR becoming a more widely available tool, posters can come alive. You will design a moving poster for a future event that uses AR to transform the printed version into motion.

PROJECT 2: OBSTRUCTIONS

Obstructions in design can seem like a burden but being able to use them as a creative starting point is key. You will create a short video and then create the same video three more times. Each new video will be created using a series of obstructions chosen in class.

PROJECT 3: SOMETHING IN MOTION

Project three will give you the option of coming up with your own project or choosing from one of the projects I have listed. The project will be a culmination of the skills and concepts you have learned throughout this course.

discussion of work

You will need to take an active role in both the presentation and discussion of your work. We will review projects in a variety of ways and you are expected to be able to talk and write about your own work and give feedback to your peers about their work. The ability to discuss your work and other student's work is a very important part of your education at Mason. Use this class to improve on those skills.

communication

Your ability to communicate with me is of prime importance in this course. If you are going to be absent, late, or not have your work, it will be your best interest in communicating those things to me in advance. I do not need to know your reasons for being absent, late, or not having your work but I do need to know. A simple, short email will be fine.

The same goes for if you are struggling in this class or having other issues that are hindering your ability to complete work in this class. The more you keep me in the loop the more I can help you and adjust as needed.

attendance

Your attendance is tied to your engagement grade. Each class you miss will lower your engagement grade by 25 points unless you let me know you won't be in class and make an effort to cover what you missed in class. Each class you are late to will lower your engagement grade by 10 points unless you let me know. If you miss four or more classes you will automatically fail the class unless you have communicated with me prior to the fourth absence.

engagement

This course has an engagement policy instead of an attendance policy. Your engagement will affect your final grade (and, by extension, the quality of your work) for this course. You are expected to actively and passionately take part in this course in the following ways.

- Attend class meetings and be on time
- Create things and be prepared to show them on time.
- Make things thoughtfully, intentionally, and with intensity.
- Meet all deadlines for handing in work and process.
- Actively participate in critiques both in class and out of class.
- Be curious about making things and the things your classmates make.
- Care about yourself & your work, your classmates & their work, and this class

grading

Grades will be based on engagement (25%), exercises (25%), and projects (50%).

ENGAGEMENT (25%)

This percentage will be based on your engagement in the class which is explained on above. Attend class and be engaged in this course and its content throughout the semester and this should be an easy 25%.

EXERCISES (25%)

The exercises are meant to be quicker, skill building tasks that improve your projects and design knowledge.

PROJECTS (50%)

Each project will generate two different grades. One grade will be based on your week to week process and the second grade will be based on the final submission. At the end of the semester you will have 4 total project grades that are all weighted equally for this 50%.

late work

Late work will be accepted for three weeks after a deadline with the exception of the final project which will be due at the end of the semester. There is a section on the rubrics showing how late work is factored into the assignment grade.

rubrics

Rubrics are used to grade exercises, projects, and checkpoints. The rubrics are at the end of this syllabus and tied to each submission on Canvas. The rubrics are here to allow you to understand how work is graded and to reference while working to self-evaluate.

semester schedule

The schedule on the next page is an outline of what we will be covering this spring. It is subject to additions, subtractions, and shifts. The most current version is on the class website.

WEEK 1: 1/23	Course Overview Gifs (PS) P1: Moving Poster E1: dot gif
WEEK 2: 1/30	Planning for Motion The Moving Poster E2: Making a Plan
WEEK 3: 2/6	What is Motion Design? After Effects Tour (AE) Position, Scale, Opacity, Rotation (AE) E3: Poster Animation
WEEK 4: 2/13	12 Principles of Animation Graph Editor (AE) E4: Sound and Motion
WEEK 5: 2/20	Cuts and Transitions (AE) Null Objects and Effects (AE) E5: Type in Motion P2: Obstructions
WEEK 6: 2/27	Animating Shapes and Trim Paths (AE) Masks and Mattes (AE) E6: Bouncing Ball
WEEK 7: 3/6	After Effects Review and Q&A (AE) Logo Reveals E7: Logo Reveal
WEEK 8: 3/13	No Class: Spring Break
WEEK 9: 3/20	P3: Something in Motion
WEEK 10: 3/27	Expressions (AE) E8: Wash, Rinse, Repeat
WEEK 11: 4/3	P3: Group Check Ins
WEEK 12: 4/10	P3: Individual Check Ins
WEEK 13: 4/17	P3: Group Check Ins
WEEK 14: 4/24	P3: Partner Check Ins E9: Stop Motion
WEEK 15: 5/1	Fill Out Course Evaluations
WEEK 16: 5/8	Final Evaluations

weekly schedule

Class is on Thursdays from 1:30–4:10. Most days we will meet for the entire time but some weeks we will have individual meetings or end early. Some classes will be work days so make sure to bring things to work on each class. Unless otherwise specified, all work is due at the beginning of class.

A note—Time management is an important skill to master and should be worked on all your classes. Staying up all night working is not a badge of honor, it typically means you didn't budget your time correctly. Staying up all night isn't healthy and making sure you are keeping yourself healthy is your first priority.

mason exhibitions & visual voices lecture series

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on four Thursday evenings from 4:45–6:30 pm, more details at masonexhibitions.org.

Visit masonexhibitions.org for the full schedule of exhibitions.

school of art social media accounts

IG: @gmusoa / FB: gmu.soa

writing center and library resources

Students who need intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center. For Spring 2025, the Writing Center is holding sessions online and in-person. For online sessions, writers can choose between meeting their tutor in real time on Zoom or uploading a draft for their tutor's written feedback. Please send your questions to wcenter@gmu.edu

Provisions Research Center for Art & Social Change is in Room LOO1 of the Art & Design Building. This student resource assists students in exploring and engaging new models for artmaking that lead to a more inclusive, equitable, and connected society. Provisions is also a hub for developing art projects through Mason Exhibitions, the Mural Brigade, and art partners throughout the metropolitan area, and beyond. Contact Don Russell for more information: drusse10@gmu.edu

Art and Art History Librarian, Stephanie Grimm, will offer appointments and virtual office hours for the Spring 2025 semester: Schedule https://infoguides.gmu.edu/prf.php?account_id=123393

official communications via mason e-mail

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University e-mail account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason e-mail account.

attendance policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class (including sections that meet online) participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the entire class. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

honor code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Office of Academic Integrity

responsible employee disclosure

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu

diversity, equity, and inclusion

Inspired by mass actions and worldwide protests demanding racial justice, CVPA's Arts in Context continues the Kritikos Anti-Racist Reading Group this semester, moderated by Mason faculty members Jessica Kallista and Kristin Johnsen-Neshati, with help from co-organizers, Cynthia Fuchs, Jordan McRae, and Sang Nam.

Members of the community are called to meet in Spring 2025 for a 90-minute session once a week with a goal of long-term commitment to relationship building, awareness, reimagining, transformation, and action, around anti-racist practices, racial justice, and the creation of conversations as well as systems of compassion and healing. We continue to focus on anti-Black racism and its effects on society.

Grounded in the knowledge that it is not a question of whether we are racist, but rather, how racism is expressed and experienced in ourselves, our lives, our behaviors, and our institutions, we explore books, music, art, essays, podcasts, and documentaries that allow us to critically question and consider our roles as artists, thinkers, citizens, and creatives in a society founded on racist values and practices.

A schedule of sessions will be available in the link below.

<https://cvpa.gmu.edu/events/arts-context/kritikos-anti-racist-reading-group>

commitment to diversity

This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

student support and advocacy center

The Student Support and Advocacy Center assists students who are encountering a life crisis or significant barriers that impact their academic and personal success and/or overall functioning. Our goal through individual consultations is to best understand the student's situation, answer questions, provide guidance, and make connections to appropriate on and off-campus resources.

For more information, please visit this website: <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

caps at mason

CAPS provides a wide range of free services to students. CAPS offers crisis, counseling, and psychiatric services virtually, and limited services in person. Services are provided by a staff of licensed clinical psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, doctoral-level trainees, and a board-certified psychiatrist. Our individual and group counseling, workshops, and community education programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. For distance learners, please see our Resources for Distance Learning page. We also provide consultation to faculty and staff who have concerns about a student.

CAPS provides short-term mental health services for enrolled students. When a student's needs require a different level of care, CAPS works with students to transition care to community providers. If a student is currently seeing a professional in the community for therapy and can continue to work with them, we encourage the student to continue care with their current provider.

To begin services with CAPS, please call us at 703-993-2380 during our business hours. Due to the rise in COVID cases, we are only offering services via telehealth during this time.

If you are experiencing a crisis after our business hours or on weekends or holidays, please call us at 703-993-2380. Please select option 1 in our phone system to be connected to an after-hours crisis counselor.

If you are interested in connecting with a provider in the community for long term counseling, please visit our Find a Community Provider page for our database of community provider options and other options for connecting with a therapist. If you have student health insurance through Aetna, you may also choose to access services through TelaDoc.

students with disabilities and learning differences

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester.

anti-racism statement

The School of Art plays an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities. It strives to provide our community members with resources to interrupt cycles of racism so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just environment for all of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends, regardless of racial background. An anti-racism approach is an active and ongoing, long-term process. In all our efforts, we uphold a commitment to creating honest, respectful, supportive, and healing spaces where members of our community can meaningfully dialogue and learn from each other's lived experiences for the betterment of our entire community.

land acknowledgment

Land acknowledgment engages all present in an ongoing indigenous protocol to enact meaningful, reciprocal relationships with ancestors and contemporary tribal nations. As a state university, we have a responsibility to include and support indigenous communities and sovereign tribes in our work.

At the place George Mason University occupies, we give greetings and thanksgivings to these Potomac River life sources, to the Doeg ancestors, who Virginia annihilated in violent campaigns while ripping their lands apart with the brutal system of African American enslavement, to the recognized Virginia tribes who have lovingly stewarded these lands for millennia including the Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Upper Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, Monacan, Mattaponi, Patawomeck, and Nottaway, past, present, and future, and to the Piscataway tribes, who have lived on both sides of the river from time immemorial.

technology requirements

We do not have any Enterprise Adobe Creative Cloud licenses available for students. However, Adobe Creative Cloud can be found in many computer labs available for student use. Adobe Software is available in our labs and can be used for free by students. Please create an Adobe account using your personal email address. Please do not use your Mason email to create your Adobe account unless you are purchasing a student subscription.

Students may also purchase Adobe Creative Cloud subscriptions for personal use with student discounts directly from Adobe. Details for student pricing can be found on Adobe's Creative Cloud for Students page. Eligibility for student pricing requires proof. If a student provides a school-issued email address during the purchase, they are instantly verified.

The School of Art, Digital Design Studio (Room 1023) has open studio hours each semester. Our lab offers computers (with Adobe Creative Suite), scanners, photo printers, and 2 risograph machines with 14 colors. Our open studio is available to all active AVT students. We also have large surfaces to assemble work. Please check our website for open hours each semester.

The Collaborative Learning Hub (CLUB) supports effective teaching and learning with technology to enhance learning experiences and the quality of work-life at the university for current students, teaching faculty, instructional support staff, and academic units seeking to improve instruction. The CLUB provides training and support for instructional improvement and technology to enhance student learning, to support the use of technology-based courseware in classrooms, and to support instructional initiatives university-wide. Reservations are strongly encouraged, but walk-ins will still be accepted. To reserve collaborative space or the sound space online, select the Reserve Resources button or visit the web checkout portal and log in with your NetID and Patriot Pass Password. Alternatively, you may call the CLUB during open hours to make a reservation. At this time, email reservation requests will not be accepted. Upon entering the lab, guests are required to sign in. The information you supply helps provide the best service possible.

important dates

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the School of Art office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed), LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs in College Hall.

JAN 21 First Day of Spring Classes
JAN 21 Last Day to Submit Domicile
Reclassification Application
JAN 28 Last Day to Add: All Individual Sections
Forms Due
FEB 4 Last Day to Drop: With 100% Tuition
Refund
FEB 11 Last Day to Drop: With 50% Tuition
Refund
FEB 12–25 Unrestricted Withdrawal Period:
100% Tuition Liability
FEB 17–MAR 21 Mid-Term Evaluation Period:
100-200 Level Classes Grades Available via
patriotweb
FEB 26–MAR 31 Selective Withdrawal Period
Undergraduate Students Only (100% Tuition
Liability)
MAR 10–16 Spring Break (Classes Do Not Meet)
MAR 28 Incomplete Work from Fall 2024 Due to
Instructor
MAY 2 Dissertation/Thesis Deadline
MAY 5 Last Day of Class
MAY 6 Reading Day
MAY 7–14 Examination Period
MAY 15 Spring Commencement
MAY 16 Degree Conferral

project rubric (100 points total)

	UNSATISFACTORY (0)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (4–6)	SATISFACTORY (7–9)	EXEMPLARY (10)
AUDIO	No audio is present.	Audio is present but not considered. Begins and ends abruptly with no thought to how the audio influences the motion.	Audio is present and the beginning and ending are considered. Audio doesn't appear to add anything to the project.	Audio is well considered throughout the project. The choice of audio adds depth to the work and the beginning and ending are considered. The audio is also reflected in the motion and design of the project.
COMPLETION	None of the requirements of the project are met.	Few of the requirements of the project are met.	Most of the requirements of the project are met.	All requirements of the project are met.
EXECUTION	No apparent understanding of how to make things move.	Basic techniques and tools used in project. No principles of animation present.	Some advanced techniques and tools present (effects, masks, mattes, null objects, parenting, etc.) and a few principles of animation present.	Multiple advanced techniques and tools used and multiple principles of animation present.
EXPLORATION	There is no evidence of exploration. Concept doesn't offer anything new.	Very little exploration is evident. The project doesn't exhibit any exploration in concept, motion, or typographic choices.	Some exploration present. The design exhibits explorations in concept, motion, or typographic choices that could be pushed further.	Exploration of concept, motion, and typography are clear, innovative, and effective.
FORM	The design is inconsistent, unorganized and incoherent. The design interferes with meaning.	The design is standard, default, unsurprising. The content and the design are at odds with one another.	The design is clear and organized. The design fits the content and does not distract from it.	The design is compelling and inventive. The design responds to the content, enhances meaning, and takes advantage of its media/format.
MOTION	Motion is minimal, mechanical, and default.	Motion is present but glitchy and not refined.	Motion is basic but considered. Easing is present.	Motion is inventive, refined, and natural. More advanced techniques and experimentation are visible.
OVERALL	Project is incomplete, hastily done, and missing requirements.	All requirements are present but the form and execution of the project are basic.	Project fulfills requirements but there is still room for improvement.	Project exceeds requirements and the design and motion are well executed showing care for details and concept.
PROCESS	The project was completed without any real process from beginning to end. The project was submitted with little feedback given along the way.	Little process evident through the project. The initial ideas and designs were not pushed very far for the final submission.	Process is evident and minor improvements happened week to week.	Strong process with a commitment to improving and pushing the project throughout the duration.
SUBMISSION	Over a week late.	Up to a week late.	Up to two days late.	Early or on time.
TYPOGRAPHY	No hierarchy to the typography. Typeface choices conflict with the content and are illegible and/or unreadable. Principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) do not exist.	Basic hierarchy to the typography with minimal differences between elements. Typefaces choices are default and uninspired. Some principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) are apparent.	Clear hierarchy to the typography on the page with some overlap between elements. Typefaces choices are safe and do not take away from the overall design. Most elements follow principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) with a few exceptions.	Clear hierarchy to the typography with identifiable differences between elements. Typeface choices are smart and add to the overall design. Principles of good typography (tracking, leading, type size, etc.) are followed.

exercise rubric (100 points total)

	NO POINTS (0)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (20)	SATISFACTORY (22)	EXEMPLARY (25)
MOTION	Submission not relevant to exercise.	Basic.	Refined.	Inventive.
EXPLORATION	Submission not relevant to exercise.	No.	Maybe?	Yes!
REQUIREMENTS	None met or submission not relevant to exercise.	Few met.	Some met.	All met.
SUBMISSION	Over a week late.	Over two days late.	Up to two days late.	Submitted on time.

project checkpoint rubric (varies)

	UNSATISFACTORY (0%)	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (25%)	SATISFACTORY (50%)	EXEMPLARY (100%)
EXPLORATION (25%)	Submission not relevant to checkpoint or repeat submission.	No noticeable exploration.	Some exploration.	Noticeable exploration.
IMPROVEMENT (25%)	Submission not relevant to checkpoint or repeat submission.	Little improvement from previous week.	Some improvement from previous week.	Noticeable improvement from previous week.
REQUIREMENTS (25%)	None met or submission not relevant to checkpoint or repeat submission.	Few met.	Some met.	All met.
SUBMISSION (25%)	Over a week late.	Over two days late.	Up to two days late.	Submitted on time.