

Reflection on Teaching: Traditional Animation Studio/Team Animation course suite

Many graduate portfolios in our school contain projects that work on their own terms and do not clearly relate to broader ideas. For example, a student may show a render of a 3D model, the goal of which is to serve as proof of a student's ability to create models with proper form and topology. It does not attempt to be anything more than that. In the industry, however, studios produce more "complete thoughts" in commercials, in-store motion graphics sequences, and so on. Within our program, we have endeavored to give students more opportunities to create these kinds of projects while in school, so that their portfolios better resemble the industry and reflect the kind of work they want to produce after school.

In response, our program has taken two classes that previously had no relationship and made them into a suite. In this arrangement of Traditional Animation Studio and Team Animation, which students take back-to-back over the course of two quarters, students have a 22-week opportunity to work on a small team (similar to a production pipeline in the industry), thoroughly concept a project such as a 30-second spec ad or PSA, and then execute those designs with enough time to polish the work to professional quality. Through this process, we feel we are better able to achieve course competencies, including "Demonstrate creative art direction to design process," and "Apply time and resource management principles to the development and production of computer animation projects in accordance with program requirements and industry standards."

We have found the results to be quite successful. Students are able to entrench themselves more deeply into the process of creating an industry-style project while becoming more professional team members and project managers. We have every intention of continuing this process. This concept also informed MAA Curriculum Task Force discussions in Pittsburgh, and as such the updated curriculum has several multi-course suites that provide similar opportunities for students to achieve.