

## art 300 spring 04 digital technologies in art

### Ron Saito

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### Overview

Just eight years ago, digital media was a largely unexplored field. No one really knew what e-commerce was, videogames looked primitive and clunky, and “virtual reality” was a big buzzword. Now, however, multimedia, new media, digital media, gaming, etc., have converged into video. This means that the ability to understand time and its relationship to manipulating video (or video-like imagery) has become crucial to creating media art today. Consider videogames, for example. Each year they look more and more like movies which are increasingly moving toward high resolution video. Or think about Flash websites. They are really a very specific kind of video with added interactivity. It’s not immediately obvious but the best Flash sites are the ones in which designers have intuitively incorporated approaches from video.

Where do you aim a camera? What constitutes an edit? What’s behind the popularity of stuttering video? What is video expressionism? Why do some music and experimental videos grip us when they don’t make obvious sense? These are the kind of concerns we’ll address in this class. If there is one central theme we’ll focus on it’s visual poetry. This means understanding how to use video, audio and words together to make video art that elicits multiple interpretations. Instead of necessarily communicating a “message” this kind of art resonates with different meanings each time it’s viewed.

This class is part of the video:Digital Art concentration at the Cal. State Northridge Art Department. Students in the concentration study motion art (Art 302), audio/video/language (Art 300), visual effects (Art 352) then do further coursework in concept development (Art 402). Students in other concentrations also take video:Digital Art

courses to supplement their own studies. For more information, see [www.csun.edu/digitalart](http://www.csun.edu/digitalart).

### What’s the difference between this class and Art 302?

This class emphasizes video art production. We’ll cover shooting and editing using Final Cut Pro. In Art 302 you’ll learn more about compositing and layering in After Effects.

### Who should not take this class

This class does not emphasize character animation although it is a good supplement to character animation classes ([www.csun.edu/animation](http://www.csun.edu/animation)).

Graphic designers tend to find Art 302 closer to their interests. However, a lot of graphic designers have done great work in this class.

This class does not cover interactivity or Flash.

This class does not cover traditional film or TV approaches to video or film. Do not expect to work with dialogue and plots.

If you’re interested in creating still images or working primarily with Photoshop or Illustrator, try one of the following: Art 200, Art 354, Digital Imaging or Digital Illustration.

You should not take this class if you don’t like working with video or video cameras.

### Software

Final Cut Pro 3

### Prerequisites

- This course assumes you have taken Art 200, Visual Technology in Art, or have equivalent experience using the Mac Operating System (opening, saving files, etc.).
- I expect you to have web access and e-mail.
- You should have access to a video camera. While a miniDV Firewire camera is best, we can also digitize video from VHS tapes. Unfortunately, we do not have cameras that can be checked out.

### Course outline subject to change

Information / continuity  
Interpretive shooting & editing  
Lighting  
Color  
Creating a psychological state  
Mise en scene  
Machine aesthetics  
Expressionism  
Language, voice & narrative  
Audio

### Grading

Projects are graded on a 10-point scale. The longer we work on a project, the more it counts in your grade. Major projects are

underlined above. Below are the approximate grading equivalents. Please note that my scale is slightly different from other instructors': 10/9.5-A, 9-A-, 8.5-B+, 8-B, 7-C, 6-D, 5 and below: F.

Major projects 50%  
Short projects 30%  
Exercises/participation 20%

Please note the following possible project deductions—missed showing rough cut (-1), missed showing final cut (-1), missed other due date or scheduled in-class activity (-1), project turned in late (-2). Example: Donna got a good grade on her project: 10. But she missed showing her rough cut, and her project was late. Her grade: 10-1 (missed rough cut) -2 (late) = 7. Her final grade for that project was a 7—C. Please remember that showing a rough cut, final cut, etc., means showing in a group setting in class unless I specify otherwise.

If you will miss class because of illness, etc., please email me before class. Feel free to check on your grades at any time. Making sure you're current is your responsibility.

### More on grading

Grading is neither objective nor subjective. This is the nature of art/design—they involve *judgement*. This means that most projects cannot be graded by simply following a predefined checklist nor is grading subject to my arbitrary whims.

There are two kinds of students—those who follow the rules/assignment closely and those who try to use an assignment to do something meaningful to them. The best grades tend to come from students who try to do both—negotiate the rules AND do something meaningful. Best grades also go to those projects that are expressive of an idea, mood or feeling. Lower grades go to those projects that simply look like class projects.

You will find me surprisingly unsympathetic if you lose your work because your hard disk crashed or if someone erased your work from a lab computer. These problems can simply be solved if you make backup copies. You will also find me unsympathetic if you turn in work late because you're trying to get it right. To me, perfectionism is a form of over-control which rarely benefits creativity.

From past experience, I've found that the following guidelines will help you to get the best grade possible from this class:

1. Turning in something bad on time is almost always better than turning in your project late.

2. Turning something in late is usually better than not turning in anything at all.

3. If several projects are due at the same time and you have some of the projects completed, you should turn in what you have. Otherwise, everything will be marked late.

4. My grading scheme, which uses a spreadsheet, tends to reward consistency. Students who try to make up for missing or poor work by doing really well on some projects or really well at the end of the class rarely succeed to alter their grades significantly. If you try to turn in all your work at the end of your class, you will fail.

### How I teach

For detailed information on my teaching style and concerns, see my web page: [www.csun.edu/saito/teaching.html](http://www.csun.edu/saito/teaching.html)

### Miscellaneous

Please turn off your cell phone in class.

Don't leave your work on the hard disks in the computer lab and expect it to be there later. Many students have had projects (including final projects) deleted. Remember, losing your work is not an excuse for a late project.

It is important that you are finished with your own project and present in class when we are looking at other student's work. This is not for my sake, but because this is an essential part of the learning process and because it shows interest in and respect for other student's efforts.

I like to keep copies of student work for use as examples in future classes or on the web. If for some reason, you don't want your work saved or shown, please let me know

Please don't eat or drink in the lab.

### Supplies & texts

- Inexpensive CD player-style headphones
- 1 Zip disk or 128 MB or greater Flash Drive
- Blank CD-Rs (not CD-RWs)
- 2 Blank DVD-Rs (not DVD+R). Apple brand is best \$3/each
- Nice but not necessary: portable 7200 rpm Firewire hard drive (e.g. LaCie).