

# HUMA 5730: Animation Theories

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## **Time & Classroom:**

Time: 3-5:50pm, Wednesday  
Room: Zoom

## **Required Readings:**

- All available online at “Modules,” Canvas

## **Course Description:**

Animation existed as optical toys long before the birth of cinema, but it was not until the digital age that animation experienced its explosive boom. Recently animation theories began to emerge as a new field of research, offering critical interventions in film studies and even challenging our conventional views of the world. This course explores various theoretical issues in animation studies, such as movement, stasis, affect, automation and agency, TV serialization, digitality, media mix, sound, authorship and spectatorship, gender, race, animals, cuteness, animism and environment. Animated films made in China, Japan, and other parts of the world will be analyzed as case studies. All reading materials, lectures, classroom discussions, and writing assignments are in English.

## **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this semester students should be able to:

- enter the field of animation studies and be familiar with major theories, debates, and approaches
- use a theoretical vocabulary to analyze animated films
- sharpen critical thinking and enhance academic writing
- analyze particular animated films, identify their directors, technologies/techniques, audio-visual styles, and socio-historical condition
- be familiar with major animators, their representative films, and the socio-historical context in which they emerged

## **Assignments for MPhil and PhD Students:**

- Watch all required films and read all required articles and book chapters every week
- Write a reading report and post it online every week (around 200 words)
- At least one presentation (around 15 minutes)

- At least one leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- A final paper (around 15-20 pages, double spaced)

#### **Assignments for MA Students:**

- Watch the films and read two articles/book chapters every week
- Write a reading report and post it online every week (around 200 words)
- One presentation (around 15 minutes)
- One leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- No final paper required

#### **Due Dates:**

- 10am, every Monday, Reading Report (submit online)
- 10am, every Tuesday, Discussion Questions (submit online)
- 10am, Nov 14, Research Proposal (email submission)
- 7pm, Dec 2 (last class), presentation of final research projects
- 10am, Dec 15, Final Paper (email submission)

#### **Grading Criteria:**

- Attendance: 5% or F
- Participation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Reading Reports: 10% (30% for MA students)
- Presentation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Leading Discussion: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Research Proposal: 10% (20% for MA students)
- Final Paper: 45%

#### **Technical Issues:**

- **Reading Materials:** All available online at “Modules,” Canvas.
- **Audiovisual Materials:** All available online at “Modules,” Canvas.
- **Discussions Forum:** Students can post questions and comments about this course for open discussion at “Discussions,” Canvas. The instructor will check the forum on a regular basis to address your postings. Your postings will be counted as classroom participation.
- **E-mail:** E-mail will be used frequently in this course. The instructor will use it to make announcements relevant to the course. You can also use it to ask questions or express your concerns to the instructor. The instructor will reply your emails within 48 hours. Please check your campus email account on a daily basis.
- **Contact:**

Canvas:	cei@ust.hk	Hotline: 2358-6318
Library Reserve:	lbreserv@ust.hk	Hotline: 2358-6776

### **Classroom Etiquette**

- **Attendance** is mandatory. It is your responsibility to sign up and track your attendance. If you forget to sign up an attendance, the instructor will not make up for it. If you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason, please inform your instructor at least three days in advance and present relevant documents within one week after the absence. Being 5 minutes late for class three times will be counted as one unexcused absence.
- **No Late or Make-up Submission** will be accepted. Please be on time.
- **Preparation:** You are expected to be well prepared before each class begins. Please read related course materials and watch the required films of the week before you come to class. In this way, you can better make the most of classroom discussions.
- **Electronic Devices:** Please turn off your cell phones in class. Laptops, iPads, and other electronic devices are allowed only for learning purposes in class.
- **Notification in Advance:** Always inform the instructor at least three days in advance for absence and other issues that need special attention and accommodation.
- **Religious Holiday Accommodation:** If you wish to claim accommodation for a religious holiday, you should talk to your instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. You need to provide supporting documents.
- **Learning Disability Accommodation:** If you wish to claim accommodation for any kind of learning disability, you should talk to your instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Please provide supporting documents.
- **Academic Integrity:** Any academic dishonesty of any kind will be officially processed in accordance with the policies of the university.

## **Week 1 (Sept 9): Introduction: What Is Animation?**

### Film Screening in Class:

- Miscellaneous animated shorts

### Required Readings:

- Paul Wells, “Chapter 1: Thinking about Animated Film,” in *Understanding Animation*, 10-28.
- Karen Beckman, “Animating Film Theory: An Introduction,” in *Animating Film Theory*, 1-22.

### Recommended Readings:

- Paul Wells, “Introduction: Abdicating all Mental Law” & “Animation and Modernism” in *Animation and America*, 1-37.

## **Week 2 (Sept 16): The Art and Technology of Movement**

### Film Screening:

- Early Disney shorts
- *Princess Iron Fan* (Wan Brothers, 1941)

### Required Readings:

- *Eisenstein on Disney*, 7-35.
- Scott Bukatman, “Introduction: The Lively, the Playful, and the Animated,” in *The Poetics of Slumberland*.
- Thomas Lamarre, “Introduction,” in *The Anime Machine*.
- Kristin Thompson, “Implications of the Cel Animation Technique.”

### Recommended Readings:

- Maureen Furniss, “Introduction,” in *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics*.
- Miriam Hansen, “Of Mice and Ducks: Benjamin and Adorno on Disney.”

## **Week 3 (Sept 23): Moving Art**

### Film Screening:

- *Uproar in Heaven* (1961-1964)

### Required Readings:

- Du, “Introduction: Animated Encounters: Chinese Animation in Motion,” in *Animated Encounters*.
- Alex Zahlten, “*Doraemon* and *Your Name* in China: The Complicated Business of Mediatized Memory in East Asia,” *Screen* 60, no. 2 (2019): 311-321.

- Lai-kwan Pang, “Animation and Transcultural Signification,” in *Creativity and Its Discontents*.
- Sianne Ngai, “Animatedness,” in *Ugly Feelings*.

#### **Week 4 (Sept 30): Automation and Agency**

##### Film Screening:

- *Metropolis* (Rintarō, Madhouse, 2001)
- *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927)

##### Required Readings:

- Vivian Sobchak, “Animation and Automation, or, the Incredible Effortfulness of Being,” *Screen* 50. 4 (2009): 375-391.
- Teri Silvio, “Chapter 1: Animation versus Performance,” in *Puppets, Gods, and Brands*.
- Rey Chow, “Postmodern Automatons,” in *Writing Diaspora*.
- Lydia Liu, “Chapter 5: The Freudian Robot,” in *The Freudian Robot*.
- Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” in *Weimar Essays*.

#### **Week 5 (Oct 7): Suspended Animation**

##### Film Screening:

- *Astro Boy*, (Japan 1963, released in China in Dec 1980)
- *The Fiery Cliff Slogans* (*Huohong de yanbiao*), 1976
- *The Song of Stone* (*Ishi no uta*, 1963)

##### Required Readings:

- Laura Mulvey, “Chapter 1 Passing Time & 3 The Index and the Uncanny,” *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*
- Tom Gunning, “Animating the Instant: The Secret Symmetry between Animation and Photography,” in *Animating Film Theory*, edited by Karen Beckman.
- Yuriko Furuhashi, “Chapter One: Intermedial Experiments and the Rise of the Eizō Discourse,” in *Cinema of Actuality*, 13-52.
- Mely Chen, “Introduction: Animating Animacy,” in *Animacies*.

#### **Week 6 (Oct 14): TV Animation**

##### Film Screening:

- *Astro Boy* (1963) (the first episode only)
- *The Story of Afanti* (1979-1988) (the first episode only)
- *Police Chief Black Cat* (1984-1987) (the first episode only)

- *The Calabash Brothers* (1986-1987) (the first episode only)

Required Readings:

- Paul Wells, “Smarter than the Average Art Form: Animation in the Television Era,” *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture*, 15-32.
- Paul Wells, “Synthaesthetics, Subversion, Television,” in *American Animation*.
- Thomas Lamarre, “Chapter 6 & 7,” in *The Anime Ecology*.
- Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, 67-97
- Thomas Lamarre, “Regional TV: Affective Media Geographies,” *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, January 2015, Vol.2 (1-2), pp. 93-126.

**Week 7 (Oct 21): Digitality and CGI**

Film Screening:

- *Monkey King: Hero is Back* (2016)

Required Readings:

- Jason McGrath, “Suppositionality and Virtuality in Chinese Cinema,” forthcoming
- Weihua Wu, “Chapter 5: Flash Empire” and “Chapter 6: Chinese Independent Animation,” in *Chinese Animation, Creative Industries, and Digital Culture*.
- Alice Crawford, “The Digital Turn: Animation in the Age of Information Technologies,” *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture*, 110-130.
- Mark Langer: “The End of Animation History,” unpublished paper.
- Shilo T. McClean, “Chapter 1: The Bastard Spawn: Hollywood Computer-Generated-Effects Movies: Some Introductory Comments,” in *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film*.
- Kristen Whissel: “Introduction,” in *Spectacular Digital Effects: CGI and Contemporary Cinema*

**Week 8 (Oct 28): Media Mix**

Film Screening:

- *Persepolis* (2007)

Required Readings:

- Marc Steinberg, “Introduction: Rethinking Convergence in Japan,” in *Anime’s Media Mix*.
- Joanna Bouldin, “The Body, Animation and the Real: Race, Reality and the Rotoscope in Betty Boop.”
- Annabelle Honess Roe, “Introduction,” in *Animated Documentary*.
- Gunnar Strøm, “The Animated Documentary,” in *Animation Journal* 11 (2003).

## **Week 9 (Nov 4): Sound**

### Film Screening:

- *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* (1979)
- *Three Monks* (1980)

### Required Readings:

- Jin Fuzai, "Music and Chinese Animation," forthcoming.
- Shunsuke Nozawa, "Ensoulement and Effacement in Japanese Voice Acting," *Media Convergence in Japan*
- Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion."
- James Lastra, "Chapter 3: Sound and Image before the Talkies," in *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*
- V.I. Pudovkin, "Asynchronism as a Principle of Sound Film," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*.

### Recommended Readings:

- Lea Jacobs, "Chapter 3: Mickey Mousing Reconsidered," in *Film Rhythm after Sound*.
- Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 33-50.
- Sarah Kozloff, "Introduction and Chapter I," in *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film*.

## **Week 10 (Nov 11): Animals and Race**

### Film Screening:

- *White Snake: Origins* (2019)

### Required Readings:

- Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesism 1," *Mechademia*.
- Du, "The Dis/appearance of Animals in Animated Film during the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *positions*.
- Haiyan Lee, "Animals Are Us," in *The Strangers*.
- Étienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," in *Race, Nation, Class*.
- Jody Berland, "Introduction," in *Virtual Menageries*.
- Kristen Whissel: "Chapter 3: Vital Figures: The Life and Death of Digital Creatures," in *Spectacular Digital Effects: CGI and Contemporary Cinema*

## **Week 11 (Nov 18): Gender and Authorship**

#### Film Screening:

- *Dreaming to be Emperor* (Chen Bo'er, 1947)
- *Snow Boy* (Lin Wenxiao, *Xue haizi*, 1980)
- *The Tall Wife and the Short Husband* (Hu Yihong, *Gao nüren he ai zhangfu*, 1989)
- *Princess Lotus Flower* (Hu Yihong, *Lianhua gongzhu*, 1992)
- *Music Up* (Hu Yihong, *Wo wei ge kuang*, 2001)
- *Cat* (Bu Hua, *Mao*, 2002)

#### Required Readings:

- Jayne Pilling, "Introduction," *Women and Animation: A Compendium*, 5 and 6.
- Kirsten Thompson, "Quick—Like a Bunny! The Ink and Paint Machine: Female Labor and Color Production," *Animation Studies*, February 3, 2014.
- Diane Lewis, "Shiage and Women's Flexible Labor in the Japanese Animation Industry," *Feminist Media Histories* 4 no. 1 (2018): 115-141.
- María Lorenzo Hernández, "A Film of One's Own: The Animated Self-Portraits of Young Contemporary Female Animators," *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5. no. 1 (2010): 73-90.
- William Moritz, "Some Critical Perspectives on Lotte Reiniger."
- Paola Voci, "DV and the Animateur in China," *DV-Made China*, edited by Zhen Zhang.

### **Week 12 (Nov 25): Cuteness**

#### Film Screening:

- *Monster Hunt* (2015)

#### Required Readings:

- Sharon Kinsella, "Chapter 6: Cuties in Japan," in *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*.
- Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," in *Critical Inquiry* 31 (Summer 2005).
- Dale, Joshua Paul, Joyce Goggin, Julia Leyda, Anthony P. McIntyre, and Diane Negra, "The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness," in *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness*, pp. 11-44. Routledge, 2016.
- Pauline Moore, "When Velvet Glove Meets Iron Fists: Cuteness in Japanese Animation," in Cholodenko.
- Stephen J Gould, "A Biological Homage to Mickey Mouse," available online.
- Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesism III: Neoteny and the Politics of Life," *Mechademia* vol 6 (2011): 110-136.

### **Week 13 (Dec 2): Thing Power, Animism, and Environment**



Film Screening:

- *Princess Mononoke* (1997)

Required Readings:

- Jane Bennett, “Chapter 1 The Force of Things & 2 The Agency of Assemblages,” *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.
- Ursula K. Heise, “Plasmatic Nature: Environmentalism and Animated Film.”
- James Clarke, “Ecology and Animation: Animation Gone Wild: Bambi vs Princess Mononoke,” *Imagine*. Bristol: *Wildfire Communications* 31 (2010): 36–39.
- Michelle Smith and Elizabeth Parsons, “Animating Child Activism: Environmentalism and Class Politics in Ghibli's Princess Mononoke (1997) and Fox's Fern Gully (1992).” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. Routledge. 26, 1 (Feb 2012): 25–37.
- Karen F. Warren, “Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective,” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, pp.3-20.