

HUMA 5370: Animation Theories Spring 2025

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Division of Humanities
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Time & Classroom:

Time: 6-8:50pm, Tuesday
Room: 5566, Lift 27-28 & 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 advent of the digital age that animation experienced its exponential boom. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of animation theories as a new area of study, providing critical interventions in the field of film studies and questioning our preconceived notions of the world. This graduate-level course examines a range of theoretical topics in animation studies, including but not limited to movement, stillness, automation and agency, TV serialization, digitality/CGI/VR, media mix, intermediality, sound, emotions, gender, race, animals, cuteness, authorship, fandom, thing power, and environment. Animated films produced in China, Japan, and other places will be examined as case studies. English is used for all reading materials, lectures, classroom discussions, and writing projects.

Course Objectives:

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

- analyze 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
- enter the field of animation studies and be familiar with major theories, debates, and approaches
- use a professional and theoretical vocabulary to analyze animated films
- sharpen critical thinking and strengthen academic writing skills in animation studies
- enhance perceptive insights of our society, cultivate humanitarian values, and develop a strong sense of social responsibility

Assignments for MPhil and PhD Students:

- Watch all films and read all articles and book chapters every week
- At least one presentation (around 15 minutes)
- At least one leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (3 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- A final paper (around 15-20 pages, double spaced)

Assignments for MA and UG Students:

- Watch the required films only and read two articles/book chapters every week
- One presentation (around 15 minutes)
- One leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (3 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- No final paper required

Due Dates:

- 6pm, May 6, presentation of final research projects
- 6pm, May 13, Research Proposal (Professor Du's mailbox in General Office, 2nd floor)
- 6pm, May 20, Final Paper due (Professor Du's mailbox in General Office, 2nd floor)

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance: 10% or F
- Participation: 20%
- Presentation: 10%
- Leading Discussion: 10%
- Research Proposal: 10% (50% for MA students)
- Final Paper: 40% for MPhil and PhD students

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.
- **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 to your emails within 48 hours. Please check your campus email account daily.
- **Contact:**

Canvas:	cei@ust.hk	Hotline: 2358-6318
Library Reserve:	lbreserv@ust.hk	Hotline: 2358-6776
Classroom Facility:	Hotline: 2358-6815	

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 need 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. One unexcused absence means 5 points off your final total score. Four or more unexcused absences will automatically lower your final grade to F.
- **No Late or Make-up Submission** will be accepted. Please be on time. The instructor will grant a late or make-up project only for absolute necessities (e.g., medical reason, family crisis) and not because you have too much work and have run out of time. Please inform your instructor in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for a late or make-up project. You are expected to present convincing documents. The late or make-up project will be completely different from the regular one and will be more difficult, and it will be graded more strictly.
- **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 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 (Feb 4): Introduction: What Is Animation? What Is Theory?

Film Screening in Class:

- Pre-Disney American/European and Chinese 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 (Feb 11): The Art and Technology of Movement

Film Screening:

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

Required Readings:

- *Eisenstein on Disney*, 7-35.
- Thomas Lamarre, “Introduction,” in *The Anime Machine*, xiii-xxxvii
- Scott Bukatman, “Introduction: The Lively, the Playful, and the Animated,” in *The Poetics of Slumberland*.
- Kristin Thompson, “Implications of the Cel Animation Technique.”
- Miriam Hansen, “Of Mice and Ducks: Benjamin and Adorno on Disney.”

Recommended Readings:

- Maureen Furniss, “Introduction,” in *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics*.

Week 3 (Feb 18): Moving Art

Film Screening:

- *Uproar in Heaven* (China, 1961-1964)

Required Readings:

- 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*.

- Daisy Du, “Introduction: Animated Encounters: Chinese Animation in Motion,” in *Animated Encounters*.
- Sianne Ngai, “Animatedness,” in *Ugly Feelings*.
- Stevie Suan, “Introduction: Anime’s Performance of Identity,” in *Anime’s Identity: Performativity and Form beyond Japan*, 1-60.

Week 4 (Feb 25): 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 Automaton,” in *Writing Diaspora*.
- Lydia Liu, “Chapter 5: The Freudian Robot,” in *The Freudian Robot*.
- Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” in *Weimar Essays*.

Week 5 (March 4): Limited and Suspended Animation

Film Screening:

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

Required Readings:

- Thomas Lamarre, “Full Limited Animation,” in *The Anime Machine*, 184-206.
- Tom Gunning, “Animating the Instant: The Secret Symmetry between Animation and Photography,” in *Animating Film Theory*, edited by Karen Beckman.
- Daniel Morgan, “Toward a Natural History of Animated Backgrounds,” *Screen* 61.2 (Summer 2020).
- Hannah Frank, “Introduction: Looking at Labor,” in *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons*, 1-12.
- Daisy Yan Du, “A Theory of Suspended Animation: The Aesthetics and Politics of (E)motion and Stillness,” *Discourse* 2022

Recommended Readings:

- Laura Mulvey, “Chapter 1 Passing Time & 3 The Index and the Uncanny,” *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*

- Yuriko Furuhashi, “Chapter One: Intermedial Experiments and the Rise of the Eizō Discourse,” in *Cinema of Actuality*, 13-52.

Week 6 (March 11): TV Animation

Film Screening:

- *Astro Boy* (1963) (the first episode only)
- *The Story of Afanti* (1979-1988) (China, the first episode only)
- *Police Chief Black Cat* (1984-1987) (China, the first episode only)
- *The Calabash Brothers* (1986-1987) (China, 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*, 121-173.
- Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood*, 67-97

Week 7 (March 18): Digitality, CGI, and VR

Film Screening:

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

Required Readings:

- Lev Manovich, “What is Digital Cinema?” available online.
- Jason McGrath, “Suppositionality and Virtuality in Chinese Cinema,” *Boundary 2*, 2022
- 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*
- Akira Lippit, “Virtual Annihilation: Optics, VR, and the Discourse of Subjectivity,” *Criticism* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 595-610.

Week 8 (March 25): Media Mix and Intermediality

Film Screening:

- *Persepolis* (2007)

Required Readings:

- Marc Steinberg, "Introduction: Rethinking Convergence in Japan," in *Anime's Media Mix*.
- Christine Yano, "Introduction: Kitty, Japan, Global," in *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek across the Pacific*.
- 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 (April 1): Midterm Break

Week 10 (April 8): Midterm Break

Week 11 (April 15): Animals and Cuteness

Film Screening:

- *Monster Hunt* (2015)

Required Readings:

- Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesism I: Translating Animals in Wartime Animation," *Mechademia* vol 3 (2009): 75-95.
- Daisy Yan Du, "Chapter 4: Animals, Ethnic Minorities, and Villains in Animated Film during the Cultural Revolution," *Animated Encounters*, 152-180.
- 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 (2005).

Recommended Readings:

- Haiyan Lee, "Animals are Us," in *The Strangers and the Chinese Moral Imagination*, 71-116.
- 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.

Week 12 (April 22): Sound

Film Screening:

- *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* (*Nezha naohai*, 1979)
- *Three Monks* (*Sange heshang*, 1980)

Required Readings:

- Jin Fuzai, "Synesthesia of Music and Image," in *Chinese Animation and Socialism*.
- Shunsuke Nozawa, "Ensoulement and Effacement in Japanese Voice Acting," *Media Convergence in Japan*
- 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*.
- Rayna Denison, "Star-Spangled Ghibli: Star Voices in the American Versions of Hayao Miyazaki's Films," *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* vol 3, 2 (2008): 129-146.
- Colleen Montgomery, "Pixarticulation: Vocal Performance in Pixar Animation," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, no. 10 (Spring 2016): 1-23.

Recommended Readings:

- Lea Jacobs, "Chapter 3: Mickey Mousing Reconsidered," in *Film Rhythm after Sound*.
- Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion."
- 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 13 (April 29): Gender and Authorship

Film Screening:

- *Dreaming to be Emperor* (Chen Bo'er, *Huangdi meng*, 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.
- Paola Voci, “DV and the Animateur in China,” *DV-Made China*, edited by Zhen Zhang.
- Daisy Yan Du, “Suspended Authorship: Women Animation Directors in Socialist China, 1940s-1980s,” in *Chinese Animation: Multiplicities in Motion*, 2025.
- Paola Voci, “When Animation is *Accented* and *Gendered*: The Affirming *Gestures* of Women Animateurs and Why They Matter,” in *Chinese Animation: Multiplicities in Motion*, forthcoming.
- Dai Jinhua, “Invisible Women: Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Women’s Film,” *Positions* 3:1 (Spring 1995): 255-280.

Recommended Readings:

- 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.”

Week 14 (May 6): Otaku, Fandom, and Participatory Culture

Film Screening:

- *Otaku no Video* (Gainax, 1991)
- *Densha Otoko* (2005)

Readings:

- Thomas Lamarre, “An Introduction to Otaku Movement,” in *Enter Text* 4.1 (2004): 151-187.
- Hiroki Azuma, “Chapter 2: Database Animals,” in *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*, 25-95.
- Saitō Tamaki, “The Psychology of the Otaku,” in *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, 9-31.
- Saitō Tamaki, “Otaku Sexuality,” in *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*.
- James Welker, “Beautiful, Borrowed, and Bent: ‘Boys’ Love’ as Girls’ Love in Shojō Manga,” in *Signs* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 841-870.
- Henry Jenkins, “Chapter 1: ‘Get a Life!’: Fans, Poachers, Nomads,” in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, 9-49.

Week 15 (self-study): Animacy, Thing Power, 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*.
- Mely Chen, “Introduction: Animating Animacy,” in *Animacies*.
- 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*. 26, 1 (Feb 2012): 25–37.
- Karen F. Warren, “Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective,” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, pp.3-20.