



Course Syllabus:

Animation for Non-Majors ART 2733

MW 5:00 pm - 7:50 pm; FA-C115

Fall, 2026

Credit Hours:3 Contact Hours: 6 per week

Prerequisites: None

Instructor: Ernest Nsimbe, Assistant Professor

Office: C107 Fain Fine Arts

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm; Thursdays, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm; Fridays, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm, **by appointment.** (Email Subject: ART 2713-101)

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Syllabus Disclaimer

The information in this syllabus is subject to change. Changes to the course syllabus will be provided in writing and announced via course-wide announcements.

Course Description

Ever wondered how a bouncing ball, a flipbook doodle, or your favorite animated title sequence actually works? This course introduces non-art majors to the fundamentals of animation through accessible, hands-on projects, no drawing talent or design background required. You'll explore movement, timing, storytelling, and visual communication using beginner-friendly digital tools, and discover how animation can bring ideas to life across any field, from science and business to storytelling and beyond.

Course Overview

This class is a practical, project-based introduction to 2D animation. Each week builds a new skill, from simple shape and text animation to short character sequences, so by the end of the semester you'll have planned, built, and presented a complete animated project of your own. Along the way, you'll develop an eye for motion, rhythm, and visual clarity, and build confidence using core animation principles to communicate ideas, no matter your major.

Topics Include

- Principles of animation (timing, squash & stretch, anticipation, staging)
- Storyboarding and visual planning
- Basic character and object animation
- Motion graphics and text-based animation
- Sound integration
- Exporting and presenting animated work

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply core animation principles, timing, spacing, and staging to original digital projects.
- Use beginner-friendly animation software to build short animated sequences from scratch.
- Plan and develop storyboards to visualize ideas before animating them.
- Communicate concepts clearly through motion, timing, and visual hierarchy.
- Analyze animated work and articulate the design decisions behind it.
- Produce and present a polished final animation project.

Student Expectations

Studio Projects

- Projects will center on core graphic design principles, composition, hierarchy, typography, and visual communication, giving you hands-on practice solving real design problems.
- All work must be original and created specifically for this class.

- Assignments are due on their assigned dates; plan your process time accordingly, as critique days depend on everyone having work ready to discuss.

Critiques

- Studio projects are reviewed and discussed as a class. Critique is where design gets sharper; it's one of the most valuable parts of a design education, not an afterthought.
- Feedback is about the *work*, not the person who made it. Keep critique professional, constructive, and focused on how the piece communicates.
- In-process critiques happen one-on-one and in small groups throughout the project, so you get feedback while there's still time to act on it, not just at the finish line.

Writings and Sketchbooks:

You will be required to keep a sketchbook (approximately 9" x 12") with white, blank pages - no lined paper. This will include thumbnail sketches of projects, as well as visual and/or written responses to exhibitions, articles, studio projects, videos, etc. This will be required for every project as a process book as you prepare your final submission for each project. It is important to keep your sketchbook neat and organized with dates, assignment criteria, and no loose pages.

PLEASE TAKE NOTES always - do not trust your brain to retain new information you passively receive while listening to a lecture.

Work Ethic:

Personal motivation and discipline are keys to a student's success in this course. These qualities are demonstrated to me by actions - such as preparation for each class, thoughtful inquiry, involvement in projects, discussions, and critiques, and the successful resolution of various problems and challenges presented throughout the course. Students should expect to spend at least eight hours per week on homework in addition to studio/class time. Further, all work should be stored and transported in a manner that preserves it for critiques and portfolio reviews. Late work will be penalized by -5 for each project submitted.

Engagement and Professionalism:

- Actively engage with the material and cultivate curiosity.
- Participate in discussions, ask questions, and show genuine interest.
- Demonstrate professionalism by being punctual, prepared, and organized.

- Take detailed notes, follow instructions carefully, and meet deadlines.
- Embrace revisions as a critical part of the creative process.
- Communicate proactively; for example, if an emergency requires you to take a personal call, notify me in advance.

Class time and conduct.

- Use class time exclusively for activities related to this course, such as sketching, ideation, production, and research.
- Avoid working on assignments for other courses during class hours
- Headphones are allowed during individual work periods to support focus
- Silence your phone and turn off notifications to prevent disruptions
- Be on time (or better yet, be a little early). (10 minutes will be considered an absence)
- On workdays in class, please set mobile devices to vibrate.
- Please turn off mobile devices during critique, lecture, and presentation days.
- Submit projects neatly and orderly and ensure that your name, course number, and project number are included on every single file you submit. (Art-2733-101 _Lastname_projX.pdf) Improper naming of files/work submitted will be penalized by -2 for each project submitted.
- Digital craft will be stressed throughout the semester. This includes image quality, file organization, and overall presentation for anything submitted (Keynote, PDF, etc.). The understanding is that to complete the assignments well, you will need to spend at least as much time outside of class working as the class is scheduled for in a week. There will be in-class time devoted to troubleshooting, but it will not be enough to complete the assignments satisfactorily or back up your digital work. Given the current size and affordability of storage devices, there is no excuse for losing digital files. Get in the habit of doing regular back-ups.

Commitment:

Studio Access

Expected Workload: The generally accepted ratio of outside-of-class study and preparation for college-level coursework is two to three times the amount of in-class contacts with your professor. Therefore, you should invest 6-10 hours per week outside of class to complete coursework successfully outside of class meetings.

The Mac lab is available whenever scheduled classes are not in session.

IF YOU ARE IN THE BUILDING AFTER CLASS HOURS, YOU MUST BE ABLE TO PROVIDE YOUR STUDENT ID AND PROOF OF ENROLLMENT IN CLASS IF AN OFFICER ASKS FOR

IT. IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM AND NEED ASSISTANCE, CALL THE CAMPUS POLICE AT 397-4239.

Studio Maintenance

General studio cleanup will take place during the last 10 minutes of each class session. Students will maintain discipline in studio safety precautions, maintenance, and upkeep throughout the semester.

The instructor will drop those students who are unwilling to actively participate in those goals. Follow the posted lab rules.

Feedback:

You will receive frequent feedback from your instructor and classmates throughout the course.

Regular opportunities for self-reflection, evaluation, and discussion will also be provided to support your development.

Process:

For this course, you will be asked to be thoughtful and creative in your approach to your projects. You will also be asked to demonstrate how you arrived at every submission. To do this, you will need to document, collect, and organize your research throughout the entire semester.

This final process documentation will be printed or scanned into a digital form. Process documentation will be graded on the thoroughness of the investigation, creativity in approach, and diversity in the exploration. It will contain sketches, storyboards, documentation (images of photos/videos), critical analysis, reflections, observations, research findings, & etc. Everything should be included with intent. This means that the images and texts you've collected include notes and analysis. Do not simply post pages or content from the web. It will show that you haven't taken the time to analyze and reflect on what you are including in your research. Save all your processes and keep them organized. When designing a book, it is easy to lose track of your process as you move from one phase of the project to another.

Note: If you incorporate AI-generated content or use AI tools in your projects, please disclose this clearly. Be transparent about how the AI was used and include the prompts or instructions you provided to generate the content.

Course standards and instructional methods

We meet twice a week. **PLEASE TAKE NOTES** - do not trust your brain to retain new information you passively receive while listening to a lecture. Active student participation is encouraged through learning activities, including individual and/or collaborative learning, lecture, guided discussion and feedback sessions, student presentations, and personal/group-based exercises and projects. Students should bring all materials they need to work to class. Lack of preparation and preparedness will affect grades. Not following instructions can result in the loss of a full letter grade. Time management is an integral part of any learning process or creative project. Review of student work can take several forms, ranging from wall critiques that engage the entire class at one time to one-on-one Critiques (Crits) or feedback sessions with individual students.

Critiques/presentations

Critiques: Critiques are formal discussions that can happen as group or individual discussions. During a critique, every project will be evaluated. It is essential to bring all research, sketches, notes, ideation, and project development for discussion.

Critiques and presentation skills are a crucial part of the learning environment. Your dialog with your fellow students about your work helps you grow and learn as an artist. The discussions you have about their work help you build your skills to analyze and communicate about the work of others. Attending every critique and being entirely prepared is in your best interest. Class critiques cannot be made up should you be absent. In this class, there will be one-on-one desk critiques, minor group critiques, and full-class critiques at key points throughout the project. During small-group and full-class critiques, everyone involved is expected to participate for the entire time. These will be identified in the project schedule.

During the critique, you will receive a lot of feedback and information in a very short time. It is up to you to determine a method for capturing this information that works best for you. The discussions that occur during a critique or in a presentation are impossible to recall later, and it is, therefore, recommended that if you do not already have a strategy for this, you should develop one.

At a minimum, you should be taking notes. Consider asking another student to take notes for you.

There are two kinds of analysis of student work:

Pin-up Critiques: These informal group discussions use student exercises, projects, and research as touchstones for further exploration. All students participate in a class that looks for common themes

and problems, and for examples of successful and unsuccessful solutions. Not every student's work will be discussed. The goal is to generate a group dialogue.

For pin-ups, Work has to be printed before class, not on the day of class.

Evaluation

Student work will be reviewed through formal critique evaluations and portfolio reviews. Students will be evaluated according to predetermined requirements for all projects. Individual projects will have a grade weight attached when given to the class.

Final Grade Summary:

A = 90 –100% B = 80 – 89 % C = 70 – 79% D = 60 – 69% F = 59 % OR LESS

Your final grade will be calculated from the entirety of major projects, Discussions, and quizzes, while also factoring in attendance, participation, and work ethic.

Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900 - 1000
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

All assignments must be completed and presented in the specified formats on the given due dates. Failure to submit a finished design presentation solution, as specified, will result in an F for that assignment. Assignments will not be accepted after the specified due date and time.

- Attendance 10% / 100 points (Should we move to remote learning? Your attendance will be counted through D2L login and access.)
- In-class exercises/presentations/ Reflection articles/ papers 15% / 150 points
- Projects/ Artwork and Research 60% / 600 points
- Critiques 15% / 150 points

Work Submissions:

All work must include digital submissions, which must be made via electronic file transfer (not email). The following are requirements for digital submissions. Failure to adhere to any of these will result in a project grade deduction:

- artwork must be packaged appropriately (image files, fonts, etc., made available)
- artwork for logos, applications, and sign design should NOT be rasterized
- must be submitted via electronic transfer (no thumb-drive submissions)

If your document doesn't open wholly and accurately, it receives a zero. Your folders must be named in the following format: all files inside that folder must be named the same, with their various extensions as appropriate.

For example:

- 2733-101_Lastname_projX (outer folder)
- 2733-101_Lastname_projX.indd
- 2733-101_Lastname_projX.pdf
- 2733-101_Lastname_projX.docx

Work Submissions:

All work must include digital/ physical submissions, which must be made via electronic file transfer (not email). The following are requirements for digital submissions. Failure to adhere to any of these will result in a project grade deduction:

- must be submitted via electronic transfer (no thumb-drive submissions)

If your document doesn't open wholly and accurately, it receives a zero. Your files must be named in the following format:

For example:

- 2733-101_Lastname_projX.pdf
- 2733-101_Lastname_projX.docx

Any file that does NOT arrive in the correct format will not be accepted. Points (-2) will be taken off for each missing or incorrectly formatted item, which could affect your final grade dramatically. **THIS IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE POLICY.** Your final projects will be stored in a digital archive for future reference. We reserve the right to use these in the future as educational aids in the graphic design program.

Late Work

All work is expected to be completed and ready for presentation on the assigned date. It is essential to stay up to date with assignments and projects. **Late work is unacceptable.** Every effort must be made to turn projects in on time. YOU are responsible for finding out what work was missed during your absence and turning in work missed due to your absence. I will not remind you that a project was due during your absence. Late work will be counted against one letter grade for each class period after it is due. Ex: An A grade is lowered to B after one period late, after two periods late, the A is lowered to C, etc.

Students should never miss a class critique. Apart from late grades on projects, this counts against overall participation.

Plagiarism is unacceptable and will result in a 0 for the project. No exceptions. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the student handbook.

Recommended Books

(These are widely used, accessible, and beginner-friendly - and they don't require an art background.)

- **The Animator's Survival Kit** by Richard Williams is A foundational guide to animation principles, timing, and movement.
- **Animation 101: A Handy Guide to the Art of Animating** by Steve Roberts. A clear, approachable introduction for beginners.
- **The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation** by Frank Thomas & Ollie Johnston. A classic reference on animation principles and storytelling.
- **Online Resources**
 - *Animation Mentor Blog* - practical tips and examples
 - *Motion Design School* – beginner-friendly tutorials
 - *Adobe Animate / After Effects beginner tutorials*

Course Materials

Have the required materials with you every day. I will specify any additional materials for the assignments. There is no required textbook. I will provide links for the required readings.

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance & Participation:** Regular engagement in class discussions, critiques, and workshops. (Art shows)
- **Weekly Exercises:** Short assignments focused on specific animation principles or techniques.
- **Project Milestones:** Storyboards, animatics, drafts, and revisions for major projects.
- **Final Project:** A completed short animation demonstrating the concepts learned.
- **Software Access:** Students must have access to the required animation software (e.g., Adobe Animate, After Effects, Blender, or another tool of your choice).
- **File Management:** Students must save, back up, and submit work in the required formats.
- **Academic Integrity:** Any use of AI tools must be clearly disclosed, including prompts and the role AI played in the project.

Project evaluation

Research and Process: You will submit a PDF containing all research, process, and development for every project submitted in this course.

Your Research and Process will include:

- Both native files and a high-resolution PDF
- Research (include how research relates to your project and include all URLs)
- Ideation, analysis, and process: thumbnails, sketches, type, grid tests, color studies, photo/image manipulation experiments, laser output, inspirational samples, notes to self, etc.
- Creative Strategy
- Visual Language: Explain how your font(s), color(s), image(s), live area/page size, etc., relate to your creative strategy.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: **December 4/2026**. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: **September 21/2026**. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” **November 23/2026**. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Recording Classes

****Recording classes is generally prohibited without the professor's explicit permission.*** Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. Some faculty may not permit recordings of their classes. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational,

social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs, such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks, or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place that prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University

establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course breakdown

Each project centers on three key questions:

- **CLIENT:** Who is your client, or who is this animation being made for?
- **SUBJECT:** What character, object, or idea will your animation bring to life?
- **TOPIC:** What subject or theme connects to your concept?

Each assignment involves creating a short animated piece tailored to a specific client's needs, whether that's a brand, a message, a story, or an idea. Clients may give you clear direction, or leave the concept open and ask you to propose your own creative interpretation. Your animation might bring a character to life, visualize a concept, or communicate a message through motion; the goal is always to use movement and timing purposefully, not just decoratively.

In every proposal, you're expected to incorporate visual storytelling, using motion, timing, and symbolism to represent ideas, emotions, or meaning beyond the literal action on screen.

ANIMATION FOR NON-MAJORS – FALL 2026 COURSE CALENDAR

Classes meet Tuesdays & Thursdays, 5:00–7:50 PM | Aug 25 – Dec 3, 2026 | Final: Tue, Dec 8, 2026

Week	Type	Date	Topic / Activity
Project 1: Real World Motion			
Week 1		Tue, Aug 25	Course intro, syllabus review; the 12 principles of animation; software & tools overview (Procreate, After Effects basics, phone camera)
		Thu, Aug 27	Project 1 assigned - Real World Motion; capture reference footage of simple real-world motion (walking, bouncing, swinging) with a phone camera
Week 2		Tue, Sep 1	Analyze reference footage - frame-by-frame breakdown, motion charts; begin translating to a simple animation study
		Thu, Sep 3	Studio work - build animation study (bouncing ball / walk cycle) informed by real footage (Sketchbook check #1)
Week 3		Tue, Sep 8	Studio work - continue building animation study; instructor check-ins
		Thu, Sep 10	Studio work - refine timing & spacing; add secondary motion
Week 4	Crit	Tue, Sep 15	In-process critique / peer feedback
	Final	Thu, Sep 17	Project 1 due - Real World Motion presentation & critique
Project 2: Animated Poster			
Week 5		Tue, Sep 22	Project 2 assigned - Animated Poster; lecture: kinetic typography, cinemagraphs, and motion-graphics basics
		Thu, Sep 24	Poster concept development - select/design a static composition; identify what moves and why (focal point, message emphasis)
Week 6		Tue, Sep 29	Studio work - build motion layers on a timeline (After Effects / Photoshop) (Sketchbook check #2)
		Thu, Oct 1	Studio work - refine looping animation & timing
Week 7	Crit	Tue, Oct 6	In-process critique
		Thu, Oct 8	Studio work - polish; export/format for platform (social, web, print QR loop)
Week 8		Tue, Oct 13	Final polish & proofing
	Final	Thu, Oct 15	Project 2 due - Animated Poster presentation & critique
Project 3: Analog Remix Project			
Week 9		Tue, Oct 20	Project 3 assigned - Analog Remix; lecture: history of analog animation (flipbooks, cut-out) & stop-motion basics

Week	Type	Date	Topic / Activity
		Thu, Oct 22	Analog production - build physical materials (cut-paper, drawings, objects); storyboard the sequence
Week 10		Tue, Oct 27	Stop-motion capture session - shoot analog animation frame-by-frame (4pm: Part of Term A last day for "W")
		Thu, Oct 29	Digitize & remix - import footage; edit/remix digitally (color, effects, layering)
Week 11		Tue, Nov 3	Studio work - refine remix, add sound design (Sketchbook check #3)
	Crit	Thu, Nov 5	In-process critique
Week 12		Tue, Nov 10	Final polish & proofing
		Thu, Nov 12	Studio work session - continued polish; instructor check-ins
Project 4: Self-Directed Project			
Week 13	Final	Tue, Nov 17	Project 3 due - Analog Remix presentation & critique
		Thu, Nov 19	Project 4 assigned - Self-Directed Project; proposal writing - combine techniques from Projects 1–3; concept pitch
Week 14		Tue, Nov 24	Proposal due; concept development & production planning (4pm: Last day for "W," Long Semester & Part of Term B)
		Thu, Nov 26	No class - assumed Thanksgiving break (please confirm)
Week 15		Tue, Dec 1	Production work day
	Crit	Thu, Dec 3	Final critique / dress rehearsal for presentation
Week 16	Final	Tue, Dec 8	Project 4 due - Self-Directed Project final presentation & portfolio screening (Final Exam Week)