

Ventura College Sabbatical Leave Proposal

David Young
Department of Fine Art
Ventura College
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Instructor's Sabbatical Leave Status
Full Time Hire Date: August 2012
Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Statement of Purpose

This sabbatical leave application is for the 2022 – 2023 academic year. I propose to use this time to pursue professional development in the field of entertainment arts, to update and revise the curriculum of Ventura College's Illustration (Art V29A, Art V29B) and Life Drawing (Art V13A, V13B, V13C and V13D) courses, and to develop workbooks to use in each of these classes.

Among art majors, there is a tremendous interest in entertainment arts. The field includes a variety of related disciplines such as storyboarding, character design, concept art, illustration for animation, and game design. There are very few graduate programs in this dynamic and rapidly changing field; almost all professionals receive a bachelor's degree and perfect their skills through on-the-job training. As such, to pursue professional development in these areas, I need to work with recognized industry leaders. I intend to take courses at the Animator's Guild in Burbank, CA, which is staffed by award winning innovators in their various disciplines.

With the increased knowledge, experience and awareness of the components of entertainment arts, I would like to overhaul the curriculum of our classes that directly relate to entertainment arts: Illustration I and II, and Life Drawing I, II, III and IV. The courses, currently tailored to the traditional studio practices of drawing and painting, and to illustration practices centered on printed materials, are dated. These classes need modification and revision to remain current and relevant to our students' needs.

As a component of updating the curricula, I will also create workbooks to use in each of these classes. There aren't any quality textbooks that accurately reflect the specific practical information that goes into Figure Drawing and Illustration coursework, especially textbooks that offer a hybrid of academic, anatomical information and also stylistic interpretations of the figure used in contemporary animation and pop culture. I have long wondered why there isn't a combined approach and have decided to put together the relevant materials myself.

Sabbatical Project Background

Ventura College's courses offer an excellent foundation in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art. We serve our students well with a competitive art education and many transfer to four-year programs in a variety of art-related disciplines. Over the past two semesters, I have surveyed the students in my Drawing and Composition and Life Drawing classes. Of the art majors who have completed my classes in the spring and fall semesters of 2021, 74% expressed the desire to pursue an education and/or career in entertainment arts. As a department, it makes sense to cater the curriculum more specifically towards the academic success of the majority of students.

My background is in the studio practice of drawing and painting, and in traditional illustration. I only have a basic knowledge of techniques and practices that pertain to entertainment arts. And while the foundational concepts are the same in virtually all two-dimensional arts, the application of those concepts in entertainment arts is very different from my educational and professional expertise. I plan to pursue professional development in concept art, character design, storyboarding and illustration for animation.

With greater knowledge in these areas, I will put together curricula that would benefit many of our courses and would update Ventura College's art program with cutting edge creative, technical and career exposure.

With the experience further training will bring, I can create coursework and classes with more immediately relevant assignments and content. In addition to the Illustration and Life Drawing classes, it is likely that some of the content and ideas can be integrated into our current drawing and composition, design and digital art classes. Given the high percentage of students that express interest in pursuing this line of education, applying some of the ideas and practices to more of our current classes would provide a vibrancy and relevance that would further engage our students and increase enrollment and students' success rates.

Sabbatical Project Components

Professional development: I will pursue coursework through area institutions catering to working professionals in the entertainment field. If the pandemic stays under control, I will pursue in-person courses at the Animation Guild in Burbank. If the health situation mandates it, I will instead take remote classes through the same institution or other facilities offering similar subjects.

Course Revision: I will develop new coursework and assignments based on a greater knowledge of the fields. Life drawing can be updated with modules of study based on character design and storyboarding, both being extremely popular areas of entertainment art. Illustration classes can evolve to include assignments covering concept art, background illustration, and character design. I believe this will instantly energize the classes and the students enrolled.

Course workbooks: I would like to collect assignments and visual materials together in printed handbooks I could pass out every semester. I have never been able to find a textbook that covers the range of approaches I would like to teach in my classes. The texts I have seen all focus on either academic figure drawing or the stylization required in animation and game design. There does not seem to be a hybrid approach that effectively deals with both aspects of the discipline. I will develop a packet of materials to fill this gap. Illustration books are more current and applicable, but I would like to tailor a booklet to my specific assignments and have it available to use in perpetuity, updating as needed.

Proposed Research

Ventura's proximity to the animation and video game design industry affords me substantial resources for development. The Animator's Guild, specifically, in Burbank, offers professional classes in character design, storyboarding, concept art and illustration for animation. (They have, like many institutions of learning, been closed to in-person classes since the outset of the pandemic, but are now beginning to reopen. I hope they fully reopen within the next year, but will take online courses if they are not.) Courses at the Animator's Guild are taught by award-winning industry leaders. I have modest knowledge of some of the aspects of these practices, but training with a working professional would give my instruction a much greater nuance and depth and would provide me with a much wider skill set to pass on to our students.

After completing my professional development courses relevant to the subjects previously listed, I will rework the curriculum for each of our courses that directly pertain to entertainment arts. Traditionally, Illustration courses focused on 2-dimensional print media, which comprised the bulk of the work in the field at that time. Today, the course should reflect contemporary applications like concept art, character design and storyboarding. Since so much of entertain arts focuses on characters and stories, it makes sense to address these ideas in figure drawing. Modules will explore the use of the figure in animation and games today. Working with other art faculty, I will integrate new ideas across the art curriculum, especially in courses like photoshop, drawing and composition, and 2D design.

Value of the Sabbatical Project:

To Ventura College and the Community

Ventura College and the local community would benefit greatly from an Art Department with several robust and vigorous classes specifically tailored to entertainment arts. I plan to share my sabbatical experience with my Ventura College drawing and painting colleagues further expanding the knowledge and skills I gain during my year study. This could be through a FLEX activity or shared teaching.

Courses covering character design, storyboarding, concept art and other similar subjects would spark more student interest and help expand enrollment. I know many students would be eager to

enroll in the courses and would, with success in our classrooms, be more likely to transfer to 4-year institutions to continue their education and pursue careers in the field.

To the Instructor

This research and course development will greatly expand my knowledge base and allow me to tailor classes to the specific interests of a large majority of our 2D art majors. It will enable the art department at Ventura College to offer a stronger foundation with more practical relevance for students preparing to enter the entertainments arts field.

To the Student

Students will benefit greatly, as course content will sync more closely with their desired educational goals and career paths. Our transfer certificate in entertainment arts will better prepare students for four-year programs in their desired fields. We will offer classes more clearly suited to the modern entertainment and animation industries so they are not spending time on classes that are outdated or irrelevant to their desired educational outcomes. With a knowledge base more grounded in current industry practices, I can keep Ventura College students more informed, better educated and better prepared for current educational and employment demands.

To the District

The district will benefit greatly if I can complete the research and share my curricula and course workbooks with the other district colleges. Oxnard College does not currently offer any illustration or entertainment art courses, and Moorpark College offers two illustration classes that are similarly focused on a dated curricula – print media and non-digital techniques. All of the schools in our district could use updating to the coursework.

VC Classes affected directly by this proposal

Drawing and Composition I
Drawing and Composition II
2D Design
Illustration I
Illustration II
Figure Drawing
Figure Drawing II
Figure Drawing III
Figure Drawing IV
Portfolio Review
Photoshop I
Photoshop II