UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
School of Arts & Architecture
Department of Design Media Arts

DESMA 21: DIGITAL IMAGE

Academic Term: Fall 25
Location: Broad 4250
Day and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 2:00pm - 4:50pm

Instructor: Sam Malabre
Pronouns: They/Them
Office hours & Location: Tuesday, UCLA Game Lab 1:00 - 2:00
Email: sbmalabre@g.ucla.edu

Teaching Assistant: Banyi Huang
Pronouns: They/Them
Office hours & Location: Thursday, 12:00-1:00
Email: banyih@g.ucla.edu

Course description

Digital Image is a studio course that introduces students to the essential concepts behind image-making as a foundation for all visual arts and design practices. Students will explore design, color theory, software, and drawing as fundamental tools for visual language and personal expression in digital spheres. Through observational studies, conceptual exploration, and creative experimentation, students will gain experience with traditional and contemporary image-making workflows. This course emphasizes visual communication, individual practice, and critical thinking, while building technical skills and essential habits for any visual art or design discipline. Projects will integrate formal art elements to develop visual literacy, refine technique, and foster meaningful communication through image-making.

Learning Outcomes

- Gain foundational skills in observation and graphical representation of three-dimensional forms and spatial relationships.
- Analyze visual elements like color, composition, texture, perspective, and value to build visual literacy, expand terminology, and develop new interpretive approaches.
- Gain proficiency with digital drawing, drafting, and hybrid drawing workflows.
- Effectively communicate abstract and concrete ideas effectively through image-making.
- Critique formal and conceptual elements of peer work to strengthen communication skills and expand visual analysis skills
- Learn effective methods for documenting, saving, compressing, and organizing projects and digital files.

Materials
Required and Recommended readings:
All required readings will be provided as PDF excerpts when the reading is assigned. There is no reader to purchase for this course.

Required and Recommended Supplies
Physical
- Blank Sketchbook (at least 8.5x11 in size)
- 4B Pencil, Mechanical Pencil, and Eraser
- 12 inch metal ruler, preferably with centimeters as well
- Black pen and thicker black marker

Recommended:
- Additional variety of coloring tools
- A small notebook that you like (for example I like to sketch in gridded or dotted notebooks)

Digital
- Laptop (please always bring to class)
- Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop and illustrator)

Recommended:
- 3-button mouse
- Drawing tablet (if you already own one, there are tablets to checkout from the department if you don't have one)

How to Succeed in this course
This is a foundation level course, which means that it is meant for you to gain familiarity with a wide array of new skills and ways of working that you will use throughout the rest of your time in DMA. If you can get some great portfolio pieces out of this course, great, but that's not our top priority. Especially if that keeps you from trying new things:
- **Experiment and leave your comfort zone:** whether you enter this class as the greatest character artist imaginable or someone fairly new to drawing, try to embrace tools and techniques you haven't used before. If you're very familiar with photoshop, use illustrator when you have the option. If you love drawing portraits of people, draw animals, landscapes, or buildings. You'll end up a more versatile artist or designer.
- **Draw and make images regularly:** Try to draw and sketch everyday while you're in this class. Sketch and iterate frequently, don't just go with your first idea. Building up a regular practice of drawing can be difficult and this class is a great opportunity to do so.
- **Rely on each other:** use yourself or friend as a drawing reference, ask your classmates if you forgot the details or due date for an assignment before asking the TA or Instructor. Share your work in progress sketches and ideas with each other. I highly recommend you make separate discord message just for your critique group.

- **Always turn in work:** It is always better to turn in work even if you aren't happy with it, unfinished, or even if it's late. You will always get a better grade if you've turned something in than if you don't.

Teaching Assistant

Our TA's are an integral part of our teaching and learning, without whose labor our classes would not be possible. Our TA's are almost always DMA Grad students, and have great skill in many disciplines, experience with feedback, critique, project planning and collaboration. Please take advantage of their office hours, their insights, and expertise. In this class our TA will check attendance, so notify them if you arrive late. They will also switch-off with the instructor for group critiques and 1-on-1 meetings, assist with in class exercises, and work with the instructor to grade projects.

Grading Breakdown

- Participation and Attendance—20%:
  - Being present and active in class. Participating in discussion and critique. Being communicative with the professor and TA about absences, projects, and assignments. Being active and engaged on the class discord is also considered.
- Daily Drawing and In-class Exercises—20%
  - Completing daily drawing and in-class exercises and posting them to discord by deadlines.
- Projects—60%
  - Initial Projects are graded largely on craft, creativity of concept, and when they have multiple stages, on process. While the quality of the overall finished product is assessed, the single most important factor in the final grade of project is the effort and level of improvement between each subsequent iteration of the project.
    - Project 1—5% Pixel art
    - Project 2—10% Contrasts: Abstract and Figurative
    - Project 3—10% Image with Purpose: Poster and Collage
    - Project 4—15% Sequential Drawing: Comic or Instruction
  - Final project in addition to the previous criteria, the final project will also be graded on project ambition and scope.
    - Final—20%

Participation

Participation is critical to passing and enjoying this class. Do the work, share your thoughts, ask questions, prepare for critique sessions and one-on-one meetings, offer feedback to your classmates, and participate actively in in-class exercises. Please do not use your phones or laptops to check messages, social media, etc during class time.

This class is meant to be a brave space in which you feel encouraged and supported in learning and taking creative risks. This means being aware and considerate of different backgrounds, perspectives, and identities. Respect each other and this space we are building together. Don't assume, ask. Remain open, be willing to take responsibility, apologize, and learn. Help each other in this. If you have concerns, please let me or the TA know.

Technology Policies
Device Use
While you should bring your computer with you to class to work, you should not use your computer, cellphone, or other devices for anything other than taking notes in your own critique or working during worktime in this class. Using devices to check social media etc distracts other classmates and hampers your own learning.

Original Work
This class is about learning to draw, design, and work with color. This means absolutely nothing in this class should be produced with AI. Doing so is against the purpose of this class, and misrepresenting AI or stock artwork as your own is also plagiarism. This class will also specifically cover working with reference from other image sources as well as ideas of fair use, appropriation, collage and how to do that ethically, honestly, and appropriately.

Discord
The class will use a DISCORD server for sharing in-class exercises and daily drawings, as well as notifications on events, and updates. We hope that the discord will be an active space for all of us to share thoughts, links and recommendations and keep a lively back channel for discussion.

Attendance
The attendance policy for this class is not here to be punitive. This is a studio class, and it is necessary to be in attendance for in-class exercises, tutorials, lectures, critique sessions, individual check-ins etc. The absence policy is a reflection of the fact that you will not be able to complete your coursework adequately without being in attendance for these parts of class.

Absences
More than 3 absences (of any type) is an **automatic fail** and must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Unexcused absences
More than 2 unexcused absences will result in **a failing grade** for the course.

Excusing Absences
We understand that sometimes you will need to miss class due sickness, emergency, or other serious or extenuating circumstance. Please email the TA and CC the instructor letting us know you will be out and brief explanation as to why. Additionally include:
- Whether you were able to complete and submit the work due that day.
- Whether you have any questions about the current assignment a classmate was not able to answer for you.
- And if necessary, ask to schedule an appointment for the next office hours.

If you are unable to email prior to class, email as soon as possible during or after. Absences will not be excused if we have not heard from you 24 hours after class time, unless there is an extreme circumstance that prevented communicating with the instructor and TA.

Lateness
There will be a 10 minute grace period after the starting time of the class.
You will be marked late if you arrive between 2:10-2:20pm.
You will be marked absent If you arrive after 2:20pm.
Two lates equals one absence.

Medical Notes
We will not normally require a doctor's note for absences. We trust you to self-report sickness, emergency, or other circumstances that lead to missing class honestly. Because this course requires a great amount of in-class participation, even a verified illness with a doctor's note may not be able to be accommodated if it leads to more than 3 absences. We may ask for a doctor's note in certain circumstances, like extended absences or needing an incomplete.

Late Work
This class has multiple, multi-part projects with opportunities for critique feedback and revision in the middle. The main goal of turning in work is to get regular feedback to iterate and improve your work. Turning in work late defeats the purpose, as it prevents your classmates from giving you feedback on your work.

If in-progress work is late, it will affect your final grade on the project. If final project work is late, it will be marked down 10 points for each day it is late.

- If you have an excused absence from class, reach out about when to turn in that day's missing work. Normally we will give you until the next class period and ask you to schedule a time for feedback during the next office hours. Otherwise the work will be late.

- If you don't have everything finished for an in-progress deadline, it is best to show what you have and get feedback on it. While it may still affect your grade on the finished project it is better than turning nothing in.

Advice on Lateness, Absence, and Missing, work

While it is of course always best to be present in class, on time and with your work turned in, failing that, the best thing to do is communicate with us honestly and promptly and make a demonstrated effort to improve.

- If you're running late to class, definitely come anyway. Even if you miss half the class, it's less to catch up on and less to reach out about. If you miss class fully, email immediately.
- If you miss a deadline, email us that your work won't be in, let us know when it will be in by, and ping us again when you turn it in.

Not only are these kinds of things good professional courtesy, we can't address anything on a case-by-case basis if we don't hear from you and don't know what's up.

Course Elements:

Daily Drawing:

Do small 5-10 minute drawing once a day every day. These really can be small, like 1-2 inches. I recommend picking and sticking to a theme at least for a week. Like sketching your cat in different poses, or doing 1 panel of a longer comic strip, or even doing thumbnails for a project for another class. To start with, these will be done physically to build basic sketching fundamentals, but eventually will transition to digital in illustrator and may have specific challenges and prompts.

In-class exercises:

We will often have small drawing exercises to complete in class. Please post an image to discord at the end of class time. Or if you wanted extra time to finish, by the following class time.

Projects:

Projects are often accomplished in phases and done over multiple weeks. This allows you to iterate, experiment, and take feedback over the course of a project. The most important part of any project is to demonstrate learning, practice, engagement, and experimentation. If for example a project is meant to help gain experience in illustrator, a decent project demonstrating working in earnest in illustrator will receive a better grade than the greatest illustration made in procreate.

- Project 1—5% Pixel art
  - We'll start from square one, the individual pixel. Drawing a series of quick images based on a prompt/brief with heavy constraints. Project will cover: raster vs vector graphics, intro to Photoshop and illustrator, image file management and image resolution, and digital color modes.

- Project 2—10% Contrasts: Abstract and Figurative
  - Inspired by Johannes Itten's Representations of Contrasts we'll make a series of illustrations representing contrasts using Adobe Illustrator, moving from abstract to figurative. Project will cover: Illustrator techniques and workflows, Thumbnails, Color contrast and color schemes.
- Project 3—10% Image with Purpose: Poster and Collage
  - We will explore the history of the radical political poster and photomontage, and work between illustrator and photoshop to create political, topical, or personal posters that convey a point of view through illustration and collage. Project will cover: Conveying meaning through color and image, advanced illustrator techniques, appropriation and fair use, digital and print color, conceptualization and point of view.
- Project 4—15% Sequential Drawing: Comic or Instruction
  - We will create comics or instruction manuals, focusing on crafting a clear sequence or narrative and depicting spaces, objects, and people (or characters) from multiple angles and perspectives. Project will cover: digital and physical workflows, advanced observational drawing, advanced composition on the printed page or digital screen, storytelling through image.

Final:
Unlike the other projects, the final is an opportunity for a much more open ended and self-directed project. You will begin with your own project proposal and work in stages to realize and develop the project throughout the final weeks of the class. The focus will be on articulating your own concept through a project plan and proposal, self-directed project management, and exploring new areas and mediums, or expanding your ambitions for a project we did previously.

Schedule

	TUESDAY	**THURSDAY**
Week 0		**Thursday September 25** Intro to class Survey Intro to Photoshop Assigned: Get supplies Assigned: Project 1: Pixel Art: BW
Week 1 Basic Drawing	**Tuesday September 30** Due: Get supplies Due: Project 1: Pixel Art: BW Intro to crit Assigned: Daily drawing Assigned: Project 1: Pixel Art: Color +	**Thursday October 2** Vector vs Raster Color Modes, Image Resolution, and

	Printed	
Week 2	**Tuesday October 7** Due: Project 1: Pixel Art: Color + Printed Illustrator Drawing with shape tool	**Thursday October 9** Illustrator Drawing with pen tool Assign: Project 2.1: Contrast
Week 3	**Tuesday October 14** Due: Project 2.1: Contrast Still life / Drawing from reference	**Thursday October 16** Scanning, Tracing, Live Trace Assign: Project 2.2: Contrast: Figurative
Week 4 Digital Color	**Tuesday October 21** Due: Project 2.2: Contrast: Figurative Digital Color	**Thursday October 23** Advanced Photoshop Assign: Project 3.1: Collage Digital
Week 5	**Tuesday October 28** Due: Project 3.1: Collage Digital Digital Color	**Thursday October 30** Assign: Project 3.2: Collage Print Color Grading Demo and Print Lab intro
Week 6 Advanced Drawing	**Tuesday November 4** Due: Project 3.2: Collage Print Perspective Drawing	**Thursday November 6** Assign: Project 4.1: Sequential Drawing: Sketches and layout Figure Drawing
Week 7	**Tuesday November 11** Veterans Day (no class)	**Thursday November 13** Due: Project 4.1: Sequential Drawing: Sketches and layout Assign: Project 4.2: Sequential Drawing: Color and Inking
Week 8	**Tuesday November 18** Project 4.2: Sequential Drawing: Color and Inking Assign: Final Project Proposal	**Thursday November 20** Due: Final Project Proposal In-Class Work Day
Week 9 Color in print	**Tuesday November 25** In-Class Work Day	**Thursday November 27** Thanksgiving (No Class)
Week 10	**Tuesday December 2** In-Class Work Day Set Surveys	**Thursday December 4** Final due
Finals week	**Tuesday December 9**	**Thursday December 11**

	Documentation Due	

Commitment to Diversity and Safer Spaces

We understand the classroom as a space for practicing creative and academic freedom; where one may challenge psychic, social, and cultural borders and create meaningful artistic expressions. To do so we must acknowledge and embrace the different identities and backgrounds we inhabit. This means that we will use preferred pronouns, respect self-identifications, and be mindful of special needs. Disagreement is encouraged and supported, however our differences affect our conceptualization and experience of reality, and it is extremely important to remember that certain gender, race, sex, and class identities are more privileged while others are undermined and marginalized. Consequently, this makes some people feel more protected or vulnerable during debates and discussions. A collaborative effort between the students, TA, and instructor is needed to create a supportive learning environment. While everyone should feel free to experiment creatively and conceptually, if a class member points out that something you have said or shared with the group is offensive, avoid being defensive; instead approach the discussion as a valuable opportunity for us to grow and learn from one another. Alternatively if you feel that something said in discussion or included in a piece of work is harmful, you are encouraged to speak with the instructor or TA.
[voidlab / CC-SA]

Land Acknowledgement

The University of California, Los Angeles occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Tongva and Chumash peoples. Our ability to gather and learn here is the result of coercion, dispossession, and colonization. We are grateful for the land itself and the people that have stewarded it through generations. While a land acknowledgment is not enough, it is a first step in the work toward supporting decolonial and indigenous movements for sovereignty and self-determination. Read more about what land UCLA occupies.

Other Policies and Resources

COVID-19

Students must adhere to the current campus directives related to COVID-19 mitigation, and refusal to do so may result in the student being asked to leave the classroom or referred to the Dean of Students. For more information about COVID-19 requirements on campus, please visit: https://covid-19.ucla.edu/information-for-students/.

Center For Accessible Education (CAE)

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When

possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Undergraduate Writing Center

The [Undergraduate Writing Center](#) is a free service for all UCLA students, providing one-on-one appointments. Appointment topics include course papers, capstone projects, senior thesis papers or application materials (resumes, CVs, statements of purpose or cover letters).

Inclusivity Statement

UCLA's Office for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion provides resources, events and information about current initiatives at UCLA to support equality for all members of the UCLA community. I hope that you will communicate with me or your TA if you experience anything in this course that does not support an inclusive environment. You can also report any incidents you may witness or experience on campus to the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion on their website (https://equity.ucla.edu).

Academic Integrity And Information On Student Conduct

UCLA is a community of scholars. In this community, all members including faculty, staff and students alike are responsible for maintaining standards of academic honesty. As a student and member of the University community, you are here to get an education and are, therefore, expected to demonstrate integrity in your academic endeavors. You are evaluated on your own merits. Cheating, plagiarism, collaborative work, multiple submissions without the permission of the professor, or other kinds of academic dishonesty are considered unacceptable behavior and will result in formal disciplinary proceedings usually resulting in suspension or dismissal. As specified in the [UCLA Student Conduct Code](#), violations or attempted violations of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic dishonesty. When a student is suspected to have engaged in academic dishonesty, Academic Senate regulations require that the instructor report the allegation to the office of the Dean of Students. For more information, see the [UCLA Student Conduct Code](#).

Title IX

UCLA prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, there are a variety of resources to assist you.

Confidential Resources:
You can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) also provides confidential counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at (310) 825-0768.

Non-Confidential Resources:
You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. These offices may be required to pursue an official investigation.

Faculty and TAs are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Coordinator—A NON-CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCE—should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Psychological Health, Well-Being And Resilience

UCLA is renowned for academic excellence, and yet we know that many students feel overwhelmed at times by demands to succeed academically, socially and personally. Our campus community is committed to helping all students thrive, learn to cope with stress, and build resilience. Remember, self-care is a skill that is critical to your long-term success. Here are some of the many resources available at UCLA to support you:

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** https://www.counseling.ucla.edu/ Provides counseling and other psychological/mental health services to students. Walk-in hours are Monday-Thursday 8am-4:30pm and Friday 9am-4:30pm in John Wooden Center West. Crisis counseling is also available 24 hours/day at (310) 825-0768.

- **Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center:** http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu Provides high quality and accessible ambulatory healthcare and education by caring professionals to support the academic success and personal development of all UCLA students.

- **Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI):** https://healthy.ucla.edu Provides links to a wide variety of resources for enhancing physical and psychological well-being, positive social interactions, healthy sleep, healthy eating, healthy physical activity and more.

- **Campus and Student Resilience:** https://www.resilience.ucla.edu/ Provides programs to promote resilience and trains students to help support their peers.

- **UCLA Recreation:** https://www.recreation.ucla.edu/ Offers a broad array of services and programs including fitness, yoga, dance, martial arts, meditation, sports, and much more.

- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** https://equity.ucla.edu/ Committed to providing an equal learning, working and living environment at UCLA and supports a range of programs to

promote these goals campus-wide.

- **UCLA GRIT Coaching Program:** https://www.grit.ucla.edu/ GRIT stands for Guidance, Resilience, Integrity and Transformation. In this program, UCLA students receive individualized support from trained peer coaches to manage stress, fostering positive social connections, set goals, and navigate campus resources.

Resources for Students Dealing with Financial Stress
- **Economic Crisis Response:** https://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/Economic-Crisis-Response provides support and guidance to students who have self-identified, or are identified by UCLA faculty or staff, as experiencing a financial crisis that impacts their academic success at UCLA.

- **Bruin Shelter:** http://www.bruinshelter.org/ provides a safe, supportive environment for fellow college students experiencing homelessness by fostering a collaborative effort between universities, community-based organizations, and service providers.

- **The CPO Food Closet:** http://www.cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/foodcloset/ provides free food for any UCLA student who may be experiencing hunger and/or struggling to attain food due to financial hardships.

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