

Course Description

Expanded* Animation

An advanced studio course that can be completed in place of Animation 4: Effects and is open to graduate-level students. The course positions animation as an expanded contemporary practice and culminates in the Expanded Animation Summit, a one-day public conference and screening event produced by the students.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course treats animation as an expanded field. What counts as animation? Where does it occur? Is it screen-based, spatial, wearable, geographic, networked? How does animation function in augmented reality, virtual reality, holographic environments, glasses-based systems, and site-dependent installations?

The *Expanded Animation Summit* emerges from these questions. It is conceived first as a conceptual investigation into the current state of artist-made and artist-led animation in a given year. Students research what is new, what is shifting, what is repeating, and what may constitute a recognizable movement. The Summit becomes a public structure through which this research is tested, debated, exhibited, and screened.

Logistically, the Summit is a one-day event featuring:

- A keynote speaker
- Student-led panels
- A poster exhibition
- A local vendor hallway
- Software demonstrations and workshops
- A curated screening of experimental animations produced within the course
- A special recognition of one animation by an FIU Animation student from another class (Fine Arts or Communication)

The long-term goal is to expand the Summit to three days. Ideally, it takes place during MERGE week within the FIU Art Department.

Potential Community Partners

The Summit is designed to occur in collaboration with a community partner. Potential venues include:

- ICA
- Locust Projects
- The Laundromat
- City State (led by artist Jillian Mayer)
- The Bass
- The Frost Museum
- MUD Foundation

The class determines the final venue based on availability and relevance.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Identify and analyze current developments in expanded animation practices
- Distinguish between technological novelty and conceptual innovation
- Develop and present a strong thesis question in a public format
- Produce expanded-format animations grounded in research
- Participate in curatorial, organizational, and pedagogical roles
- Understand professional pathways that combine artistic production with teaching, organizing, curating, and conference leadership

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is organized into four modules. Each module includes an Exercise (1 week), a Project (2-3 weeks), and structured research components. Students move from research and experimentation toward public production and authorship.

AI is integrated throughout the semester as a research and organizational tool. It is treated not as novelty, but as part of a longer trajectory of generative and procedural systems that artists have worked with for decades. Students use AI to sort research, test for sameness, draft proposals, and analyze trends, while critically examining how these systems generate generic output.

Module 1: Mapping the Field - New Developments in Artist-Led Animation

This module focuses on research into current developments in artist-made and artist-led animation. Students investigate:

- Emerging software, technologies, and production methods
- Whether recognizable stylistic or thematic movements are forming
- Shifts in process
- The influence of global and local events on artists
- Concerns specific to local animation communities

Exercise:

Short GIF experiments testing new processes or tools.

Project:

Small team-based 20-30 second animations exploring new technologies, including AR, VR, holographic formats, glasses-based systems, or geographic-dependent experiences.

Critique Focus:

Are these developments formal trends, conceptual shifts, or technological reactions? Where does sameness appear? How do generative systems reinforce or disrupt it?

Module 2: Content, Themes, and Public Discourse

This module examines the content of contemporary animation. Are artists responding directly to news cycles, or retreating from them? Who are the major figures shaping the field? How do issues of identity, environment, space, war, gender, and labor appear?

Students begin identifying potential Summit contributions.

Exercise:

Topic-based research presentations with thesis questions rather than answers.

Project:

Students develop 20-30 second experimental animations inspired by researched artists or themes. They begin drafting:

- Panel proposals
- Poster abstracts
- Keynote suggestions
- Workshop ideas

Critique Focus:

Clarity of thesis question. Ability to synthesize research from decentralized sources including tutorials, video essays, podcasts, live webcasts, panels, and direct engagement with local artist-led spaces.

Module 3: Ideation, Collaboration, and Expanded Methods

This module investigates how ideas develop. How do artists collaborate now? Through Discord servers? Open-source platforms? Shared virtual spaces? How do new tools reshape ideation itself?

Students test new modes of communication and production.

Exercise:

Collaborative ideation structures and experimental workflows.

Project:

20-30 second animations that push expanded formats:

- Augmented reality
- Virtual reality

- Glasses-based AR
- User-controlled storytelling
- Community-driven or geographically dependent animation

Students also prepare five-minute research presentations delivered on the hour during structured studio sessions, teaching others about their methods and tools.

Critique Focus:

Does the format justify itself? Does the expanded medium meaningfully affect authorship, audience, or spatial experience?

Module 4: Public Production - Building the Summit

The final module shifts toward production and public engagement.

Students choose roles:

- Chair a panel (must submit abstract and guiding question; must create an animation supporting the panel's argument)
- Apply to present on a panel
- Prepare and present a poster
- Lead a software demonstration or workshop
- Join the curatorial team for the screening
- Develop an Open Call for external animation students in FIU's Art Department Animation courses and Communication and Journalism Animation courses
- Manage conference logistics (graduate students)
- Collaborate on graphic design (or work with Design students)

Students use AI tools to organize research archives, draft communications, and sort submissions while maintaining authorship and accountability.

The final month is devoted to producing the Summit and completing animations begun in Modules 1-3. All works must be approved by the curatorial team before screening.

The conference culminates in an outdoor public screening of student animations produced throughout the semester.

RESEARCH AND CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

Students engage with expanded animation discourse, including models such as the Expanded Conference at Ars Electronica. They research spaces and practices not widely visible on dominant platforms, prioritizing artist-led initiatives and local experimental communities.

Students may propose exhibitions of work from other universities, create contests, or develop Open Call systems as part of the Summit's expansion.

RATIONALE

Contemporary artists rarely operate solely as isolated studio producers. They chair panels, present research, curate screenings, lead workshops, write abstracts, organize Open Calls, collaborate with designers, and produce their own work simultaneously. These roles are part of how artists sustain themselves, build visibility, and secure positions within the arts ecosystem.

Students must understand why pursuing a BFA in Animation differs from practicing informally without a degree. Participation in a student-led animation summit provides a professionalizing structure within an undergraduate framework. It positions FIU's Animation program as a site of contemporary research and expanded art practice, not solely production training.

The Expanded Animation Summit builds both individual artistic agency and institutional visibility. It foregrounds animation as a contemporary art discipline operating publicly, critically, and collaboratively.

*<https://expanded-conf.org/> title taken from the inspiration for this which is the Expanded Conference that takes place yearly during the Arc Electronica Festival. The current title should change.

Topics at that conference include the following:

3D Scanning	generative and algorithmic art
AI-generated media; human-AI collaboration	hybrids between animation and game
art-science and interdisciplinary collaborations	innovative interfaces
artistic human-computer interaction (HCI and UX)	innovative research and practice-based methodologies
audio-visual experiments	music visualization
data journalism and animated documentary	participatory media
data visualizations and information aesthetics	performance projects
digital cultural heritage	physical computing, tangible media/interfaces, robotics
digital media art history	projects using NFT, Metaverse, Social Media
digital, hybrid, and expanded theater	reactive and interactive visuals
expanded animation	real-time CG
game art and playable media	scientific visualizations
sound art and soundscapes	site-specific installations, projection mapping, media facades
transmedia environments, narratives, and experiences	VR, AR, MR, XR; virtual humans and environments

Also resources found here: [*https://expandedanimation.net/](https://expandedanimation.net/)

<https://expandedanimation.net/category/expanded-animation/>