

ART 5304 Graduate Art Studio I: Digital

Sul Ross State University

Fall Semester 2026

Course Format: Synchronous Online

Meeting Time: T, TH 5-8

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Julian Vidales

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Office Hours: Virtual by appointment and scheduled weekly hours

Course Description

ART 5304 Graduate Art Studio I: Digital explores advanced digital imaging techniques through the development of original character designs for entertainment, illustration, animation, gaming, and visual storytelling applications. Students will investigate professional character design workflows including visual research, mood boards, shape language, silhouette exploration, orthographic views, and character call-out sheets. Emphasis is placed on concept development, design iteration, visual communication, and presentation standards used within the creative industries.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Conduct visual research and develop effective mood boards.
 2. Apply principles of shape language to communicate personality, function, and narrative.
 3. Create clear and readable character silhouettes.
 4. Develop multiple iterations of original character concepts.
 5. Construct accurate orthographic character views.
 6. Produce professional character call-out sheets.
 7. Demonstrate advanced digital imaging and illustration techniques.
 8. Participate in constructive critiques using professional terminology.
 9. Present character concepts suitable for portfolio inclusion.
 10. Analyze contemporary character design practices used in animation, gaming, and entertainment industries.
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Required Materials

Hardware

- Computer capable of running professional digital imaging software
- Reliable internet connection
- Web camera and microphone for synchronous sessions
- Digital drawing tablet recommended

Software

- Adobe Photoshop (required)
 - Adobe Creative Cloud access
 - Optional:
 - Adobe Illustrator
 - Procreate
 - Clip Studio Paint
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Course Structure

This synchronous online course combines:

- Live lectures and demonstrations
- Guided studio work
- Individual consultations
- Group critiques
- Peer feedback sessions
- Project presentations

Students are expected to attend live sessions and actively participate in discussions and critiques.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will demonstrate:

- Advanced visual communication skills
 - Professional character development workflows
 - Effective use of reference and research
 - Strong design iteration practices
 - Portfolio-ready presentation skills
 - Critical evaluation of visual design solutions
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Major Projects

Project 1: Character Research and Mood Board Development

Students will create visual research boards that establish themes, aesthetics, influences, and narrative context.

Deliverables

- Research document
- Mood board
- Written design rationale

Weight: 10%

Project 2: Shape Language Exploration

Students will investigate how geometric forms communicate character traits and personalities.

Deliverables

- Shape studies
- Character thumbnails
- Design iterations

Weight: 15%

Project 3: Silhouette Design Series

Students will develop multiple silhouette concepts emphasizing readability and visual hierarchy.

Deliverables

- Minimum 20 silhouette explorations
- Refined selections
- Comparative analysis

Weight: 15%

Project 4: Character Development Project

Students will synthesize research, shape language, and silhouette design into a fully developed character concept.

Deliverables

- Character turnarounds
- Expression studies
- Costume and prop exploration

Weight: 20%

Project 5: Orthographic Character Views

Students will create production-ready character views.

Deliverables

- Front view
- Side view
- Back view
- Three-quarter view

Weight: 15%

Project 6: Character Call-Out Sheet

Students will prepare a professional character presentation package.

Deliverables

- Character sheet
- Detail call-outs
- Color palette
- Material references
- Character description

Weight: 20%

Grading

Category	Percentage
Mood Board Project	10%
Shape Language Project	15%
Silhouette Project	15%
Character Development	20%
Orthographic Views	15%
Character Call-Out Sheet	20%
Participation & Critiques	5%

Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

Attendance and Participation

Because this is a synchronous studio course:

- Attendance at live sessions is expected.
 - Students should arrive prepared with assigned work.
 - Active participation in critiques contributes to the learning experience.
 - More than three unexcused absences may negatively affect the participation grade.
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Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Course Introduction

- Overview of character design industry
- Course expectations
- Software review

Week 2

Visual Research Methods

- Gathering references
- Design research strategies

Week 3

Mood Boards

- Theme development
- Visual storytelling through research

Project 1 Due

Week 4

Shape Language Fundamentals

- Circles, squares, triangles
- Personality through form

Week 5

Character Ideation

- Thumbnailing
- Rapid concept generation

Project 2 Due

Week 6

Silhouette Design

- Readability
- Visual hierarchy

Week 7

Silhouette Iteration

- Refinement methods
- Design evaluation

Project 3 Due

Week 8

Character Design Development

- Anatomy considerations
- Costuming and accessories

Week 9

Character Refinement

- Expressions
- Narrative integration

Week 10

Midterm Critique

Project 4 Due

Week 11

Orthographic Views

- Production standards
- Turnaround construction

Week 12

Technical Drawing Methods

- Alignment and consistency

Project 5 Due

Week 13

Character Call-Out Sheets

- Industry examples
- Presentation standards

Week 14

Detail Documentation

- Materials
 - Props
 - Functional elements
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Week 15

Final Production and Revision

Week 16

Final Presentations and Critique

Project 6 Due

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. All submitted work must be original. Use of visual references is encouraged; however, copying or tracing copyrighted artwork without attribution is prohibited.

Accessibility Statement

Students requiring accommodations should contact the Sul Ross State University accessibility services office as early as possible. Appropriate accommodations will be provided in accordance with university policy and applicable laws.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

Generative AI tools may be used for research, brainstorming, and ideation when explicitly approved by the instructor. Students must disclose and document any AI-assisted content used during project development. Final designs should demonstrate substantial original creative input and artistic decision-making by the student.

Final Portfolio Requirement

Students will submit a professional character design package including:

- Mood board
- Shape language studies
- Silhouette explorations
- Refined character design
- Orthographic views
- Character call-out sheet
- Design rationale statement

The final portfolio should demonstrate a complete professional character design workflow and be suitable for inclusion in a digital portfolio.