

Overview for instructors:

The course this lesson plan is written for is a third-year technical communication class. The students in the class are assumed to be familiar with various forms of computer technology and word processing. In addition, during the semester, they will have already become familiar with web authoring processes. This lesson plan will deal with creating a Flash Movie that students can then use and insert into their own website. The lesson will have the following goals:

- 1- To explain flash animations by their appearance in the current online media climate
- 2- To explain the rhetorical principles of creating animations for specific purposes
- 3- To explain the conceptual logic of the Macromedia Flash program that will allow students to grasp creating Flash movies more quickly
- 4- To allow students practice in creating a Flash movie

The instructor should explain the use of Flash movies as a way to create animations that can then be used as visual signatures for students' various web-authoring projects. Students will need to realize that animations are complex rhetorical situations in which visuals, text, and animated features all work to create a favorable impression on the audience. In creating a Flash movie, students are therefore practically initiated in new media composition, in which various visual, textual and cultural rhetorical considerations all play a role. The instructor is therefore advised to highlight the rhetorical considerations of composing in new media rather than the "technicalities" of the Macromedia Flash program itself. The goal of the lesson is therefore to allow students to think about the way they are presenting their own projects' identity in animated spatial, textual and visual ways, as well as create a visual signature for their project using Macromedia's Flash MX. This lesson should be given in a computer lab.

Class components & Timeline:

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| 1-Discussion of purpose of animations on websites | (15 min) |
| 2-Rhetorical Considerations of creating animations | (20 min) |
| 3-Introduction of Flash Concepts | (20 min) |
| 4-Creating a Flash Movie (Handout) | (25 min) |
| 5-Student Practice & Questions | (20 min) |
| Total: | (100 min) |

This lesson plan is intended for the instructor to have a measure of experience in creating multimedia applications using Macromedia Flash MX. In addition, the instructor should be familiar with the principles of web authoring and the rhetorical considerations of creating web multimedia applications.

Course Objectives:

The course intends to familiarize students with various forms of technical communication. Because many students are coming from various disciplines, and many organizations and business demand that employees are familiar enough with desktop applications to be able to represent their company or organization visually as well as textually, it is important for many of them to engage with projects in which they are asked to visually represent a project of their liking. This lesson plan is part of a web project in which students create a visual signature to represent a community-based project that they will be doing for the rest of the semester. During this time, various concepts of usability, document design, and web authoring will have been explained to them.

Project Objectives:

This project is intended to get students to critically think about the difficulties of creating visual, textual and spatial representation for a particular project. In addition, they will learn to think about the technicalities of using a particular software program, and how this also mediates the way that they create particular visual animations. Most importantly, however, the instructor will need to convey to students that while Flash has many capacities, the difficulty is in creating visual animation with rhetorical purpose.

Course Components:

1-Discussion of purpose of animations on websites

(15 min)

During this time, the instructor will ask students about the function of animations on websites. Current examples of animations can be seen on various websites, such as Msn.com, Cnn.com, etc. The instructor will need to ask students what their functions are in the context of the website.

- Why are animations featured on a website?
- For what purpose?
- If they are to categorize animation, how would they categorize them in terms of traditional forms of media?

In general, these represent some of the answers that can reasonable be expected:

- Animations make a website more lively
- Animations create visual analogues of dynamic situations
- Animations can be for commercial purposes i.e. to advertise a thing
- Animations can be placed in media terms as text, picture or moving images, or a combination of all

Hopefully, this discussion will reveal that animations can therefore present a strong visual signature for a company or organization. At this time during the semester, students will have already been looking for a community-based project and will know that they will need to represent a certain organization in doing their project and visually represent this organization on their website. In so doing, they will realize that they are to create an animation and also, that this animation combines text, pictures and moving images all at once. This introduces students to the complexities of multimedia composing, which the next segment will be about

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| <p>Note to instructor: The above section can either be in the form of a discussion, or explicitly written on the blackboard.</p> |
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2-Rhetorical Considerations of creating animations

(20 min)

After students have found out that it is difficult to place animations in terms of one dominant media form, they will have grasped that composing in this context also necessitates further rhetorical consideration. During this segment, the instructor will want to make sure that students are introduced to rhetorical considerations of context, purpose, and audience. For example, the instructor can choose to display various animations and ask students to analyze them for these rhetorical considerations. This segment has two purposes:

- To get students to critically think about context, purpose and audience, when they are looking at multimedia
- To get students to integrate these principles and connect their own animations' purpose to their own specific project's context and audience.

A good example would be to display the difference between an animation on Msn.com (which more than likely will feature an advertisement with commercial pursuits in mind), and Cnn.com, where animations are more likely to feature latest news. Students will therefore learn that context and audience of the website determine the purpose of the animation.

3-Introduction of Flash Concepts

(20 min)

This segment will necessitate opening up Macromedia MX and having it displayed on a screen. Because students are encouraged to create their own movies, it is discouraged that the instructor limits what students see by locking their screens into instructional broadcast mode of the instructors' screen. Rather, students will need to be told that learning Flash is dependent upon them grasping particular concepts that the program assumes the user will learn. The instructor will more than likely need to explain the following:

- Animations are done by laying various sheets of paper over each other. Flash calls these sheets of paper “layers” – these allow multiple objects to do a variety of different things at the same time.
- Flash works according to a timeline. That is, it allows you to create a timeline by placing various layers onto a stage by which you produce your animation
- The timeline works according to key frames. These key frames can be seen as snapshots of a particular visual setup of a layer
- The stage can feature different elements such as text, visuals, and moving images. If you move something off the stage, that means that in your animation it will disappear from the stage as well
- If you want to create a moving Flash animation, you have to make sure that you create a Symbol first. A Symbol makes it that Flash will see it as a unit that can be manipulated and moved across the stage.
- Flash creates “Tweens” – literally, “beTweens” that allow the user to move a symbol across a stage between key frames. The Tween will have the program fill in the path of the animation or change the size, the place, and the color of the symbol
- Flash differentiates between “Motion Tweens” and “Shape Tweens”. Motion has to do with the movement of a single layer across a timeline on the Stage. Shape has to do with the visual representation of a symbol according to its color, size, and general appearance.

This section of the lesson plan will do two things:

- It will give students a common vocabulary when talking about Flash, which will help them troubleshoot each other's animations, as well as help them ask the instructor in-depth questions
- It will give students a conceptual framework as to how Flash works to create animations for them
- It will give them an idea on how to use Flash for their own projects

4-Creating a Flash Movie (Handout)

(25 min)

Note: there is a detailed handout for this segment of the lesson plan. It is advised that this is given as a printed out handout, or at least accessible to students when they are creating their own animations, so that they can refer back to this handout in case they run into trouble at their own animation drafting stage.

During this section, the instructor will show the class how to create an animation that features a black circle that moves across the screen. It is hoped that the simplicity of the handout's animation will allow students to grasp the concepts mentioned above, and not get distracted by other visual elements, so that they can use this technology purposefully and rhetorically

5-Student Practice & Questions

(20 min)

During this segment, the class will be allowed to find their way around Flash. After creating their first animation, the instructor will want to encourage them to get more acquainted with the program. It will also be good for students to pay attention to the various elements they can place on a layer. For example, the instructor can encourage them to use various graphics they have created in graphic application programs such as Photoshop or Fireworks for their project, and place these onto a layer and combine this with text they have written. This will give students the necessary framework for learning about how to use Flash with their own learning methods, as well as transition them back into thinking about rhetorical considerations for their own projects. This time is also crucial for the instructor to smooth out any misconceptions, or to do technical troubleshooting.