

Teaching animation remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case study on the experience in the Cinema and Audiovisual course at the Federal University of Sergipe in the 2020.1 academic period

O ensino de animação na modalidade remota durante a pandemia COVID-19: um estudo de caso sobre a experiência no curso de Cinema e Audiovisual da Universidade Federal de Sergipe no período acadêmico 2020.1

Jean Cerqueira¹ 

ABSTRACT

This work is an experience report on the offering of the Animation I discipline in the Cinema and Audiovisual course at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its objective is to understand the remote offer in the period 2020.1 and the developments in carrying out the proposed activities. Despite the numerous uncertainties, this context proved to be challenging, coupled with the unavailability of laboratory space and several obstacles to complying with the course's syllabus and workload. The offer of Animation I was claimed by the students themselves, and the classes took place remotely, demanding greater protagonism from them: half of the course load involved asynchronous activities on a virtual learning platform aimed at reading related texts, discussing animated films and exercises for application of animation principles. In this first remote experience, the available places were doubled to 50 students in each class: class 01 had 45 students, the majority from the Graphic Design course (51%), class 02 had 50 students, 62% from the course of Cinema and Audiovisual. As a final assessment, the students produced short "animated films". Evidently, several productions manifested technical limitations, such as difficulty in stabilizing the camera, lack of supports (rigs) for objects, low image quality, insufficient number of frames for fluid movements, in addition to the students' own inexperience and insecurity. However, several demonstrated resourcefulness in applying the principles of animation, expressing them through aesthetic choices and creative narratives, with potential for future forays.

Keywords: Teaching animation. COVID-19 pandemic. UFS. Cinema and Audiovisual.

RESUMO

Este trabalho é um relato de experiência da oferta da disciplina Animação I no curso de Cinema e Audiovisual da Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), durante a pandemia de COVID-19. Seu objetivo é compreender a oferta remota no período 2020.1 e os desdobramentos na realização das atividades propostas. Em meio às inúmeras incertezas, esse contexto se mostrou desafiador, somando-se à indisponibilidade de espaço laboratorial e vários entraves para o cumprimento da ementa

¹Universidade Federal de Sergipe, Department of Social Communication, Cinema and Audiovisual Course – São Cristóvão (SE) Brazil. E-mails: jeanfabioufs@gmail.com; jeanfabio@academico.ufs.br
Received on: 06/18/2023. Accepted on: 08/29/2023

e da carga horária da disciplina. A oferta de Animação I foi reivindicada pelos próprios discentes, e as aulas ocorreram de forma remota, exigindo maior protagonismo deles: metade da carga horária envolveu atividades assíncronas em plataforma virtual de aprendizagem visando à leitura de textos relacionados, discussão de filmes animados e exercícios para aplicação dos princípios da animação. Nesta primeira experiência remota, o número de vagas foi duplicado para 50 alunos em cada turma: a turma 01 contou com 45 alunos, a maioria do curso de Design Gráfico (51%), a turma 02 contou com 50 alunos, sendo 62% do curso de Cinema e Audiovisual. Como avaliação final, os discentes produziram “filmes animados” de curta duração. Evidentemente, diversas produções manifestaram limitações técnicas, como dificuldade na estabilização da câmera, ausência de suportes (rigs) para os objetos, baixa qualidade de imagem, quantidade de quadros insuficientes para fluidez dos movimentos, além da própria inexperiência e insegurança dos discentes. Contudo, vários demonstraram desenvoltura na aplicação dos princípios da animação, manifestando-os a partir de escolhas estéticas e narrativas criativas, com potencial para incursões futuras.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de animação. Pandemia COVID-19. UFS. Cinema e Audiovisual.

INTRODUCTION

The general objective of this work was to present the experience of offering the Animation I subject in the 2020.1 academic period by the Cinema and Audiovisual course of the Department of Social Communication (*Departamento de Comunicação Social – DCOS*) of Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), in remote mode, due to the pandemic of COVID-19.

In general terms, this work was an experience report configured as a case study of a qualitative, exploratory, and documentary nature, assuming the virtual classrooms of related classes, made available through Google Classroom, as the locus of investigation. Based on this delimitation, the guiding elements of the adopted course plan were analyzed, such as the reference bibliography, the systematization and distribution of content throughout the classes, as well as the asynchronous activities and proposed assessments.

Evidently, the students' responses to such activities were considered in a privileged way to understand the resulting interactions and discussions, both on a theoretical level and on practice itself. Although the research is predominantly of a qualitative nature, specific quantitative data were also considered, especially regarding the quantification of classes available, activities carried out, student responses, and productions presented, in addition to data relating to the evolution of enrollments at throughout the class offerings focused on teaching animation at DCOS.

It is important to highlight that, as this is an exploratory study, no specific hypotheses or research problems were formulated. Instead, this article is focused on understanding the theoretical-methodological perspective adopted in the subject, especially its developments, in light of the context of remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, translated here not only as a limiting moment, but which claimed creativity and student involvement. In this way, the aim was to socialize the experience on screen, in order to aggregate information that allows

expanding knowledge about strategies adopted to facilitate practical disciplines, specifically related to the teaching of animation within the scope of public higher education institutions.

The work was divided into two parts. In the first, a general contextualization of animation teaching in the Department of Communication at UFS was carried out, from its “subversive” genesis to its effective insertion in the curriculum and subsequent accommodation, revealing methodological aspects and emphasizing the dynamics of evolution in enrollments as an indicator of interest by it. The second part consists of the presentation and discussion of the main aspects of the offer carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching animation at the Department of Social Communication/ Universidade Federal de Sergipe: a brief historical trajectory

According to the Pedagogical Project of the UFS Undergraduate Course in Cinema and Audiovisual, approved by Resolution No. 18/2017/CONEPE, the Animation I discipline emerges as the only mandatory discipline dedicated exclusively to animated cinema within the scope of DCOS, and possibly at UFS itself, since related courses such as Graphic Design and Visual Arts do not present related subjects in their curricula. Under the code COMSO0165, it is currently offered in the 6th period of the curriculum, comprising two classes capable of housing 25 students each, and their total workload is 60 hours: 15 of which dedicated to theoretical debate; 45 focused on practical activities. The course curriculum also provides Animation II, an optional subject that can be offered to students who are interested in continuing their experiences from Animation I.

It is worth noting that animation was already emerging as a mandatory subject in the old Audiovisual qualification of the Social Communication course at DCOS. According to Resolution No. 60/2008/CONEPE, its nomenclature was “Animation and Infography I” (COMSO0230), which included animation in a historical trajectory, but still used as a journalistic tool in the infographic aspect, for example. In fact, the discipline moved between video art, computer graphics, and animation. In any case, the existence of a mandatory subject related to animated cinema in the context of DCOS represented a recognition of its expressive value, its consolidation in the audiovisual field, its relevance as a cultural product and, above all, the need to situate it as a field of research at UFS and work for future graduates. It is important though to consider that despite the massification of animation throughout the 1990s, it took 16 years, since the emergence of the degree in Social Communication at UFS, in 1992, for its curricular internalization.

The Department of Social Communication at UFS currently consists of undergraduate courses in Journalism, Advertising, and Cinema and Audiovisual. Until 2008 there was a single degree with three qualifications in Social Communication, which coexisted with the degree course in Visual Arts in the same department, the Department of Arts and Social Communication (*Departamento de Artes e*

Comunicação Social – DAC). With the approval of the Graphic Design course, in 2009, the qualifications in Communication were brought together at DCOS, while Design, together with Visual Arts, became part of the Arts and Design Center (*Núcleo de Artes e Design* – NAD), in 2010, finally becoming the Department of Design Visual Arts (*Departamento de Artes Visuais de Design* — DAVD) in 2013.

In historical terms, animation teaching at DCOS went through three moments: 1) the “subversive” offer, when it was covered through loopholes in subjects with flexible syllabuses in Radio and Television qualifications; 2) the moment of curricular internalization in the pedagogical project of the Audiovisual qualification, as an effective subject; 3) the period of maturity with the curricular reform that resulted in the bachelor’s degree in Cinema and Audiovisual, remaining a mandatory subject with a more robust syllabus.

Animation teaching was introduced at DAC in 2004, during the offering of the optional subject “Special Topics in Digital Media” (COMSO0063), in the second period of that year. Belonging to the curriculum of the extinct Radio and Television qualification, it had a workload of 60 hours and was offered to complement the workload of temporary teachers, a kind of “contractual joker”. However, the 2004.2 offer had a subversive character. Taking advantage of loopholes in a generalist syllabus that aimed to develop “Study of specific themes in the area of digital media.”, the professor author of this work, then responsible for the discipline, aligned his professional experience¹ with the students’ desires, and throughout that semester, the class embarked on theoretical discussions about animated cinema and practice in this field. Immediately after this initial offer, the subject “Special Topics in Digital Media” became, among DAC students, synonymous with Animation, being regularly offered² in all academic periods until 2009; the subject attracted not only students from courses from DAC, but also from several other UFS courses.

From a didactic-pedagogical point of view, the discipline followed the following path:

1. Initially, a historical review of Western animated cinema was undertaken, based on the work “History of Animation: technique and aesthetics through History”, written by Alberto Lucena Junior, and on the Brazilian context, based on the “Brazilian Experience in Animation Cinema”, by the late Antônio Moreno, in order to establish an understanding of the genesis and basic principles of animation, as well as its plastic and technical heterogeneity.
2. Expository classes were interspersed with screenings and debates of related films, aiming to expand the students’ repertoire, with emphasis on experimental animators who were then unknown to them.

1 At the time, the professor was a partner in an audiovisual production company specializing in computer graphics, where he worked on art design in animation and advertising video projects, especially in 3D.

2 In 2016, the professor became part of the permanent faculty at DCOS. Since then, he has worked to defend the inclusion of animated films in the courses offered.

3. After discussing basic bibliography, which comprised half of the course workload, aspects of the production itself were considered, based on the text “The Animation Book: A Complete Guide to Animated Filmmaking: From Flip-Books to Sound Cartoons to 3D Animation”, by Kit Laybourne. Thus, the second half of the discipline was focused on experience in creating animations, starting with the construction of optical toys and progressing to organic techniques, such as cut-out animation, including silhouettes, of characters with improvised armor and “animation without a camera”.

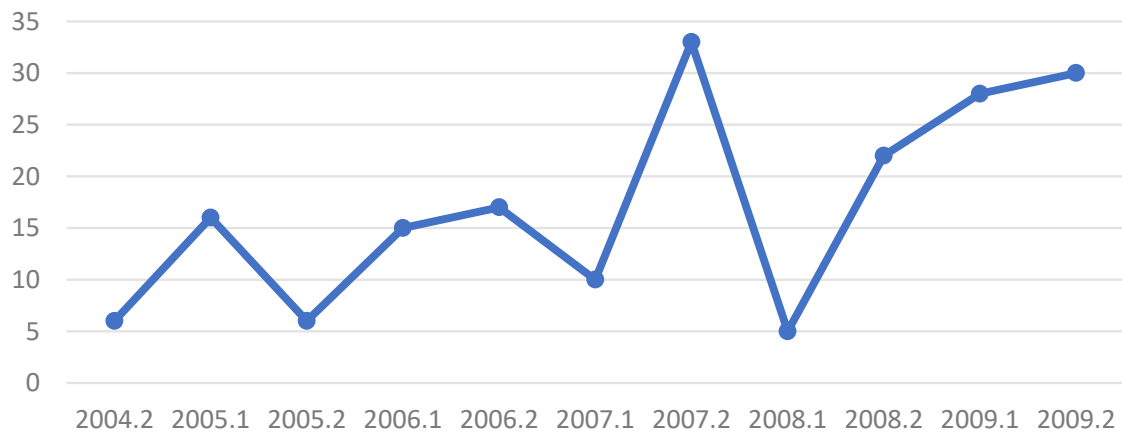
In fact, structural limitations, such as computer labs shared with several disciplines and the unavailability of a studio to create sets and characters, defined the balance between technique and aesthetics adopted in classroom work — a situation that persists today, despite of some improvements that will be discussed later.

Other specificities of this period deserve to be highlighted: as the subject “Special Topics in Digital Media” was optional, the students enrolled were often those who demonstrated interest and dedication to animated cinema; structural limitations encouraged teamwork, improvisation, and creativity in experiments; aspects of regional popular culture, such as *cordel* literature, were influential in the search for narratives for the final works of the disciplines; as the works were produced in groups, few films were made, but they had the collaboration of several students; there was no practice of creating a collection to remember the course, and several of these works were lost; the adopted books were shared, since the Central Library’s collection on the topic was limited. Emblematic from this period are the stop motion “Mauses”, a parody of the feature film “Mission: Impossible”, in which a group of mice (computer ones!!!) wait for the right moment to take revenge on their “aggressors”, including users who insist on violent and repetitive clicks, handling them with filthy fingers with food and other deplorable organic matter, etc., and the animation in silhouette cutouts “Not everything that shakes falls”, an adaptation of the homonymous *cordel*.

The aspects mentioned reveal, in general terms, the dynamics of the discipline in this initial context. However, the evolution in enrollments in the discipline is also important to the understanding of its relevance in DCOS. The following graphic shows the evolution of enrollments throughout the provision of this first phase of animation teaching, still confined to the subject “Special Topics in Digital Media”.

According to Graphic 1, the number of enrollments did not occur regularly, and the peak of supply occurred in period 2007.2, when the class had 33 students enrolled — possibly due to the imminent extinction of the qualification in Radio Broadcasting and Television, students sought to complete their school records. Disregarding the drop in 2008.1, the offer in the last three semesters was growing, concentrating 80 (42%) of the 188 students who took the subject during the period observed.

In the qualitative aspect, it is important to highlight that the offering of the discipline stimulated interest in animation beyond the classroom, inserting it as an



Graphic 1. Enrolled students (2004.2 to 2009.2).

object of investigation in course completion works, albeit in a timid way. Two significant works from this period were carried out by students Wille Marcel Lima Malheiro³ and Tiago Almada Dutra⁴, both from the class of 2006.2.

Despite the limitations arising from an extremely limited course load and the lack of appropriate laboratory space, the successive offerings of classes in the subject “Special Topics in Digital Media” allowed students to establish a valuable dialogue with the field of animation. The didactic scheme was guided by the historical understanding of animated cinema, including the Brazilian context, and its technical aspects, also allowing for practical incursions with the development of some experimental productions⁵.

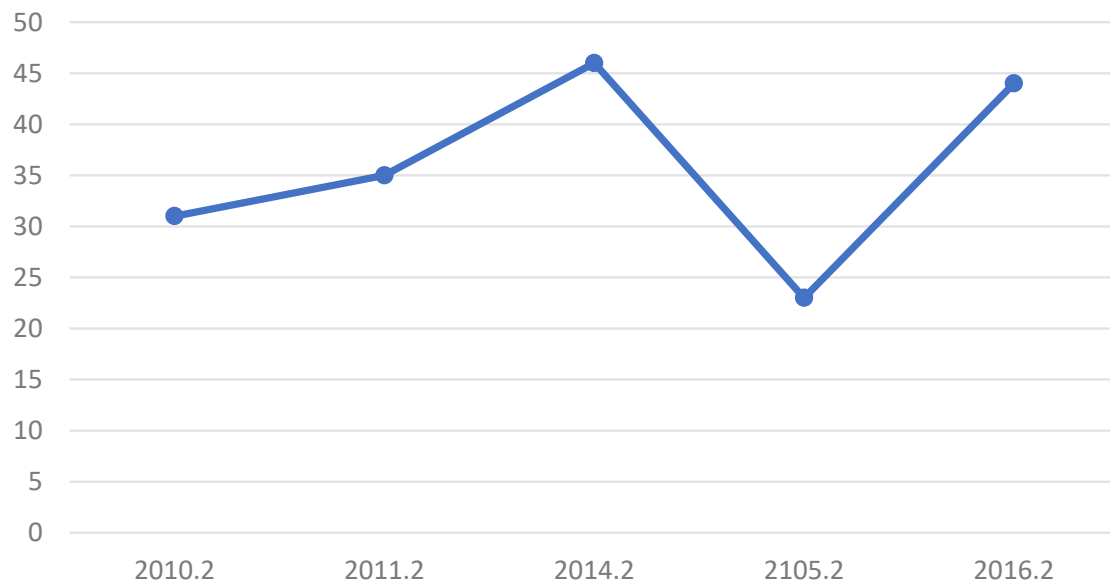
In 2009, with the emergence of qualifications in Audiovisual, animation teaching gained greater visibility, becoming mandatory in the curriculum, specifically in the subject “Animation and Infographics”, with 60 hours, offered in the fourth semester of the course. In this second phase, its syllabus updated the perspective contemplated in “Special Topics in Digital Media”, but, according to its nomenclature, it internalized an instrumental character. The first offer took place in 2010.1 and lasted until 2016, when this qualification gave way to the undergraduate course in Cinema and Audiovisual, which began to be offered in 2017.2. In general, the context proved to be paradoxical: while the syllabus established that most of the course load would be allocated to practical activities, the theoretical scope was too

3 In 2008, he defended his Final Paper “Free software, bazaar and computer graphics: the case of blender”, investigating the contributions of discussion communities to the maturation of the application.

4 In 2010, he defended his Final Paper “Interactive drama: Analysis of the narrative of the game Heavy Rain”, discussing the relationship between narrative and interactive animation in the field of games.

5 As mentioned, one of the main problems regarding the history of DCOS is related to its memory. Over these 30 years of activity, the department has been unable to catalog and gather its productions into a public collection. Recently, two course completion works dealing with the production of animations were identified and were carried out by students on the Visual Arts degree course at UFS. See more in Monteiro (2007) and Silva (2006).

broad, which in practice concentrated most of the classes. In fact, the path to practice was confined to the optional subject Animation and Infographics II, which was never offered. Graphic 2 shows the evolution of enrollments in the Animation and Infographics discipline⁶.



*Enrollment data in the related discipline, over the 2012.2 and 2013.2 semesters, are not available in the Integrated Academic Activities Management System (*Sistema Integrado de Gestão de Atividades Acadêmicas – SIGAA*). During this period, the subject was taught by temporary professors, since the permanent professor was away for his doctorate.

Graphic 2. Enrolled students (2010.2 to 2016.2)*.

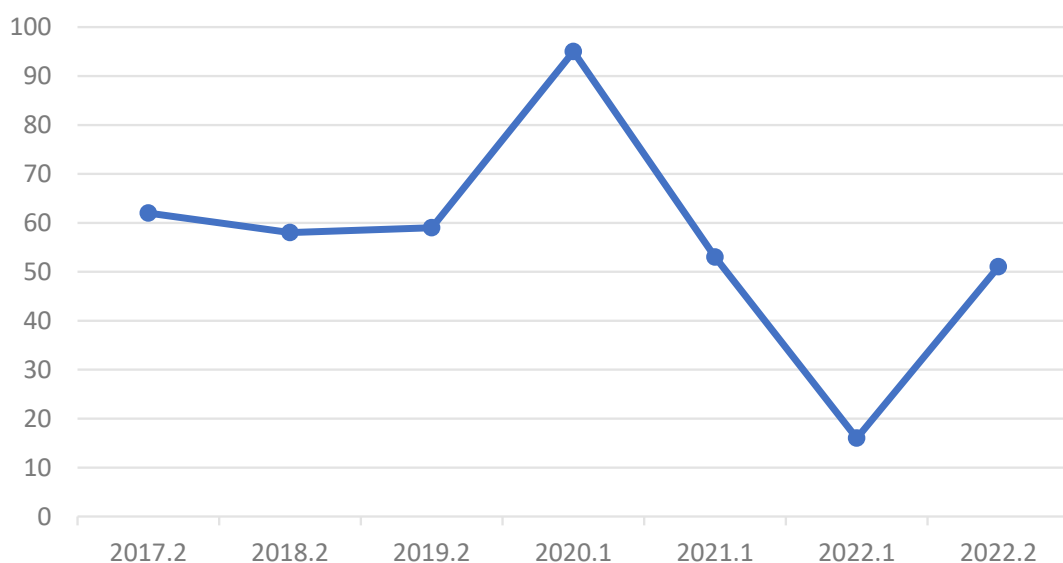
It is important to highlight that the graphic totals the offering of the two classes in each semester, whose regular forecast was 50 students. It is noted that only offers from 2014.2 and 2016.2 came close to this quantity. In relation to the numbers of 2015.2, in which only 23 students enrolled in the subject, it is necessary to consider two factors: 1) to study animation, prior approval in “Cinematic and Audiovisual Language” was necessary, a mandatory prerequisite; 2) this prerequisite was only offered in odd-numbered semesters, so, apparently, this quantitative variation in enrollments can be explained by the high level of failure in the prerequisite taken in the period immediately prior to the offering of Animation.

Regarding the course plan, “Animation and Infographics I” was similar to that adopted in “Special Topics in Digital Media”, but, as previously mentioned, practical work was restricted to just under 1/3 of the total course load. Discussions on

⁶ During the two years between 2012.2 and 2013.2, “Animation and Infographics I” was taught by three different teachers. This was due to the permanent professor’s leave to undertake a doctorate. Data relating to such offers are not available in the academic management system, the UFS SIGAA, which explains the absence of this gap in the graphic above.

computer graphics and video graphics were added, the basic bibliography was maintained, with the addition of references on video art and complementary texts aimed at creating special effects, web animation and infographics. Consequently, the final practical works of the discipline were generally produced by students who had reduced practical experience compared to those in the first phase. Furthermore, many of them chose to develop their experiences individually, which resulted in more discreet and limited works. It is worth noting that, at this time, the department already had a more appropriate laboratory structure, and the discipline had computers and software such as the Adobe package, including After Effects, and 3DStudio Max, from Autodesk. In any case, the option for more organic and less computer-dependent techniques was maintained.

With the replacement of the Audiovisual qualification with the Degree in Cinema and Audiovisual, in force since 2017, animation teaching (the third phase at DCOS) began to be viewed with greater autonomy and seriousness compared to other audiovisual products. According to the course's pedagogical project, Resolution No. 18/2017/CONEPE, the mandatory subject "Animation I" guaranteed a greater workload for practical activities (45 of the 60 hours) and "Animation II" was designed as an optional subject capable of meeting particular demands related to animation. The offer was inserted in the sixth semester of the course, a period in which students already arrived with a background in audiovisual language and with some practical experiences, especially in image and video editing. In any case, the discipline did not establish prerequisites, which boosted its search for students from other courses and resulted in relevant contributions, mainly from Graphic Design and Visual Arts students. Graphic 3 reveals the dynamics of enrollment in the discipline from the period of its implementation until its most recent offer.



Graphic 3. Enrolled students (2017.2 to 2022.2).

It is important to consider that in the 2017.2, 2018.2, and 2019.2 offers, carried out before the COVID-19 pandemic, total enrollment was always higher than the 50 places regularly available, including the two classes. As mentioned previously, the absence of prerequisites attracted students from other courses, mainly due to requests for separate inclusion in the discipline. In this context, the first phase course program was resumed and improved. The practice was privileged and began to be interspersed with theoretical discussions of lectures and film screenings. In other words, since the beginning of the discipline, students were able to practice animation. Furthermore, the bibliography was updated, with emphasis on the adoption of the texts "Animation Cinema", by Sébastien Denis, "The Animator Survival Kit", by Richard Williams, and "Between the look and the gesture: Elements for an Animated poetics", by Marina Stela Graça. Another relevant aspect of this context was the valorization of animation research in the discipline, with the alternative of producing a scientific article as the final work of the discipline, for students less interested in the practice. In this regard, the discussions proposed by Denis (2010) about the discursive power of animation, especially in the political and ideological sphere, influenced several works: some articles analyzed gender representations in animation, as was the case with a comparative study of representation of the woman in the 1985 series "She-Ra: The Princess of Power", and in its 2018 update; others observed aesthetic aspects, such as the analysis of the elements that make up the aesthetics of Wes Anderson's work.

In relation to the 2020.1 offer, the subject of this experience report, according to the previous graphic, the peak of 95 students enrolled reflects the strategy adopted which consisted of doubling the number of places for classes in remote mode. In it, it is also possible to notice a reversal in the offering of the discipline, which started to occur at an odd-numbered period, a decision by the course board in response to a student demand and which will be discussed in detail in the following section. Still according to the graphic, in 2021.1, vacancies in animation classes returned to their regular capacity, of 25 students each, but requests for inclusion were also considered. In 2022.1, a special class was offered, given the backlog of students in the subject who avoided taking it remotely. Finally, in 2022.2, the animation discipline resumes its regular offering in even-numbered periods.

In general terms, the consolidation of the Cinema and Audiovisual course and the regularity in the offer of the animation discipline provided greater visibility of animated cinema among students of the course and related courses, resulting in the appreciation of animation as a language, as well as its technical specificities and countless directors who have driven its history. This also contributed to the recognition of animation as a field of investigation and work.

Still timidly, but no less promising, experiences with animated production also became routine in the classes offered. In relation to course completion work, animation also experienced a growing interest. Among these, the experimental short "Insano", an animation produced by Maria Aparecida de Jesus Santos (2019), and the short "Super Crab World", an animation that emulates a gameplay and

addresses environmental communication stand out, both from 2019, carried out by students of the Cinema and Audiovisual course (GODINHO; NASCIMENTO, 2019). Students from the Graphic Design and Visual Arts course have also been guided by the professor responsible for the animation discipline: in 2018, Galvão (2018) made his animated short “Rafa”, dealing with the issue of Gender Identity; this same year, Giberlan Santos (2018) animated a teaser for his short “Vaquejada”; in 2019, students⁷ Carvalho and Vasconcelos (2019) evaluated the role of graphic design in an animated film, covering the pre-production stages with the elaboration of character and scenario concepts, the creation of a narrative/script, the production of the animatic and the implementation of some animated scenes.

In view of the above, it is necessary to highlight that, despite relevant achievements, there are several challenges and obstacles that persist in teaching animation in the Cinema and Audiovisual course at UFS. The laboratory structure is not capable of meeting the demands related to animated cinema, both with regard to the availability of specific software, such as Dragon Frame, and in relation to the configuration of available hardware. There are also no appropriate photography cameras, lighting sets, light tables, 3D printers, rigs and armatures, etc. Animation still appears confined to a single mandatory subject, with a single teacher.

As seen, to a large extent, the students’ work is carried out under adverse conditions, requiring dedication, improvisation, and persistence. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic further accentuated these challenges, transforming what was precarious into non-existent. However, it revealed animation teaching in its potential for motivation and coping, and it is this context that will be discussed below.

The offer of Animation I during the COVID-19 pandemic: discussion and results

Offering subjects remotely was the alternative adopted by UFS to continue teaching activities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. At DCOS, the offer for the 2020.1 semester was resumed in mid-October, six months after the pre-pandemic forecast. This return to classes was preceded by broad departmental discussions, where each course had to adapt its subjects to the pandemic scenario. In this context, the subject “Animation I” was chosen over the subject “Cinema and Video Editing I”, both taught by the same teacher. The decision to prioritize animation was supported by a previous survey carried out by DCOS among the student body, which indicated “Animation I” as the students’ preference, mainly due to its possibilities of being carried out using mobile devices, in the students’ own homes.

⁷ Both submitted the animated short “The Fisherman and the King of Clouds”, the final work of the “Animation I” discipline, to the minute festival. The film is available at <https://www.festival30seconds.com.br/pt-BR/contents/42769>. These students’ course completion work also dealt with animation and was entitled “The role of graphic design in the construction of the narrative of an animated film”. In it, all the stages related to the pre-production of an animated short film were developed, with emphasis on the work of creating the scenarios and characters, culminating in the production of specific scenes. See more in Carvalho and Vasconcelos (2019).

With the approval of the department, the regular offering of the Cinema and Audiovisual course was reversed, and "Animation I" was offered in the odd period. Furthermore, the number of places was doubled in relation to the in-person offer, allowing the subject to be taken by regular students, those who failed in previous semesters, and students from other courses. Therefore, the subject was planned to be taught through virtual classrooms on Google Classroom, with each class having its own room. The teaching plan previously established the content of each of the fifteen classes planned for the semester. In compliance with institutional guidelines for remote provision, half of the course load was allocated to expository classes, held synchronously, in blocks lasting a maximum of 2 hours. The other half was made available asynchronously and, amid the uncertainties, anxieties and expectations of this social scenario, they were focused on carrying out practical activities in line with the exhibitions.

Class 01 consisted of 45 students, while the second class received 50 students. In the first class, students from the Graphic Design course predominated (31 students, 68% of the class), followed by 9 from Cinema and Audiovisual (20% of the class), in addition to students from various courses, such as Theater, Electrical Engineering, Journalism, Advertising, Visual Arts, Psychology, Petroleum Engineering, among others. In class 02, there were 31 Cinema and Audiovisual students (62% of the class), 12 Graphic Design students (24% of the class), as well as History, Advertising, Visual Arts, and International Relations. Considering the demand for the subject and the fact that other optional subjects were offered simultaneously at DCOS, it is reasonable to conclude that studying and practicing animation had great attraction for students during the pandemic.

Regarding subject planning, the virtual classrooms in *Classroom* were configured in a similar way for both classes. According to the Course's Pedagogical Political Project, the "Animation I" syllabus establishes the following discussions:

Origins and evolution of animation. Basic principles. Animation language. Techniques: flat, spatial, camera-less animation, trickery, computerized animation. Photo-film, cartoon, films with plastic dough, titling. American, European, and Brazilian animated cinema. Perspectives of animation in the face of digital technologies. Scenic special effects, holography. Digitized animation.
(CONEPE, 2017, p. 12).

Therefore, there was an attempt to cover the course syllabus, strictly respecting the division of 15 hours dedicated to theoretical aspects and 45 hours for carrying out practical activities. Thus, the 60 hours of the course were distributed into 15 classes of 4 hours each, according to the following scheme:

- *Class 01*: synchronous section dedicated to the exhibition of an archaeological panorama of animation. Asynchronous section aimed at exemplifying such toys and the application of their principles today, culminating in the development of exercises centered on the creation of a free-choice toy and the creation of "animated" content for them, with subsequent posting on the platform.

- *Class 02:* synchronous section aimed at discussing the contributions of precursors Blackton, McCay, and Émile Cohl. Asynchronous section focused on the appreciation of works created by precursors on screen, the reading of complementary texts, and exercises related to the elaboration of a comparative table of the contributions related to the emergence of animation.
- *Class 03:* synchronous section aimed at discussing the context and process of emergence of the main animation studios in the USA and productions around the world. The asynchronous section consisted of carrying out a brief survey of two Brazilian animation studios and comparing their production structures.
- *Class 04:* synchronous section dedicated to the discussion of anthropomorphism as a recurring strategy in animated cinema, tracing its origins to precursor animations. The asynchronous section aimed to provide complementary material for this discussion and present animations that marked this process.
- *Class 05:* synchronous section dedicated to discussing the consolidation of American industrial animation, its global influence, the canons established by Disney, in addition to the developments in animation after the Second World War. The synchronous section consisted of an activity focused on understanding Disney's contributions.
- *Class 06:* synchronous section was entirely focused on discussing the principles of animation, starting by covering the elementary process of drawing frame-by-frame movement, privileging the use of a cell phone in this process. The asynchronous section consisted of activities dedicated to the animation of an obliquely thrown ball bouncing on the ground, with an emphasis on timing and understanding the emulation of the force of gravity, weight, and elasticity of bodies.
- *Class 07:* synchronous section revisited aspects of animation produced during the Second World War, mainly interested in understanding its educational, persuasive, and commercial aspects. The asynchronous section encouraged watching related films and carrying out a critical activity comparing works from different studios and nationalities.
- *Class 08:* synchronous section discussed general aspects of the animated production that emerged in Europe, more specifically in the east of the continent. The asynchronous section of the class focused on the critical reading of animations related to this context and texts about some of its main directors.
- *Class 09:* synchronous section highlighted the work of animator Norman McLaren, highlighting aspects of experimental and authorial animation. The asynchronous section was dedicated to critical assistance of the main films and the reading of complementary texts.
- *Class 10:* synchronous section dedicated to understanding timing diagrams for organic animations, with an emphasis on stop motion. The asynchronous section was dedicated to carrying out exercises centered on the animation of cycles, such as the movement of clock pendulums, etc.

- *Class 11:* synchronous section dedicated to the discussion of animated production in the context of television. The asynchronous section was dedicated to the modeling clay animation exercise, emphasizing metamorphoses and related exercises.
- *Class 12:* synchronous section dedicated to discussing general aspects of Japanese animation. The asynchronous section was dedicated to performing cut-out exercises, emphasizing everything from the different options for creating joints to their animation, with an emphasis on rotoscoping.
- *Class 13:* synchronous section dedicated to the context of Brazilian animation. Asynchronous section dedicated to building armor for stop motion characters.
- *Class 14:* entirely dedicated to supporting the completion of the final works of the subject.
- *Class 15:* entirely dedicated to supporting the completion of the final works of the subject.

The main basic bibliography adopted for the development of the discipline privileged the text “The Art of Animation: Technique and Technique through history”, written by Alberto Lucena Junior, to the detriment of the book “Animation Cinema”, by Sébastien Denis (2010), which had been systematically adopted in previous classes, guiding the holding of face-to-face seminars. Given the impossibility of such an undertaking, since many students did not have reliable access to the internet, Lucena Junior’s text (2005) was valued for its historical and objective coverage of animation, in its historical perspective. Thus, the topics of the synchronous classes were anchored in the outline presented by the author, but asynchronous discussions aimed to deepen the debate based on several complementary texts, by providing videos and films representing the discussions and by theoretical and practical activities.

As an example of asynchronous activities, according to “class 01” presented previously, the historical recovery of the emergence of animation was explored with an activity aimed at the production of an optical toy of free choice by students. Thus, valuing student protagonism, the offer of “Animation I” sought to intersperse its theoretical approach with practical experimentation in the first remote classes. To this end, complementary texts such as “A Cartilha Anima Escola: Animation technique for teachers and students” and “Fazendo Animação”, a supplement to Raquel Coelho’s book, were decisive in encouraging experimentation so that around 60% of students in both groups developed the activity, considering it to be very relevant. The confidence in animation, from the beginning of the class, seemed right, especially focusing on the animation itself, to the detriment of the emphasis on technology, especially digital animation systems. With the simplicity of optical toys, now available to each student, the production of animated cycles was stimulated with privilege for the zoetrope.

Discussions about the contributions of the three main animators (Blackton, McCay, and Cohl) of the pre-industrial era, in the American context, resulted in the

creation of a comparative table that identified the specificities of each director by the students. Design and Visual Arts students were particularly encouraged to have a more in-depth discussion about McCay's work, based on the text "Winsor McCay: His life and art", written by John Canemaker, in order to understand the influences of his comics in animated work.

In relation to the configuration and consolidation of the first animation studios, this discussion encouraged students to understand the technical particularities of animation and the nature of the division of tasks, with an emphasis on Disney's perspective. In addition to the availability of animated films and complementary texts, the students researched the configuration of work teams in Brazilian studios, comparing this scenario with the works they carried out.

In this context, and also based on the debate about Disney's production in its "Golden Age", technical aspects of animation were inserted and demonstrated, and a series of exercises were proposed, privileged by the use of the "Stop Motion Studio" mobile application⁸. Such exercises aimed to explore the timing of events/movements and resulted in the classic activity of producing an animation of an obliquely thrown ball bouncing on the ground. This understanding was supported by the text "The Animator's Survival Kit", by Richard Williams.

Discussions about animation produced in Eastern Europe also favored the development of practical activities, especially in stop motion, with an emphasis on animation of silhouette cuts, according to Lotte Reiniger. This discussion was expanded by the text "Animation: the pocket Essential", by Mark Whitehead, and by the "annotated" screening (in an asynchronous discussion forum) of several films and interviews with the animators. Some specific experiments with clippings were carried out, with an emphasis on the exploration of animated cycles, or the application of certain principles such as anticipation and secondary movements. One may also note that, amid the imposed social distancing, students researched the most diverse alternatives for creating articulations, given the need to use what was available in their own homes. Furthermore, sharing these searches on the web, especially on YouTube, brought together important collective support material, also incorporated into the virtual rooms.

The second half of the course focused on brief approaches to particular themes, as was the case with the work of Norman McLaren, whose discussion was supported by an annotated screening of several films. In this specific case, the class was provided with software so they could experiment with sound design, according to the animator.

The specificities of animation developed for television, as well as the debate about Japanese animation and Brazilian animation were covered in subsequent classes. In addition to the availability of audiovisual material, additional texts were

⁸ This application was adopted in the discipline due to its versatility, as it can be installed free of charge on Android or IOS smartphones and tablets. In its full version, it has powerful resources for creating animations: the well-known and indispensable "onion skin"; dynamic frame rate adjustments; tools for removing rigs; acceleration curves; allows the design of trajectories and the timing of movements under them; in addition to adding facial expression with lip sync and using chroma key.

discussed, such as the work “Prime Time Animation”, by Carol A. Stabile and Mark Harrison, “Dramaturgia da Série de Animação”, by Sérgio Nesteriuk, “The Brazilian experience in cinema of animation”, by Antonio Moreno, among others. In parallel to these classes, practical activities were developed, with an emphasis on experimentation with timing diagrams and exercises with articulated cuts, also encouraging the use of the “Dragon Frame” software, in the trial version. Finally, a class was dedicated to assembling an armature for stop motion, using accessible materials, such as wire, silicone glue, sponges, and epoxy adhesive.

The evaluations regarding this remote offer also took into account the protagonism of the students. Each student obtained two grades, the first of which related to the total number of individual activities developed over the 15 classes — one for each. In fact, as attendance at synchronous meetings was not mandatory, all lectures were recorded with the help of Google Meet, and later made available in *Classroom*. In this way, the assessment became procedural, allowing each student to explore the content based on their own dynamics, but requiring them to carry out the activities set out. The second note, in turn, consisted of two distinct alternatives: elaboration of a simple and objective animated production, but one that developed a narrative based on the exploration of some animation principles; or the preparation of a scientific article assuming animation as an object of investigation based on various issues, related to social, political, technical, authorial, aesthetic issues, etc.

For short-term animated films, adequate timing of movements, as well as camera stabilization, were primary requirements, with the production platform, technique, and narrative to be explored being a free choice. With regard to scientific articles, models adopted by relevant forums such as the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (*Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação – INTERCOM*) and the Brazilian Cinema and Audiovisual Teaching Forum (*Fórum Brasileiro de Ensino de Cinema e Audiovisual – FORCINE*) were provided, in addition to a general discussion of their structure and of methodological strategies according to specific student demands.

In the case of class 01, 19 students failed (or abandoned the course), 5 interrupted their enrollment, and 21 were approved (around 46% of those initially enrolled). Among those approved, 12 chose to produce an animation experience, while 9 developed an article. In class 02, 34 students were approved (68% of those initially enrolled), 6 interrupted their enrollment, while 10 failed. Among those approved, 18 chose to try developing an animated production, while 16 developed analytical work. It is important to highlight that the percentage of students who failed was significant in class 01, comprising around 48% of students who remained in the class until its closure, while in class 02, the percentage was around 23%. It is important to highlight that many of these students faced difficulties accessing the internet, a fundamental condition for participating in the remote mode. Although UFS has contracted services to facilitate this demand, in practice, the intense use of videos and films for asynchronous content, or even simple participation in synchronous classes, required bandwidth and data allowance beyond institutional estimates.

In general terms, among the practical productions, we observed a plastic heterogeneity that ranged from the use of traditional modeling clay to perishable foods, including paper cutouts, toys, porcelain objects, Lego pieces, etc., all included in stop motion animations. On the other hand, but to a lesser extent, animations were created in a digital environment, in various graphic programs, with emphasis on After Effects and Krita. Only one study involved the application of rotoscoping.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The context imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging for Brazilian universities, especially those of a public nature. Within the scope of UFS, the experience since the implementation of the Remote Higher Education Center (*Centro de Ensino Superior a Distância – CESAD*), in 2007, favored the option for remote teaching as a coping strategy. However, for the Cinema and Audiovisual Course, as well as several others made up of subjects that require laboratory activities, of a practical and experimental nature, the challenges were even more imposing.

The emotional shock that occurred among students and teachers in the face of the tragic development of the pandemic in Brazil, coupled with the precarious structure of internet access then available to a considerable portion of the student community at UFS, required a broad reflection on the offer, when disciplines were then privileged of a theoretical nature. However, in the case of the Cinema and Audiovisual course, laboratory subjects are essential for the progress of the course, and for this reason they also needed to be adapted to the remote context.

In this sense, the offering of the “Animation I” discipline gained prominence, taking into account that, in general, its classes have always faced a scenario of structural precariousness and its production, at a more basic level, does not require robust equipment. Furthermore, authorial animation is recurrent, and its production is usually carried out in a closed environment, sometimes at home. In view of the above, the discipline proved to be relevant to the confrontation, so that two classes were offered in the period 2020.1.

Despite the various obstacles presented, animation gained visibility and interest in DCOS during the pandemic. The high demand for the two “Animation I” classes attests to this context, as does student participation in exercises and related activities. Withdrawals or failures, despite being significant, were within the traditional averages seen in distance learning courses, or less in other subjects offered in this same context.

In relation to approved students, evidently, several of the animations developed as the final work of the course presented technical limitations, mainly due to the precariousness of production conditions. However, several students demonstrated substantial understanding of the principles presented, expressing very creative choices and decisions in the works presented. Nevertheless, it seems that Graphic Design and Visual Arts students are still those with the greatest interest in production processes, while Cinema and Audiovisual students still seem to see animation as a distant product.

In general terms, the context of the pandemic highlighted aspects that deserve attention in the regular offering of the discipline: the appreciation of practice and know-how proved to be stimulating; optical toys, namely the zoetrope, proved to be a very democratic starting point for the technical understanding of animation, in addition to sharpening the curiosity and interest of students, also valuing a magical atmosphere of animation, an oasis in the midst of academic rationality; the provision of a vast complementary bibliography on animated cinema to students allowed them to take a leading role in the search for aspects of particular interest, both in the field of technique and in the field of research on directors, studios, discursive aspects, etc.; sharing experiences through a forum or wall collectively created throughout the course also proved to be crucial for student engagement.

This results in a very significant legacy that has been internalized in the theoretical-methodological delimitation of subsequent offerings, recognizing that even in the face of structural adversities, animated cinema proves to be powerful. In this way, the path of organic animation, less dependent on computing, still emerges as the most promising one for production proposals within the discipline, at least until such limitations are overcome. Amid the ongoing curricular reformulation process, the experience of remote offerings will be valued with a view to greater inclusion of animation in the Cinema and Audiovisual course, accompanied by the intensification of its production through the creation of an infrastructure dedicated to this venture.

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About the author

Jean Fábio Borba Cerqueira: PhD in social communication from the Social Communication Program at Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (PPGOM-UFPE); coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Environmental Communication Laboratory (*Laboratório Interdisciplinar de Comunicação Ambiente – LICA*), a research group linked to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq*), professor of the Cinema and Audiovisual course at the Department of Social Communication at UFS (*Departamento de Comunicação Social – DCOS*).

Conflict of interests: nothing to declare – **Funding:** none.

