This fall, COC and LCC are jointly offering a three-credit seminar that explores the technical and aesthetic aspects of Machinima, an animation technique based on three-dimensional game engines. The course is cross-listed with CS as CS 4903/CS 8003/CS 8903.

The class looks at a form of real-time rendering and video production based on video games, called machinima, and aims to investigate the underlying concepts of this new form of moving images. These can be broken down in the expressive element—such as camera, lights, editing, realism, performance—and the more technical features—the tools, engines, and logistics of the new format. We need to explore both as the art form of machinima can only be developed in a combination of both—much like the art form of traditional cinema depended on technical advances to widen the artistic freedom.

Therefore, the course will be split into theory sessions and practical lab hours. The first third will see an introduction into some issues of machinima and cinematic traditions—conceptual and technical. We will look into examples of classic moving image language and aesthetics and the problems of their manifestations in machinima. Students are expected to address these challenges and suggest principle answers in the second part of the course. The last third will be dominated by a practical test production of a machinima piece (or pieces) that illustrates and—to a limited extent—exemplifies the solutions developed in the second section. Students are expected to make the technical as well as theoretical perspective shift towards the world of machinima and directly address issues we identify during the course—first via the presentation of new concepts (from interactive camera work to new production pipelines) but also in the form of detailed proof-of-concept prototypes.

Participating students will have to deliver a detailed discussion of and solution to a selected machinima topic, look at machinima tools and engines, and work on practical projects that lead up to a final project. They are expected to participate actively in the course discussions and look for possible answers as well as for new questions. Knowledge of game engines (especially Unreal Tournament), 3D modelling programs (Maya), and coding are useful.