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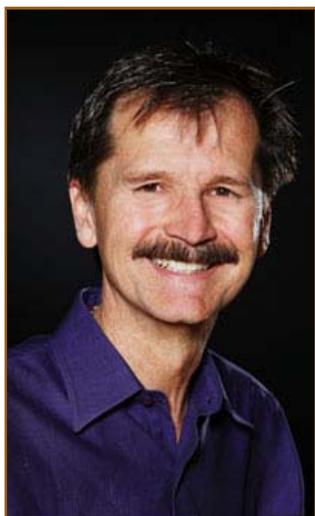
◀◀ BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS

A few questions for Craig Caldwell

USTAR PROFESSOR IN DIGITAL MEDIA CLUSTER FILM STUDIES

Craig Caldwell

Originally from Griffith University in Brisbane, where he was head of the largest film school in Australia, Craig Caldwell is now at the U as a USTAR professor teaching with Mark Van Langeveld and Roger Altizer in the Master Games Studio, a new interdisciplinary graduate program offered jointly by the departments of film and computer science. In the program, students design and build computer games—one of the fastest growing fields in digital media.

FYI News: Describe your teaching and research.

Craig Caldwell: I teach animation courses in the film department and arts courses for our new Master Games Studio graduate program. My research is in how digital media is made—the production processes—which offers a variety of opportunities for collaboration.

FYI: What attracted you to the U?

Caldwell: I'm familiar with the U's strong reputation in computer science visualization, and its film department is growing rapidly with strong ties to the Sundance Film Festival. The digital media industry has become such an expansive industry worldwide that it's easy to forget that the field of computer graphics first got its start right here in the University's computer science department—and the spirit of investigation and entrepreneurship is still vibrant.

FYI: What do you most enjoy about teaching?
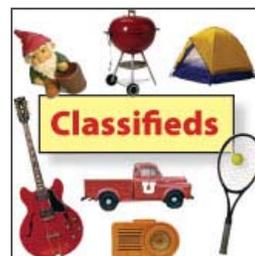
Caldwell: That sense of discovery from the students. It's exciting when students acquire new skills and I can help connect those to potential career directions. The priority in my teaching is on learning first, and teaching second. This has made me a better teacher.

FYI: How did you become interested in computer games development?

Caldwell: I've worked at both Walt Disney Feature Animation and Electronic Arts. My interest is in how technology changes the scale of what can be created in the arts. In animation we add the element of movement and narrative; with games it is the element of interactivity as the audience shifts from a passive role to a more active role.

Caldwell: **FYI: What do you like about living in Utah?**

Caldwell: The mountains and deserts. It is like one big sculpture.

FYI: What books are on your bedside table?

Caldwell: Next to my bedside table is an iPad. So I read technical manuals, view animations, play games, read short stories—all in the same evening. I find narratives utilizing different perspectives on human behavior from other countries fascinating.

FYI: If you could meet any notable person who would it be?

Caldwell: I actually met him last year—Ed Catmull, the president of Pixar. He is a U of U graduate and was raised in Salt Lake City. He has his Ph.D. in computer science, but he also speaks to the importance of drawing in learning to see. He is in demand for his clarity of vision—of not resting on his laurels and repeating his successes.

FYI: What's the best advice you ever got?

Caldwell: With so many different interests I sometimes spread myself too thin. My graduate instructor said that when you don't know what direction to turn, you need to determine what is most important. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing choice but when you are unsure which way to turn, check your values and find what is 51 percent more important—that is where you want to devote your energies.

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