

## Digital Narratives: The “Literary” in the Age of the Digital

ATEC 6V81

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M 7:00-9:45 ATEC 1.104

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Office Number: 1.502

Office Hours: TR1:30-2:30

### Course Description:

We are in a culture moment which, for lack of a better term, I would describe as being in a “change-over.” That is, we are slowly but surely moving from storytelling structures which are supported by analog means (book and film) to narratives which are supported by digital ones (digital games, web fiction, distributed narratives). By reading a variety of literary and critical texts we will seek to understand what it means to be in this change, to understand both what possibilities these new narrative forms open up and which ones they foreclose. For example: Are there new paradigms of knowledge formation and literary work enabled by digitally networked structures? What should we make of the difference between non-linear and linear narratives? Does it even make sense to talk of non-linear narratives? What should we make of the increasingly short time allowed these narratives? Are images supplanting words, or are images still relegated to the regime of text?

### Required Texts:

(all texts are available at Off-Campus Books)

*Cybertext: Perspectives in Ergodic Literature*, Espen Aarseth ISBN 0801855799

*Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin ISBN 0262522799

*Avatars of Story*, Marie-Laure Ryan, ISBN 0816646864

*First Person, New Media as Story Performance and Game* ISBN 0262731754

*My Mother Was a Computer*, N. Katherine Hayles, ISBN 0226321487

*House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski, ISBN 0375703764

*Patchwork Girl*, Shelly Jackson, Eastgate Systems ISBN 1884511236

*Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov ISBN 0679727299

There will be several readings available online or via eReserve, which you will need to print out and bring to class.

In addition you will need to obtain a copy of *Grand Theft Auto*, *San Andreas* on your own. This game is widely available and will play on most platforms.

### Course Requirements:

The primary requirement for this course is class participation. To do well in this course you will need to come to class having done the reading for the week prepared to discuss the text at hand. I realize that the reading load for this class is heavy at times, however, we are going to be covering some complex and complicated issues and in order for the class discussion to proceed and for everyone to benefit the most from our time in class it is necessary for every student to have a shared basis from which class discussions can proceed.

Thus for every class it is your responsibility to come to class not only having done the reading, but to have spent time considering the issues that each text raises, ready to engage in a lively discussion about the questions at hand. Missing more than one class can lead to a lower grade. In addition to attendance and participation the following are required for this class.

**Participating in the class blog:** There is a website for this class (see below). Every week you will need to compose a substantial post, in the form of a comment, to the class site. This gives you a chance to comment on the reading before we get to class, to see what others have made of the reading, and provides me with some feedback about how the class has approached the material. I will often use this online forum as a place from which to begin our in class discussion. Thus, you should post your comment *no later than midnight on the Saturday before class*, and plan on visiting the website sometime on Sunday to look over what others have written. These posts need not be long essays but rather one or two paragraphs (300-400 words); they should give a sense of what you thought of the material and places where you would like to begin the discussion. Think of these as questions rather than a thesis.

**Midterm:** There will be a short take-home midterm for this class (1500-1800 words) that will ask you to reformulate and synthesize readings from the first half of the semester.

**Final Project:** I want this assignment to be productive for each of you not just in terms of the class, but also to relate to your overall work as an academic. So, depending on your the degree program in which you are enrolled, and your own goals you can choose from one of two final projects. I will cover these in more detail in class, but here is a rough sketch. After the midterm you will need to give me a one-two page summary of what direction your project is taking so that I can provide feedback. (Note: If you are in the Ph.D. program you will need to do the traditional scholarly essay.)

- A “traditional” scholarly essay. You can write an academic essay that addresses any of the issues that we have covered in class. What I will accept here in terms of topic is fairly broad, you just need to submit an outline to me for feedback after the midterm. (4500-5000 words)
- Produce a creative work. Compose a digital narrative in the spirit of those we have read in class. What I will accept here is fairly broad, I just need a clear sense of the project after the midterm. However, in addition to the work you will need to write process notes for your work. This is not an artist statement but rather a shorter version of option #1, placing the choices you made in creation of the work in conversation with the class readings (2000-2500 words). (Note: If you choose this option the work needs to be original creative work for this class.)

### **Course Website:**

The course website for this class can be found at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com/arche>>. You should get in the habit of checking this regularly as I will post suggestions and thoughts about the readings here, as well as links to other things that might interest the class. The syllabus can be found here as well, and any changes to the syllabus will be posted here. If you forget the web address you can always find it from <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>, an easier url to remember.

### **How to Reach Me:**

The best way to reach me is by email <dparry@utdallas.edu> or you can find me online at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>. I check email frequently throughout the day. If you email me and do not receive a response within 48 hours (usually I will get back to you within a day), please feel free to email me again (I might not have received your first one) and give me a reminder. I promise not to consider this harassing.

My office hours are 1:30-2:30 on Tuesday and Thursday. I am always happy to meet with graduate students, so if these times do not work please email me and we can find another time. My office is ATEC 1.502.

## **Literary New Media** (Schedule of Reading)

### **Week One:** Monday, Jan. 7th

Class Introduction and Overview

### **Week Two:** Monday, Jan. 14th

*KateModern* <<http://bebo.com/katemodern>>

Other Texts to Consider:

*Lonely Girl 15* (YouTube)

*Agent to the Stars*, John Scalzi <<http://www.scalzi.com/agent/>>

*Belle de Jour*, <<http://belledejour-uk.blogspot.com/>>

*Online Caroline* <<http://onlinecaroline.com>>

### **Week Three:** Monday, Jan. 28th

*Cybertexts: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Espen Aarseth

Other Texts to Consider:

*Hypertext 3.0*, Landow

*Hyper/Text/Theory*, Landow et. all

*The Gutenberg Elegies*, Sven Birkets

*The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes

### **Week Four:** Monday, Feb. 4th

*Avatars of Story*, Marie-Laure Ryan

Other Texts to Consider:

*Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet Murray

*Narrative as Virtual Reality*, Marie-Laure Ryan

*Narrative Discourse an Essay in Method*, Gerard Genette

### **Week Five:** Monday, Feb. 11th

*Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov

Other Texts to Consider:

*Pale Fire*, Vladimir Nabokov

*Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale

*Licensing Entertainment*, William Warner

*Dictionary of the Khazars*, Milorad Pavic

*Ficciones*, Jorge Luis Borges

### **Week Six:** Monday, Feb. 18th

"The Book to Come," & "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Jacques Derrida

Other Texts to Consider:

"The End of Books" Robert Coover

*Avatars of the Word*, James O' Donnell

*Thinking Otherwise*, David Gunkel

*What is an Author*, Michel Foucault

### **Week Seven:** Monday, Feb. 25th

*Remediation*, Bolter & Grusin

Other Texts to Consider:

*The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich

*Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Freidrich Kittler

*Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong

**\*Midterms Will Be Distributed\***

### **Week Eight:** Monday, March 3rd

*Patchwork Girl*, Shelly Jackson

Other Texts to Consider:

*afternoon, a story* Michael Joyce

*Victory Garden*, Stuart Moulthrop

*Electronic Literature Collection* (available online <<http://collection.eliterature.org/>>)

**\*Midterms Due\***

### **Week Nine:** Monday, March 17th

*House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski

Other Texts to Consider:

*They Shall Know Our Velocity*, Dave Eggers

*The Gum Thief*, Douglas Copeland

**Week Ten: Monday, March 24th**

*Inanimate Alice*

Other Texts to Consider:

*Broken Saints* <<http://brokensaints.com/>>

**Week Eleven: Monday, March 31st**

*My Mother was a Computer*, Katherine Hayles

Other Texts to Consider:

*Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Bernard Stiegler

*Echographies*, Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler

*Mass Mediauras*, Samuel Weber

***Final Project Proposals Due***

**Week Twelve: Monday, April 7th**

*First Person*, Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan

Other Texts to Consider:

*Gamer Theory*, Mackenzie Wark

*Rules of Play*, Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman

**Week Thirteen: Monday, April 14th**

*Grand Theft Auto*

Other Texts to Consider:

*The Meaning and Culture of Grand Theft Auto*, Nate Garrelts et. all

*Unit Operations*, Ian Bogost

*Persuasive Games*, Ian Bogost

**Week Fourteen: Monday, April 21st**

*Super Columbine RPG!*

**Week Fifteen: Monday, April 28th**

Alternative Reality Games:

***Finals Due May 5th***