

Story-Telling for New Media

ATEC 4346

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TR 10:00-11:15 ATEC 1.104

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Office Number: 1.502

Office Hours: TR11:30-12:30

Course Description:

With the rise of digital literacy, what was once marginal “geek” culture has come to dominate the social landscape. While storytelling used to take place via a relatively narrow set of channels, born digital narratives are now opening up new structural possibilities (hypertext, blog fiction, YouTube shows, digital games). Criticism has ranged from outright dismissal (“nothing has changed”) to hyperbolic (“nothing will ever be the same”). Regardless of where one takes up position along this spectrum, the now ubiquitous potential of the digital text raises two crucial questions: What/How much changes in the digital text? And perhaps more importantly, how does this move to the digital text affect us as readers? In class we will ask these questions (along with a host of others) of a variety of narrative forms. In order to adequately address these issues, we will read creative works from a variety of genres (novels, hypertext, digital games, web fiction), while supplementing our approach through the reading of critical texts.

Required Texts:

The following are available at the Off-Campus Books.

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

Patchwork Girl, Shelly Jackson, Eastgate Systems ISBN 1884511236

Not available at bookstore (i.e. you will need to obtain on your own).

Grand Theft Auto, San Andreas (Rockstar)

In addition there will be texts available online or via eReserve, which you will need to print out and bring to class.

Course Website:

The course website for this class can be found at <http://www.outsidethetext.com/trace>. 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.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (25%): This is a crucial part of class. Students are expected to come to class on time, prepared, having completed the assigned reading and writing, and ready to contribute their thoughts to class discussions, to listen seriously and respectfully to the thoughts of others, and to participate in all in-class group work and writing activities. I

strongly urge you to attend every class, as most of the work done in class is necessary for successful completion of the course. Only three absences are permitted, and these should be used for illness or emergencies (i.e. this does not mean three absences plus absences for illness etc.). Missing more than three classes will affect your grade. More than five absences will result in failing the course. If you need to miss class for religious reasons, please speak to me ahead of time. Absences for religious purposes do not count against the permitted number (as long as prior notification is given). Lateness is also unacceptable; if you arrive late to class you will be marked as absent.

“Remediate” Projects (20%): Twice, once for the early short stories and once for *Patchwork Girl*, you will work in groups to re-interpret in a different form the works we have discussed. That is you will be asked to take these works and use a different digital presentation format to present them. More information on these projects will be given in class.

Class Wiki (25%): One of the central tenets of this class is that contrary to our assumptions about writing, authorship is actually a collective process not an individual endeavor. (While I would make this argument for older narrative forms, it is certainly true of contemporary digital networked media.) Thus, one of the requirements of this course is to not only understand this new collaborative literacy, but to partake in it as well. We will be producing a class wiki which covers the content of this course. The entire class will be responsible for contributing to this project. At times this will entail working in groups, at times on your own, but always with a sense of producing an overall collaborative piece. Each of you will be required to contribute new entries as well as serve as an editor for the work of others. Your grade for this project will be partially determined by your individual effort and partly on the overall quality of the site. I will cover the details in class, but think of this as a Wikipedia with a critical perspective on digital narrative.

Final Project (30%): You will have a choice of producing a critical or creative piece for your final project. This will entail producing several drafts of your chosen project throughout the second half of the semester. Critical projects will need to be 8-10 pages, while creative ones will need to be significant digital narratives (produced for this class) accompanied by process notes that help to contextualize your work in terms of the issues we have discussed in class. More details of this assignment will be given after midterm.

Grading: As per the undergraduate catalog students will be graded on a range of A-F.

A Note on Technology:

Because at its core this class is about how technology changes narrative and more broadly our sense of self and culture, we will necessarily engage with a range of computer tools and web based applications. You do not need any prior skill, however, merely a willingness to engage and learn. I am more than willing to take extra time; all you need to do is ask.

A majority of the tools we will be using in class are web-based, thus you will not need any special software (except for the final weeks of class when we will be covering Digital Games). You do however need an up-to-date version of Firefox (a free web browser) as well as current versions of various plugins (for example flash, and a video player). Don't worry though, we

will cover this in class. You should have an email address that you check regularly for this class.

One further note about technology. As much as technology makes life easier, at times it can also be difficult (computer crashes, deleted work, unavailable internet connections, etc). Plan accordingly: “the computer ate my homework” or “the internet was down” are not reasons to forgo doing the assigned work. It is in your best interest to leave extra time, especially at first, to ensure that technology does not get in the way of your class work.

How to Reach Me:

The best way to reach me though 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 11:30-12:30 on Tuesday and Thursday. My office is ATEC 1.502.

A Final Note:

Should any aspect of class confuse/concern/trouble you, or if you have questions about any of this, please see me.

Schedule of Readings

Week One

Tuesday, January 13

Class Introduction

Thursday, January 15

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

Week Two

Tuesday, January 20

"Murders in the Rue Morgue," Edgar Allen Poe

"A Medieval Romance," Mark Twain

Thursday, January 22

"Deathbird Stories," Harlan Ellison

"Garden of Forking Paths," Jorge Luis Borges

Week Three

Tuesday, January 27

"Nonlinearity and Literary Theory," Espen Aarseth (eReserve)

Thursday, January 29

"The Pleasure of Immersion and Interaction" Douglas and Hargadon (*First Person*)

Week Four

Tuesday, February 3

Workshop

Thursday, February 5

Remix Presentations

Week Five

Tuesday, February 10

Remediation (eReserve)

Tuesday, February 12

Patchwork Girl

Week Six

Tuesday, February 17

Patchwork Girl

Tuesday, February 19

Patchwork Girl

Week Seven

Tuesday, February 24

Firstworld <<http://www.underlandpress.com/>>

Plan B <<http://www.dynamicobjects.com/d2r/planb/>>

Thursday, February 26

A Million Little Penguins

Flight Paths

Week Eight

Tuesday, March 3

Implementation <<http://nickm.com/implementation/>>

Bloomsday <http://www.bogost.com/blog/bloomsday_on_twitter.shtml>

Thursday, March 5

We Tell Stories <<http://wetellstories.co.uk/>>

217 Babel <<http://www.217babel.com/>>

Week Nine

Tuesday, March 10

Inanimate Alice

Breathing Wall

Thursday, March 12

Late Fragment (film)

—Spring Break—

Week Ten

Tuesday, March 24

"Game Design as Narrative Architecture" Henry Jenkins (*First Person*)

"Towards Computer Game Studies" Markku Eselinen (*First Person*)

Thursday, March 26

"Narrative, Interactivity, Play and Games" Eric Zimmerman (*First Person*)

"From Work to Play" Stuart Moulthrop (*First Person*)

Week Eleven

Tuesday, March 31

Grand Theft Auto

Thursday, April 2

Grand Theft Auto

Week Twelve

Tuesday, April 7

"Representation, Enaction, and the Ethics of Simulation," Simon Penny (*First Person*)

"Playing the Bad Guy," Shira Chess (eReserve)

Thursday, April 9

ARGs

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, April 14

ARGS

Thursday, April 16

Playing Columbine

Week Fourteen

Tuesday, April 21

Student Projects

Thursday, April 23

Student Projects

Week Fifteen

Tuesday, April 28

Student Projects

Thursday, April 30

Student Projects