

**Syllabus LMC 4720 Interactive Narrative / LMC 6317 Interactive Fiction  
FALL 2020  
M/W 3:30 - 4:45 PM  
Remote via BlueJeans**

Professor Janet H. Murray  
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Office Hours Monday/ Wednesday 5 - 5:30 PM BlueJeans after class or by appointment

Game Resources are available online through the Digital Integrative Liberal Arts Center but copies are limited

The official site for this course is the joint Canvas site for 6317/4720  
Announcements and revisions to schedules will be made through Canvas

**Banner Blurb for 2020**

This course will be taught remotely. It is a workshop course with frequent small projects and one large project at end of semester. Format includes frequent in-class exercises and presentations. The technical platform is Twine and there is also a requirement for a narrated video capture of your final project. The final project will be an individually authored story that is part of a consistent story world created with teammates. In addition to usual topics about story structure and interaction design, there will be 2 optional themes for this semester: Pickrick Restaurant Civil Rights Confrontation of 1964-5 and COVID-19 sim games. There is no need to be on-campus to take this course. If you have any questions or just want to say hello, you are encouraged to contact the instructor.

**Course Prerequisites (4720)**

- ENGL 1102
- LMC 2100 or LMC 2700 or LMC 2800
- CS 1322 or CS 1331

**Course Prerequisites for LMC 4720 and 6317**

- Familiarity with or ability to quickly master Twine 1.x or a similar rapid prototyping environment of your choice is essential. **If you cannot meet this requirement you should not take this course.**
- Knowledge of CSS and JavaScript and Unity will be helpful.

**Core Area/Attributes**

- Humanities/Fine Arts/Ethics

**Course Description**

The larger objective of this course is to contribute to the expansion of human expressive powers by creating and critiquing artifacts that exploit the affordances of the emerging digital medium for the purposes of the ancient human practice of storytelling. The course will survey multiple strategies for the representation of narrative in interactive, digital formats. It will present a structured approach for analyzing and creating coherent interactive storytelling systems that require the participation of one or more interactors. The course will be conducted through instructor presentations and active discussions, student oral reports, in-class discussion of students' written analytical and creative assignments, and in-class group workshop projects. Students will be responsible for multiple prototypes and design documents, and a substantial final project in the form of a digital interactive narrative.

**Programmatic Learning Outcomes**

- Students can create digital artifacts with an awareness of media traditions, audience, and context.
- Students can appreciate and evaluate future trends in the development of digital media

**Attendance Policy for Remote Classes**

Please let me know if you have any trouble attending synchronous classes or participating with video. This is a workshop class so most of the learning takes place by showing your work and receiving critiques, critiquing the work of others, and collaborating in real time on group exercises. If you have bandwidth or other barriers to participation let me know as soon as possible.

### **What to do if you fall behind**

Everybody drops the ball sometimes, and students often find themselves unable to keep up due to an illness or family emergency. If this happens to you, come and see me about it as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements for work that has been missed, and continue coming to class even if you have not handed in the assignment for the week.

### **Sharing of work**

Participation in the course implies permission for sharing work with others in the class and with future students if your work is judged to be a good example. If you are not comfortable with this, please let me know. Unless I am informed by you in writing (email) that you do not want your work shared with others in the context of current and future versions of this course, I will assume that it is available.

### **Adapts Disability Services Program**

Students with disabilities at Georgia Institute of Technology will find programs designated to coordinate academic accommodations and promote access to all phases of university life. Such programming is coordinated through the ADAPTS-Disability Services.

The ADAPTS-Disability Services Program is a functional part of the Office of the Dean of Students. ADAPTS-Disability Services Program personnel oversee and coordinate programs to ensure accessibility to students with disabilities on an individual basis. The Georgia Institute of Technology strives to provide equal access to a college education as well as support to students with disabilities in their experience in the university community. During the COVID emergency they should be able to provide services via teleconference:

<https://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/> 404-894-2563 (V) 404-894-1664 (TDD)

### **Honor code statement**

The members of the Georgia Tech community believe the fundamental objective of the Institute is to provide the Students with a high quality education while developing in them a sense of ethics and social responsibility. We believe that trust is an integral part of the learning process and that self-discipline is necessary in this pursuit. We also believe that any instance of dishonesty hurts the entire community. It is with this in mind that we have set forth a Student Academic Honor Code at Georgia Tech. You can find the Georgia Tech Honor Code at this address:

<http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>

### **Some Special Applications of the Honor Code to Work in this Course**

Students may use computer code, story elements, and images produced by others as part of their work in fulfillment of assignments for this course, if (a) they clearly identify and credit the source of any work not original to them and (b) they point to a substantial part of the assignment that is their own original creation and is equivalent in creativity and effort to the work of others who have not included borrowed elements.

In collaborative projects, students should clearly identify who is responsible for each element of the design and implementation. Credits should be assigned by mutual agreement and any dispute about crediting should be brought to the attention of the instructors as soon as possible in the process. Any collaborations beyond the group work explicitly assigned in class must be approved by the instructor in advance.

### **Communications Center**

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons 447. Trained professional and peer tutors help undergraduate and graduate students with written and oral presentations. Take advantage of this resource in preparing your assignments. They are available for online consultations:

<http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu/make-appointment>

### **Respectful Social Behavior**

There is zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment on any basis, including but not limited to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. Georgia Tech is committed to providing its staff, faculty, and students the opportunity to pursue excellence in their academic and professional endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. Georgia Tech's full anti-harassment policy is online here: <http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/anti-harassment-policy>. Violation of these expectations will result in appropriate penalties, including but not limited to reduction of grade, rescinding of lab access, or disciplinary action.

### **Coping with our High-Stress Culture ... and a Global Pandemic and Political Crisis!**

The known stresses of academic life can intensify other sources of personal or societal anxiety, and we all get overwhelmed at times. In Fall 2020 we are all under stress because of the pandemic and the highly contested November election. Even though our workload may be high, it is important to take time to look after ourselves and one another. The beginning of the semester is a good time to think about pacing your work so you don't have to pull all-nighters and you don't get into a cycle of lack of sleep, loss of perspective, and accelerating anxiety. Try to set aside some regular time to escape to something you enjoy for its own sake. Many people find yoga and meditation helpful to getting perspective on life. We live in a golden age of TV drama, and I am personally a firm believer in the healing power of narrative which can simultaneously distance us from our everyday world and reveal to us what we most deeply love, hate, and long for. So go binge-watch something great – and see if you can get a friend to watch with you (even if remotely) or to talk with you about it. Try to find a way to get outside exercise regularly while wearing a mask and avoiding indoor crowds that will increase your risk of infection.

If you are experiencing anxiety or depression or a medical, personal, or family crisis, or if you just feel overwhelmed and unable to cope with the many pressures of being a student at Tech or a human being on this planet at this moment in time, please do not hesitate to reach out for help. Everybody needs help sometimes, and college and graduate school years are often a personally challenging time in ways that can feel frightening and isolating. You are not alone, and many of us – including me -- are available to be sympathetic listeners and to share our own strategies for coping with stressful situations. In addition, professional counselors and medical practitioners have expertise that can be very helpful. The Dean of Students Office has a list of services here: <http://studentlife.gatech.edu/content/services>.

### **COVID-19 ADAPTATIONS**

I want this course to provide you with the opportunity to be create and do good work that can contribute to your portfolio, enlarge your thinking, and increase your skills. I also want it to be an enjoyable experience in which the work is intrinsically pleasurable. That is usually the case with this course, but we may have to work a little harder to make it fun while meeting remotely. I have some ideas I will be trying out and I will need feedback from you all and suggestions to enhance the experience and make sure that everyone feels present and engaged. It's possible that the workload will also have to be adjusted, and I will be open to suggestions about that as well.

## Requirements and Grading

This is a workshop course, focused on design insights that can be immediately applied to the creation of interactive narratives. There are 4 short analytical assignments requiring responses to games, videos, and TV shows, and 4 rapid and brief prototypes of interactive narratives, as well as 1 final project which is a substantial, playable individually-created story-game that is also part of a shared Storyworld developed in groups of 4 or 5.

- 10% class participation. This includes active involvement in in-class discussions and design exercises, coherent presentation of assignments when called on in class, productive contribution to group projects, constructive critical responses to other students' creative and analytical work, and receptivity to other students' thoughtful critiques of your own work.
- 30% for Rapid Interactive Prototype assignments
  - **Grad students:** do **all 4** prototypes (they will be graded on a 10 point scale but count for 7.5 points each in your final grade calculation)
  - **Undergrads:** do **any 3 of the four** prototypes (10 points each) and for the one you skip, substitute the 2-point "Alternate Assignment" for that week
- 30% for analytical diagrams in response to media reading/viewing/playing assignments
  - **Grad students:** do **all 4** analytical diagrams (they will be graded on a 10 point scale but count for 7.5 points each in your final grade calculation)
  - **Undergrads:** do **any 3 of the four** diagrams (10 points each) and for the one you skip, substitute the 2-point "Alternate Assignment" for that week
- 30% Final Project – A complete, individually created story/game that is also part of a larger storyworld created collectively by 4-5 students:
  - Group /Individual Planning Documents 5%
  - Mockup and response to user testing 5%
  - Final oral / slide presentation 5%
  - Working final project 10%
  - Video documentation 5%.
- Bonus Credit: Helpfulness to other students (technical help, artistic contribution, etc.) up to 5pts bonus.
- **All work is due by noon of the first meeting day of the week they are due and students should always be prepared to discuss their work in class, including the weeks on which as an UG you have only handed in a brief written statement or conceptual design.**
- **Late submissions without prior excuse will be penalized by 1 point off .**

**Default Authoring Environment for rapid prototypes:** Twine – tutorials available on [twinery.org](http://twinery.org). **You are responsible for learning it on your own to the level required to fulfill assignments.** (alternate platforms such as Unity may be acceptable in some cases with prior permission from instructor, but they will not be supported; Twine will be supported by office hours of a GRA from DILAC)

## Required Texts

- Pickrick Restaurant Sources (see Canvas for details)
- Propp, V., *Morphology of the Folktale* 1928, Austin: University of Texas Press. (Intro to Second Edition and Chapter II, on Canvas)
- Jenkins, Henry, "Transmedia Storytelling 101," Confessions of an Aca-Fan, March 22, 2007 [http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia\\_storytelling\\_101.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html)

## Required Videos:

- "Bowling," *Malcolm in the Middle*, Season 2, Episode 20 (2001) Episode available streaming from Netflix
- "Remedial Chaos Theory" *Community* Season 3 Episode 4 (2011) episode available streaming from Hulu

## For Storyworld Assignment

**EITHER** 1 TV episode and 1 Telltale game episode from the same season of **EITHER** of the following:- feel free to fast forward through violent or revoltingly gory scenes and substitutions accepted with prior approval of the instructor) *Game of Thrones* **OR** *Walking Dead*.

Default game choice: *Game of Thrones: Fire from Ice* (2014) which is available in GAL.

**OR** any alternate pairing of a transmedia pair in which one item is a playable game

**Disturbing Content Warning – If you choose one of the Telltale storyworlds**, feel free to fast forward through violent or revoltingly gory or prurient scenes; and substitutions of other storyworld paired media examples accepted with prior approval of the instructor

COVID Games

<https://indiecadejammingthecurve.iac.gatech.edu/>

### Recommended Temporal Stories

Harold Ramis (writer), *Groundhog Day*. Feature Film, Columbia Pictures, 1993.

Natasha Lyonne, *Russian Doll* Netflix TV Series, 2019.

### Recommended Storygames

- Leibling, D., et al. (1979). *Zork*, available on line at [http://textadventures.co.uk/games/view/5zyoqrsugeopel3ffhz\\_vq/zork](http://textadventures.co.uk/games/view/5zyoqrsugeopel3ffhz_vq/zork)
- Weizenbaum, Joseph (1966). Eliza, (paper in Resources, good emulation of original here: <http://www.masswerk.at/elizabot/eliza.html>)
- Pope, Lucas. *Papers Please* (2013) (available in Game Lab)
- Chen, Jenova, *Journey* (2012) ThatGameCompany (available in Game Lab)
- Pedercini, Paolo and Jim Munroe. *Unmanned* (2012) Molleindustria <http://unmanned.molleindustria.org/>
- Anna Anthropy, *Dys4ria* (2012) (Play online)
- Pedercini, Paolo. "Everyday the Same Dream" (2009) (Play on line)
- The Fullbright Company, *Gone Home* (2013), Available through DILAC
- Inkle Studios, *80 Days* (2014) plus Vimeo: Meg Jayanth "Unfair Game" (2015) <https://vimeo.com/149286981>
- Sam Barlow, *Her Story* (2015)
- *Florence* (2018)
- Sam Barlow, *Telling Lies* (2019)

### Recommended "Interactive Journalism" Examples (includes some VR)

- OpenDocs Project at MIT Media Lab: <http://opendoclab.mit.edu/interactivejournalism/>

### Additional Recommended Texts and Resources

Other relevant readings will be available on Canvass including pdfs of articles by Brenda Laurel, Mary-Laure Ryan, and David Herman. Web resources below:

- Campbell, Joseph (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces*. (excerpt) Novato, Calif., New World Library. Originally published 1949 (Part I – The Adventure of the Hero) (pdf on Canvas)
- Fernández-Vara, C. (2008). "Shaping player experience in adventure games: History of the adventure game interface." *Extending Experiences: Structure, Analysis and Design of Computer Game Player Experience*: 181-190.
- Murray, J.H., *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* updated MIT Press edition 2017, Chapters 3,4,5 (in pdf on Canvas)
- <http://emshort.wordpress.com/> Commentary on interactive storytelling by an inventive practitioner and very perceptive critic
- <http://inventingthemedium.com> Janet Murray's blog with a section on interactive narrative, including video of *Janet's Ted Talk* (1998) ; Janet's Future of StoryTelling (FoST 2015) video on Dramatic Agency <https://futureofstorytelling.org/video/janet-murray-dramatic-agency/>
- Some related videos: <http://futureofstorytelling.org/films/>
- Penlab Projects: <http://penlab.gatech.edu/projects/>



Schedule: Details of assignments are on Canvas.

	Dates (MW)	M	W
1	8/17, 8/19	Introduction: Syllabus Design Goals: Dramatic Agency Replay with variation for richer understanding	COVID GAME Sampling: <a href="https://indiecadejammingthecurve.iac.gatech.edu/">https://indiecadejammingthecurve.iac.gatech.edu/</a>
2	8/24, 8/26	Spatial Storytelling: Pickrick Restaurant Civil Rights Confrontations 1964-5	Spatial Storytelling In-class exercise
3	8/31, 9/2	Prototype #1 Spatial Twine Story	Prototype #1 Spatial Twine Story
4	---, 9/9W	----	Individual Conferences
5	9/14, 9/16	Temporal Story Structures: Malcolm in the Middle “Bowling”	Temporal Story Structures: Community “Remedial Chaos Theory”
6	9/21, 9/23	Prototype #2 Temporal Twine Story	Prototype #2 Temporal Twine Story
7	9/28, 9/30	Genre Story Structures - Substitution System (Propp)	Genre Story Structures - Substitution System (Propp)
8	10/5, 10/7	Prototype #3: Genre Substitution Structure Twine Story	Prototype #3: Genre Substitution Structure Twine Story
9	10/12, 10/14	Storyworld Components across Media	Storyworld Components across Media
10	10/19, 10/21	Prototype #4 Dialog/Character	<b>Due Before Class: Review of your Genre Group’s Characters for storyworld overlaps</b>  In class: Form Storyworld Teams  <b>Due by end of class: First Draft of Storyworld Documentation</b>
11	10/26, 10/28	<b>Due 10/26 DUE: Documentation for individual Stories</b>  On-going Revisions of Documentation for Shared Storyworlds	On-going Revisions Documentation for Shared Storyworlds and for individual Stories  In Class: Group meetings, with conferences with Janet in groups and individually throughout the week

		In Class: Group meetings, with conferences with Janet in groups and individually throughout the week	<b>Due End of Week:</b> Revised Documentation of Storyworld and Individual Stories
12	11/2, 11/4	Build Final Project (open lab meetings during class time) (individual conferences available)	Build Final Project (open lab meetings during class time) (individual conferences available)
13	11/9, 11/11	<b>Due: Post link to testable version of your final project</b> User Testing in groups / Revision of Final Project	User Testing in and (if time) across groups / Revision of Final Project
14	11/16, 11/18	Final Project Presentations	Final Project Presentations
15	11/23M	Final Project Demo Videos	