**LMC 6317 Interactive Fiction (and Narrative) Version 3 January 17 2024**

**Janet H. Murray**

**M W 3:30-4:45**

**Skiles 357**

*Office:* TSRB 320A

*Office hours (in Skiles 357 or 318): Wednesdays* 4:45-5:45 or by appointment in person or on Teams

Contact me on Teams with questions about assignments or to make an appointment.

*DILAC GRA (for access to VR, Games, etc.):* Supratim Pait spait3@gatech.edu

Assignments and updated syllabus will be available on Canvas. All requirements must be handed in on the appropriate Canvas page no later than 3pm on due date.

**Course Prerequisites**

* Familiarity with or ability to quickly master Twine 2.0 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 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 blend theory and practice, analyzing artifacts and identifying emerging structures and conventions of digital narrative design, particularly those that allow us to capture human experience with greater complexity.

Multiple preliminary interactive digital narrative projects will form a process of iterative design leading to the final complete and functional interactive digital narrative project. The final project will be documented in a slide talk in the final weeks and in a required project video.

**Multi-year Sharing of Assignment Responses**

The collaborative nature of the course requires students to hand in all assignments to a shared webpage. It is assumed that you are giving permission to use your assignment responses with attribution to you in future iterations of the course as exemplary samples, just as this course uses selective works of previous students. If you do not want to participate in this multi-year sharing, you can opt out by sending an explicit email to the instructor refusing permission.

**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

**Requirements and Grading**

Interactive Narrative Project – total 60 points

Milestone 1: 10 points

Milestone 2: 10 points

Milestone 3 (user testing): 10 points

Final Deliverables: 15points for project, 15points for slide, poster, and video documentation

IDN Design Theory Assignments: 5 short posts of 100-200 words (6 pts each) offering definition of a design concept for IDN in your own words illustrated by a highly specific example drawn from an IDN or related media artifact/experience. Best cases will contrast your example with an example from the reading, or will offer multiple examples of a new term of your own proposing. 30 points

You are expected to do the reading/viewing and critical thinking for all the critique-focused weeks. In weeks you do not do the written assignment, you should come to class with a design concept and example in mind which you will be ready to talk about.

In-class exercises and general preparedness and participation 10 points. Class attendance and active participation is an important part of the course.

**Required Readings** will be supplied on Canvas under Files or by weblink

Some **viewing** assignments will require paid streaming services –arrangements can be made to view in DILAC on request

**Games** and **interactive digital narratives** in various formats will be available in DILAC. You may substitute gameplay videos for interaction for some assignments, with permission of instructor.

**Preliminary Schedule**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Dates |  | Texts | IDNs and Harbingers | Strategies and Concepts |
| 1 | Jan 8, 10 | Overview, refine syllabus | Murray HoH and articles  J.Murray “Research into IDN” in Required Reading | Reliving Last Night (student masters project) <https://pedromarinyo.github.io/relivingLastNight/>  Art Show (student non-final project)  Student projects from other years  <https://gatech.instructure.com/courses/368494/pages/sampler-of-student-projects-from-previous-versions-of-this-course-and-related-gt-research>  including some in Timeline <https://penlab.gatech.edu/2021/10/22/a-long-journey/> | Digital Affordances. Dramatic Agency, Active Creation of Belief, Segmentation, Replay |
| 2 | [MLK Day]1/ 17 | Overview, Preliminary story ideas | Murray HoH  Chapter 3, 5  Koenitz Part 1 | See Week 2 Assignment on Canvas  To review in class:  Florence  To discuss in class  Zork  Coming Home | Digital Affordances. Dramatic Agency, Active Creation of Belief, Segmentation, Replay  Room Structure, Inventory, “Environmental Storytelling,” Backstory in objects, Exploration, Locking/unlocking, |
| 3 | 1/22, 1/24 | Scenario with variation | Polygon  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWEVGbVoxQ4>  HoH Chapter 6 (and update) Transformation | Malcolm in the Middle (on Netflix – “Bowling” episode)  Overboard  <https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=2508565180> (on Nintendo Switch in DILAC) | Parameters, Scenario, Parallelism and Contrast, Milestone events, Sequencing of actions, Time and place as structure |
| 4 | 1/29, 1/31 | Narrative Immersion | HoH Chapter 4 (and update)  Nonny de la Peña  Ted Talk Berlin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSc4PShv11k>  Recommended  Marie-Laure Ryan Immersion vs. Interactivity:Virtual Reality and Literary Theory <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/19/article/32231?casa_token=1tH9yAlnH00AAAAA:tICKz4mHWP-v2psJoecPJ276MGPXt7eWK1qntm0VjGNe5vNU3TDDcPsoRomyB99oRYj8FUqFWw>  Expert Writers on  Narrative in Games (in Req Reading)  Narrative Immersion and Attention (in Req Reading) | Nonny de la Peña, *Out of Exile, Daniel’s Story* VR (in DILAC)  Recommended  Online videos of other de la Peña projects: Hunger in LA and Across the Line  For reference, think of an immersive non-interactive unisequential fiction like  *Lord of the Rings* books or movies, *Friends* TV series, *Succession* TV series … whatever you find deeply immersive | Immersion principles, novelty versus innovation, conventions and genres  Establishing boundaries  Encyclopedic design strategies  Active Creation of Belief |
| 5 | 2/5, 2/7 | Complexity, Narrative Structure | Koenitz – Part 3, 4  Recommended:  Mittell – Narrative Complexity  Gasque, Tang, Rittenhouse, Murray, article on Telling Lies and Obra Din (in Rec Reading)  Koenitz Part 3  Koenitz Part 4 | *Everything, Everywhere, all at Once*  *Ayiti: The Cost of Life* <https://www.cdgr.ucsb.edu/database/game/666>  Discuss in class:  *Telling Lies*  *Return of the Obra Din*  *Papers Please* | Multiple causes, Multiple outcomes, Multiple POVs, Dramatic compression, Meaningful versus Empty Variation |
| 6 | 2/12, 2/14 | PROJECT MILESTONE 1 | See assignment | Be prepared to present |  |
| 7 | 2/19, 2/21 | Story Morphemes, Archetypal Structures, | Tale of Two Boyfriends  Recommended  Joseph Campbell  Vladimir Propp  Story Logic | The Uber game <https://ig.ft.com/uber-game/>  Discuss in class:  The Sims | Abstracting the world as a simulation, simulations vs games vs stories, story elements as object classes, emergence, visualizing complex systems |
| 8 | 2/26, 2/28 | Simulations | The Function of Fiction is the Abstraction and Simulation of Social Experience (Oakley et al) in Rec Readings | Your choice of illustration | Moral Physics  Morpheme, Narrateme  Hero’s Journey  Fairy Tale motifs  Character design, Foils  Genre conventions |
| 9 | 3/4, 3/6 | INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES with JHM | INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES with JHM |  |  |
| 10 | 3/11,3/13 | PROJECT MILESTONE 2 | Be prepared to present |  |  |
|  |  | SPRING | BREAK |  |  |
| 11 | 3/25,3/27 | Chatbots | Alan Turing on Computing Machinery and Intelligence (1950), <https://redirect.cs.umbc.edu/courses/471/papers/turing.pdf>  Weizenbaum on Eliza  <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/365153.365168>  (use Georgia Tech Library credentials to access) | Eliza – playable recreation is here: https://www.masswerk.at/elizabot/eliza.html  Chat GPT – Dialog with it as a character  Recommended  Any Loebner Prize winner | Sentient being or literary character? Active creation of belief. |
| 12 | 4/1, 4/3 | Emerging Genres | Murray HoH Chapter 10  Or  Murray “How close are we to the holodeck?”  (will be posted) | Participatory Theater like Punchdrunk “Sleep No More” (see reviews on line)  Interactive TV on Netflix | Inventing conventions, genres, formats, platforms; establishing fourth wall; |
| 13 | 4/8,4/10 | Lab Week | Build your projects |  |  |
| 14 | 4/15, 4/17 | PROJECT MILESTONE 3 | User test your projects |  |  |
| 15 | 4/22 Last Class | FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS as “POSTERS” | Present your projects in format similar to conference “poster” |  |  |
|  | 4/29 5pm | Final Day to hand in revised design documentation including video and running project | Poster, Slide, and Video documentation ; final running code of the project, Project web page summarizing and linking to other items |  |  |

**More Assignment Details**

Please note that you will be downgraded for excessive typos and grammatical errors. It is your responsibility to find adequate proofreading before handing in assignments, including creative work. Since Twine does not have a built-in spelling or grammar correction module, be sure you have a process that ensures that your text is free of errors.

**6 Weekly Assignment (brief responses, no more than 100 words each) (6 posts x 5 points, may include up to 2 more for extra credit ). (PhD students assignment may vary. )**

Weekly posts on the assigned texts in the form of:

At least one design term from the readings with brief definition and example to illustrate, improve, or refute it

or

Description of 1 interaction convention from this week's artifacts that created the experience of dramatic agency (or failed to in a meaningful way)

or 100 words on any similar focused topic arising from the assignment that helps us build a design vocabulary for interactive narrative

**Project Details – see detailed assignment sheet on Canvas for**  [interactive digital narrative project development requirement  which comprises 60% of the grade:](https://gatech.instructure.com/courses/368494/pages/assignment-for-iterative-interactive-digital-narrative-project)

**Attendance Policy for this Course**

This course fuses theory and practice, and much 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 health vulnerabilities, bandwidth limitations, or any other barriers to participation , please let me know as soon as possible. Some meetings and office hours may be virtual via Teams if weather, scheduling, or health concerns make that advisable.

***This semester it is particularly important that you never come to class in person if you have any flu-like symptoms.***Please send me an email to let me know you will be out, and notify your teammates as necessary. All health-related absences will be excused, and arrangements will be made for virtual attendance if requested. Keep in mind that Covid-19 remains active, vaccination is the best protection, and it is wise to test yourself and keep masks on hand. There are also other serious respiratory illnesses circulating during the winter months that can be particularly dangerous for older people or people with other health challenges, so please bear that in mind for the welfare of others.

**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, please know that I want to work with you to help you complete the course in a way that fits your circumstance. Please contact me about it as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements for work that has been missed, and (assuming you have no flu symptoms or exposure) please continue coming to class even if you have not handed in the assignment for the week.

**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 group work explicitly assigned in class must be approved by the instructor in advance.

**Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions:**

Classes may not be recorded by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is pursuant to an accommodation granted by the Office of Disability services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Students may not record or share the materials or recordings, including screen capturing or automated bots, unless the instructor gives permission. Digitally proctored exams may require students to engage the video camera, but those recordings will not be shared with or disclosed to others without consent unless legally permitted.

* For classes where participation is voluntary, students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded.
* For classes requiring class participation, if students are identifiable by their names, facial images, voices, and/ or comments, written consent must be obtained before sharing the recording with persons outside of currently enrolled students in the class.

**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>

**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)

**Coping with our High-Stress Culture**

The known stresses of academic life can intensify other sources of personal or societal anxiety, and we all get overwhelmed at times. In Fall 2021 we are all under significant added stress from the uncertain course of the pandemic and the contentious political atmosphere surrounding university health policies. 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. Others find relaxation in daily exercise routines or regular craft practices. 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 novel-reading or watching a favorite movie or TV show can be a good resource. Please remember to make time to do the things that can refresh your spirit.

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: <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/services/mental-health-well-being> and

**Dean of Students Office, CARE Center, Counseling Center, Stamps Health Services, and the Student Center:**

The [**CARE Center**](https://care.gatech.edu/) and the [**Counseling Center**](https://counseling.gatech.edu/), Stamps Health Services, and the Dean of Students Officewill offer both in-person and virtual appointments. Student Center services and operations are available on the [**Student Center**](https://studentcenter.gatech.edu/) website. For more information on these and other student services, contact the Dean of Students or the [**Division of Student Life**](https://studentlife.gatech.edu/).