Multimedia Writing

CRN 86006 ENGL 303/001
Syllabus url: http://tinyurl.com/b3rfos7
TR 10-1115, Spring 2013, G06 Colson Hall

Professor Sandy Baldwin
charles.baldwin@mail.wvu.edu
Office: G20 Colson. Hours: TR 1130-1230

Required texts [abbr.]

- *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling: How to Captivate and Engage Audiences Across Multiple Platforms*, by Andrea Phillips [CGTS]
- *InDesign CS6: Visual QuickStart Guide*, by Sandee Cohen [ID6]
- *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, edited by Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin [3dP]

Course Catalog Description

Study of communication and design issues in multimedia composition focuses on communication, creative expression, persuasion, interactivity, and rhetorical principles. Practice in composing multimedia documents such as online publications, interactive literary works and tutorials.

Course Topics and Goals

The focus this semester is on the study and creation of large, pervasive, "platform-independent," transmedia narratives. You will learn about and create interlocking stories with interlocking technologies. Spaces collapse (real / virtual, narrative / lived). The guiding theme / overall topic for the narratives is *anonymity and identity*. Who are we online? Anyone? No one?

Each student will create a character and write set of stories about the character. These texts will be developed on a blog but will eventually be moved to other platforms. Students in groups will create trails and quests for their characters, using several technologies, and including scenarios for how and why the character inter-relate (are they friends? enemies? part of a band? part of a band of superheroes? on the run? the last people on earth? and so on). This is not a game.

As a class, you will create a framework for distributing the group scenarios, authoring as a class a single large narrative that includes multiple channels and media. You will define forms of audience participation and co-creation of content. In short, you will build a world with multiple viewpoints and many stories.

The class will collaborate with Professor Jerry Habarth's class from the CAC. Groups will be paired with groups from the CAC class. The short-term focus of the collaboration will be two nights of public performance and projection of class projects in early March. Towards the end of the course, you will collaborate on the final design and distribution of your project.

Requirements

- **Presentation**. You will sign up for one of the essays on the schedule for April and present it to the class. Presentations are a minimum of 10 minutes and must be delivered in a clear and professional

manner. Your presentation must be accompanied with a blog post (500 words minimum) which includes notes on the key/important take-aways in the essay and at least 3 provocative questions. Graded PASS/FAIL. 15% of overall.

- **Blogging**. On dates marked on the syllabus with an *, you write a blog post in response to the prompt on the schedule. Posts must be a minimum of 200 words to receive credit. All posts are graded PASS/ FAIL. 15% of overall.
- **Character Story**. You will make a second, "fictional" blog where you will create a character and a set of narratives about that character. The blog can simulate a "real" blog or can be explicitly a set of stories about the character. Prompts and dates for the character story are in the schedule. The story will fit within the group scenarios/quests, and within the overall class narrative. As part of this grade, each of you will schedule a meeting with Sandy during February to discuss the project. Student projects will be given a letter grade. Version for grade due March 5. 25% of overall.
- **Group Story**. Semester long groups of 4-5 will produce scenarios and quests within the overall narrative. There are three stages to the Group Story Proposal, with due dates indicated in the schedule: 1) Character trails. Create a Google maps of "trails" for your characters. Each character should have a set of locations and a linked trail on the map. All the group character appear on the map. Transform a familiar, local space through transmedia narrative. How do your characters follow the path? Metaphors might be: drift, running from zombies, parkour … 2) Write the narrative "bible" for the group story (reference CGTS). It should be a pdf of at least 6 pages posted to Google docs and linked on all group member blogs. In it, create a narrative that plays on and expands on the theme of identity and anonymity, and integrates your groups characters. 3) Create a proposal for the distribution and management of your Group Story. Describe each member's role and workload. Describe plans for audience engagement, participation, and user-generated content. Add this to the "bible" pdf and re-upload. Group projects will be given a letter grade, with all members of the group receiving the same grade. Version for grade due April 9. 25% of overall.
- **Class Story**. The entire class will create a transmedia narrative that includes components in digital, online form, *and* components in the *real* space of Morgantown. The goal is to play with and re-tell reality. The project will emerge from collective brainstorming. You will define the story, audience, development cycle, budget, delivery mechanisms … You will define the combinations and roles of media employed. (YouTube, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, email, webpages, interactive pdfs, QR codes … ?) The content of the story is up to the class, but must relate to the theme of *anonymity* and *identity*. The overall project will be given a letter grade. Version for grade due May 9. 20% of overall.

Attendance and Participation

Attending class and participating in the class activities is indicative of professional conduct and is a basic courtesy to others in the class. You are expected to attend every class. Every unexcused absence or failure to participate after the first week – starting with class on 1/22 – will lower your overall final grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from an A to an A-, and so on). I am happy to discuss the absence policy. I will determine what constitutes an *excused* absence.

Participation includes but is not limited to coming to class prepared and with all the work due; participating in class activities; and maintaining a courteous and considerate attitude in class (for example: cell phones on silent). All work should be turned in promptly, on the due date, with the proper formatting, and with attention to spelling and grammar. Completing ungraded writing such as drafts and other short writings is *assumed* as part of your participation. Every failure to participate in the above manner will lower your overall final grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from an A to an A-, and so on).

Academic Integrity/Dishonesty Statement

"The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards

of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter."

Social Justice Statement

"West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. [...] If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700)."

Schedule

All assignments and readings are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. You must be prepared to discuss the readings in the class they are due. Unless otherwise discussed or arranged, assignments delivered after the due date are considered late and will be marked down by third of a grade for every day after the due date.

Jan 15 Introduction.
Examples: World without oil http://www.worldwithoutoil.org/, Traces of Hope http://tracesofhope.com/, Accomplice http://accomplicetheshow.com/, Cathy's book http://www.cathysbook.com/, 42 Entertainment http://www.42entertainment.com/

Jan 17 Topic: Identity.
Read "False Facebook" http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/13/technology/false-posts-on-facebook-undermine-its-credibility.html?_r=2&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1357733538-u7Efz/QGzdrSP56dxRRNAg&&pagewanted=all
In class: Create blogs. First post: Who are you online? Answer this question any way you choose.
Examples. Find the Future http://game.nypl.org/#home, speculat1ion http://speculat1on.net/, speculat1ion wiki http://speculat1on-wiki.us.to/, Specflic http://www.specflic.net/, Cloudmakers http://cloudmakers.org/, unfiction http://www.unfiction.com/, argnet http://www.argn.com/
In class: Class brainstorming. "What if"? Gather as many scenarios as possible.

Jan 22 Topic: Anonymity.
Read Anonymous 101 http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/11/anonymous-101/all/1, Part Deux http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/12/anonymous-101-part-deux/all/1, Anon 2011 http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/tag/anonymous-2011
> * Blog post. Respond to the readings. What are the goals of Anonymous? Name the 2 or 3 most important. Discuss these goals and their methods. What do you think? Conclude by discussing the more general idea of anonymity online. Is it important and is it possible? Why or why not?
In class, create second, fictional blog. Class brainstorming. Continue with "what if" scenarios.

Jan 24 Read McGonigal Chapters 7-10 https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1GTkBRo22_FRzBGemUtb2hVNGc/edit, Top Secret Dance Off http://topsecret.ning.com/

* Blog Post: What are the three main claims in McGonigal's writing? Be specific and cite a sentence or two from her text for each claim. What evidence does she use to support these claims? Do you agree with her?

In class. Create groups. [Create group blogs](). Group brainstorming.

Jan 29 CGTS Chapter 1-4 (Introduction to Transmedia). Group brainstorming.
* Blog post: Outline your fictional character. What is his/her backstory? What stories do you want to tell? Be as open and imaginative as you want.

Jan 31 CGTS Chapters 5-10 Storytelling. Group brainstorming.

Feb 5 CGTS Chapters 11-16 Structure. Group brainstorming.
* Blog post: What principles of storytelling can you take from CGTS and apply to your story/character? Be explicit: quote the passages from the book, explain them in your own words, and describe how you will apply them to your work.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 7 Due: Group Story Part 1, Story Trails
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 12 CGTS Chapters 17-23 Production.
* CGTS Top Ten list. What are the top 10 things you take from CGTS. Write at least a sentence for each and be clear on how these things apply to your individual or group project.

In class: Group and Class brainstorming.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 14 CGTS Chapters 24-28 The Big Picture. In class: Group and Class brainstorming.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 19 Due: Character Narrative Proposal. Post to your blog: Who is your character and how does/he she fit in the group and class project? Link to your character blog with at least 500 words of writing there on/about/by the character.

In class: InDesign/Id6 training.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 21 In class: Group and Class brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 26 In class: Group and Class brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.
Due: Group Story Part 2, "bible."
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Feb 28 In class: Group and Class brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.
** Schedule individual meetings with Sandy

Mar 5 In class: Group and Class brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.
Due: Character Narrative, for grade. Revised blog post and at least 1000 words on your blog on/about/ by the character.

Mar 7 Presentations.

Mar 12 Presentations.

Mar 14 Class cancelled

Mar 19 Class cancelled

Mar 21 Due: Group Story Part 3. In class: InDesign/Id6 training.

Mar 26 Spring Break

Mar 28 Spring Break

Apr 2 3dP Intro, Parkin, Williams, Orman

Apr 4 3dP Laws, Hite, GLancy, Stafford, Cook

Apr 9 Due: Revised Group Story for Grade.
3dP Bartle, Rolston, Miller, Gingold

Apr 11 3dP Klein, Thiel, Jenikl & Lewison, Grossman

Apr 16 3dP Kalat, Price, Robbins, Ford & Jenkins

Apr 18 3dP Lavery, Hills, Kirschenbaum, Huber

Apr 23 3dP Krywinska, Reynolds, Lowood

Apr 25 Workshop

Apr 30 Workshop. Fill out [ESEI](.).

May 2 Last Class. Fill out [ESEI](.).
Class story due.
> * Blog post. Class top 10: What are the Top 10 things about the class? They could be positive or negative. Write at least as sentence for each.

May 9 Final date for revisions and graded work.

"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."