

Multimedia Writing ENGL 303

Syllabus url: <http://tinyurl.com/o64tylv>
TR 1:00-2:15, Spring 2014, G06 Colson Hall
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Professor Sandy Baldwin
Office: G20 Colson
Hours: TR 12:00-1:00



Required materials [abbr.]

- *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling: How to Captivate and Engage Audiences Across Multiple Platforms*, by Andrea Phillips (from WVU bookstore or elsewhere) [CGTS]
- *Halting State*, by Charles Stross (from WVU bookstore or elsewhere)
- *The Institute*, 2013 documentary movie (from Amazon or iTunes)

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," networked, transmedia narratives. You will learn about and create interlocking stories with interlocking technologies. You will tell a single story across multiple media. Part of the persuasiveness of effective transmedia narrative is using diverse genres of multimedia writing to integrate the storytelling experience into everyday life.

In order to think about and expand on transmedia storytelling, the course begins by examining alternative reality games (ARGs), defined by Wikipedia as an "interactive [networked narrative](#) that uses the real world as a platform and uses [transmedia storytelling](#) to deliver a story that may be altered by players' ideas or actions." While ARGs are not the same as transmedia narratives, they are a useful way of understanding the practice. Towards this end, we will read and discuss the book *Halting State* and watch and discuss the movie *The Institute*. Responses to these and other readings (such as *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling* and the essays by Jane McGonigal) will be posted on your personal blog.

Each student will create a character and develop a narrative about this character. The character is a fictional and invented person but with a transmedial presence in a blog and other media, created and maintained by you. Note: this is separate from your personal blog; you will maintain (at least) two blogs for the course. The

blog is the primary development site for the character. You will work in groups to discover a premise that brings your character's together in relation to "The Process." You will use your blogs and other media to create trails and quests for your characters, including scenarios for how and why the character interrelate (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).

"The Process" is nothing more or less than a basic framework for group interactions. You can choose to make as much or little use of the initial framework as you wish. The "clues" are here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aEBDII8wR1-FqKcx6gWA-MZlyZY8BvJeSjXa-LV7FVE/edit?usp=sharing>

Requirements and Percentage of Overall Grade

- Blog posts. Each 500 words minimum. You will have a personal blog where you post various assignments. Included in these assignments are 9 posts throughout the semester in response to prompts, also posted to your personal blog, due on dates indicated with **. Graded PASS/FAIL. 20%
- [Twine](http://twinery.org/) Narrative. <http://twinery.org/> An interactive narrative about your character, using Twine, telling his/her story in relation to "the process." At least 10 nodes. Must be uploaded to IFDB and posted on your character's blog. Due for a grade on February 18. 10%
- Character trails (group project). As a group, create a single Google maps of "trails" for your group 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 ... Due for a grade on March 25. 10%
- Character Blog and Trailer. The fictional character blog can simulate a "real" blog or can be explicitly a set of stories about the character. You will develop this throughout the course: you will post on the blog information, narratives, pictures, etc. by/about your character. Develop the blog in a persuasive manner. The video trailer about your character tells his/her story in relation to "the process." Create the video using YouTube or Mozilla Popcorn or the video editor of your choice, and host it on YouTube and embedded in your blog. Version for grade due April 1. 20%
- Story Bible and Trailer (group project). Each group will turn in a single Story Bible. Format is interactive pdf, created with InDesign. Hosted on the web (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.). Minimum of 10 pages, with all the requirements as set out in A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling. The Story Bible should include plans for distribution, management, and audience engagement in your story. The video trailer tells about your group story in relation to "the process." Create the video using YouTube or Mozilla Popcorn or the video editor of your choice, and host it on YouTube and embedded in your blog. Version for grade due April 15. All members of the group will be graded equally. 20%
- Final Character Blog. Final, updated version of all your work. Along with blog, the trailer, and the Twine Story, each student must incorporate at least two other media as part of their storytelling (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, email, web pages, QR codes, Instagram, Tumblr, etc.). Presumably these other media forms will integrate with the "group" requirement (below). Due by May 1. 10%
- Final Group Blog (group project). Final, updated version of all group work. Along with blog, the trailer, the Character Trails, and the Story Bible, each group must incorporate at least two other media as part of their storytelling (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, email, web pages, QR codes, Instagram, Tumblr, etc.). Presumably these other media forms will integrate with the "character" requirement (above). Due by May 1. 10%

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 1/21 – 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 9 No Class

Jan 14 Introduction.

- The Process.
- Transmedia Narrative (and ARGs).
- Examples: World without oil <http://www.worldwithouthoil.org/>, Accomplice <http://accomplicetheshow.com/>, whysoserious? <http://www.42entertainment.com/work/whysoserious>, Year Zero <http://www.42entertainment.com/work/yearzero>, Shadow Unit <http://shadowunit.org/index.html>, Ingress <http://www.ingress.com/>, The Source <http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/gamechanger/portfolios/the-source/>
- Resources: Unfiction <http://www.unfiction.com/>, argnet <http://www.argn.com/>

Jan 16

- Homework: Read the first three chapters of Halting State (through page 32).
- In class: Create personal blogs <http://blogspot.com>. First post: Respond to Halting State. Second post: questions so far?
- Class brainstorming. "What if"? Gather as many scenarios as possible.

Jan 21

- Homework: Blog post responding to Halting State (through page 230: Shanghaied).**
- In class, create second, fictional blog. Class brainstorming. Continue with "what if" scenarios.

Jan 23

- Discuss Halting State (complete book).
- In class. Brainstorm about fictional characters.

Jan 28

- Homework: Blog post outlining your fictional character. What is his/her backstory? What stories do you want to tell? Be as open and imaginative as you want. **
- In class: Discuss *The Institute*. Institute Website <http://www.theinstitutemovie.com/>

Jan 30

- In class: Discuss *The Institute*. Discuss fictional blogs.

Feb 4

- Homework: Review of *The Institute* due as post to your blog. Respond to the movie. How you respond is up to you. How do you respond to this movie? Be sure to discuss the use of transmedia narrative in the Jejune Institute. **
- In class: Discuss reviews. Group brainstorming. Create groups. Create group blogs.

Feb 6

- Twine Intro <http://twinery.org/>. Create basic Twine narratives.
- In class: Group brainstorming.

Feb 11

- Homework: Write a blog post outlining your Twine narrative. How does the story relate to your fictional character, to the group, and to “the Process”? **
- In class: Group brainstorming.

Feb 13

- Work on Twine Narratives.
- In class: Group brainstorming.

Feb 18

- Homework: Final version of Twine narrative.
- In class: Group brainstorming.

Feb 20

- Homework: Read CGTS Chapter 1-4 (Introduction to Transmedia).
- In class: Discuss CGTS. Group brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.

Feb 25

- Homework: Read CGTS Chapters 5-10 Storytelling. Write 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. **
- In class: Discuss CGTS. Group brainstorming. InDesign/Id6 training.

Feb 27

- Homework: Read CGTS Chapters 11-16 Structure.
- In class: Discuss CGTS. Group brainstorming. Character Trails introduction.

Mar 4

- Homework: Read CGTS Chapters 17-23 Production. Write blog post 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: Discuss CGTS. Group brainstorming. Work on Character Trails.

Mar 6

- Homework: Read CGTS Chapters 24-28 The Big Picture.
- In class: Discuss CGTS. Group brainstorming. Work on Character Trails.

Mar 11 Spring Break

Mar 13 Spring Break

Mar 18

- Homework: Read McGonigal Chapters 7-8.
https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1GTkBRo22_FRzBGemUtb2hVNGc/edit, Write blog post about 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: Discuss McGonigal. Group brainstorming. Work on Character Trails.

Mar 20

- Homework: Read McGonigal Chapters 9-10
- In class: Discuss McGonigal. Group brainstorming. Intro to making trailers..

Mar 25

- Homework: Character Trails due.
- In class: Group brainstorming. Work on trailers.

Mar 27

- In class: Group brainstorming. Work on trailers.

Apr 1

- Homework: Character blog and Trailer due. Also, a blog post about your fictional character: what do we (readers, interactors) need to know about him/her? Where do we begin? **
- In class: Group brainstorming. inDesign training.

Apr 3

- In class: Group brainstorming. inDesign training.

Apr 8

- Homework: Blog post about your character, who he/she is, how he/she fits into the group and into "the Process." **
- In class: Group brainstorming. inDesign training.

Apr 10

- In class: Group brainstorming. inDesign training.

Apr 15

- Homework: Story Bible and Group Trailer due.
- In class: Group brainstorming.

Apr 17

- In class: Group brainstorming. Work on final projects.

Apr 22

- In class: Group brainstorming. Work on final projects.
- Fill out [ESEI](#).

Apr 24

- Last Class. Work on final projects. Fill out [ESEI](#).

May 1

- Final date for revisions and graded work. Final Character blog and Group blog both due.