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.

What is multimedia writing?

1. A pragmatic knowledge of applications and technologies?
2. A genre of writing? Electronic fiction, hypertext...
3. A journalism or business writing for multimedia platforms?
4. Multimedia *writing*? *Multimedia* writing?
5. For that matter: What is writing? What is multimedia?
6. Is writing already multimedia or are they antithetical? (A code inscribed on a surface? Or a recording of thought and voice?)

Some starting points:

1. Learning about media means understanding media.
2. It is not possible to differentiate the technology of writing, as a seemingly neutral and pragmatic set of skills, from the histories and modes of knowing implicated in/by writing.
3. Writing remains the meta-code of culture. This is a transformed code: no longer a matter of the inscription of language in printed books but of the transcription of programs across multiple media.
4. Programming is writing: a concern with design (its philosophy, its structures) and a concern with material implementations.
5. This course combines pragmatic experience in writing new media artifacts with a theoretical understanding of how media frame our situation. We'll start by exploring the *concept* of "multimedia writing" before turning

Michael Joyce: "Print stays itself, electronic text replaces itself."

Ron Wodaski: "For centuries, books have been the cutting edge of artificial reality. Think about it: you read words on a page, and your mind fills in the pictures and emotions - even physical reactions can result."

Lev Manovich: "How does fictional, critical, theoretical, and historical writing take advantage of all the multimedia capabilities offered by the Net? How to write about ideas using images, animation, sound, video and 3D worlds? How to communicate complex concepts while also being able to employ traditional rhetoric functions (seduce, convince, scare, inspire) using multimedia? How to allow the user not just to be simply a 'co-author' (which is what the ideologists of interactivity naively aim at) but rather to take him/her 'inside' the mental space of a text, inside the thinking process of another subject? How to think through multimedia? What are the historical precedents for 'multimedia writing' in cinema, book design, theater, concrete poetry?"

Vilém Flusser: "What do those do who sit in front of the computers, who are pressing keys and who produce lines, surfaces, and bodies? What do they really do? They realize possibilities. They gather points according to precisely formulated programs. What they thus realize is an outside as well as an inside: they realize alternative worlds and thereby themselves. From possibilities they 'design' realities which are more effective the more densely they are structured. Thus, the new anthropology is put into practice: 'we' is a node of possibilities that increasingly realizes itself - as it gathers more and more densely the possibilities swirling in itself and around itself, i.e., as it creatively shapes them. Computers are apparatuses for the realization of inner-human, inter-human, and trans-human possibilities, thanks to exact calculatory thought. This formulation can be understood as a possible definition of 'computer.'"

Christopher Alelxander: "So, the real work of any process of design lies in the task of making up the language, from which you can later generate the one particular design."

to specific multimedia writing machines.

No technical experience is required, beyond a general familiarity with word processors and web browsers. Writing is the important thing. In doing your work, be as creative and original, and as professional and scholarly, as you want to be. Don't let the new-ness of new media force you to be anything other than yourself.

This is a growing course web. Check back frequently for updates.

Required Materials

Available at the WVU Bookstore

- Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (MIT Press)
- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (Harvest Books)
- Frances Condron, Michael Fraser, Stuart Sutherland, Eds., *Digital Resources for the Humanities* (WVU PRess)
- Edward Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Graphic Press)
- Robin Williams and John Tollett, *The Non-Designer's Web Book* (Peachpit Press)

Available Elsewhere

- *Majestic* (EA Games). Available at eagames.com, amazon.com, KMart, elsewhere.
- Web-authoring software. Download Netscape (netscape.com). Download a demo version of Dreamweaver (macromedia.com).
- FTP client. Try downloading WS-FTP
- A notebook, both for in-class work and for taking notes outside class.
- A camera, any sort will do. Digital would be nice, but even a disposable camera is OK.

Recommended Materials

- Trace On-Line Writing Community (trace.ntu.ac.uk)

- *Majestic* 15% (1%/week, first week free, graded pass/fail). Play for at least an hour a week. Post a weekly comment to the class discussion on Campus MIX (mix.wvu.edu) by 5 pm on Mondays, starting 1/28. The form of the comments is open.
- In-Class participation and Attendance 15% (1%/week, graded pass/fail). This is an workshop class: a lot happens during the scheduled session. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.
- Short Assignments 10% (2% each, graded pass/fail) (see assignments)
- Photo/Story Project 10% (see assignments)
- Personal Web Space Project 20% (see assignments)
- Invisible Cities Project 30%. This is a group project. Group's will evaluate their member's work and evaluations will be factored into the grading. (see assignments)

Schedule

T 1/15
Introduction. What is multimedia writing?

R 1/17
Three-part homework:

1. Spend some time checking out *Multimedia from Wagner to Virtual Reality* (http://www.artmuseum.net/w2vr/contents.html).
2. Watch *Run Lola Run*. There'll be a showing in White 104 on W 1/16 @530, or you can borrow it at A/V Library, Blockbuster, and elsewhere.
3. Begin thinking about the Photo/Story Project.
   Topics: defining multimedia.

T 1/22
Read all of Tufte for today.

Topics: principles of information design.

R 1/24
Short Assignment 1 due in class.

T 1/29

Read Chapter 1 of Aarseth's *Cybertext*
(http://www.hf.uib.no/cybertext/Ergodic.html).

Topics: linearity, ergodics, games.

Commercial sites
1
CNN, American Institute of Graphic Arts, Getty One, Bauhaus Museum
2
Nokia Tyres, Nike Women's Shoes, VW Autoshow, MTV 2
3
Requiem for a Dream, Donnie Darko

Ergodic Narratives/net.art
1
Carolyn Guertin (click on the finger, then go to the map), Stuart Moulthrop (look at
Hegirascope and Reagan Library), My Boyfriend Came Back from the War, Rice
2
Lair of the Marrow Monkey, Sub-Method
3
SuperBad, Absurd

R 1/31
Photo/Story 1 due in class.

Topics: granularity, narrative, observation.

T 2/5
Read the Introduction, Chapter 1 ("Starting Points in the Internet") and the intro to
"Literature in English and Other Languages" in Condron, Fraser, and Sutherland.

Topics: rhetoric of the link.

R 2/7
Short Assignment 2 due in class. Continue to work on Photo/Story. Read Chapters
1-4 in Williams & Tollett

T 2/12
Photo/Story 2 due in class. Read Chapters 5-8 in Williams & Tollett.

Topics: diagrams, pseudo-codes, repetition.

R 2/14

Short Assignment 3 due in class. Read Chapters 9-11 in Williams & Tollett. * ** *

T 2/19

Complete Photo/Story. Read Chapters 12-13 in Williams & Tollett.

R 2/21

Intro to Personal Web Space project. Read Williams & Tolllett 14-16.

T 2/26

Personal Web Space 1 Due. Read Bolter & Grusin Intro & 1-3. *Remediation* page:
http://www.lcc.gatech.edu/~bolter/remediation/index.html

Topics: remediation, immediacy, hypermediacy.

R 2/28

Short Assignment 4 due in class. Continue to work on Personal Web Space Project.

T 3/5

Read Bolter & Grusin 4-8.
Some cool home pages: Scott McLoud, Nick Bantock, Ben Marcus
web graphics: try Photoshop. Check on your computer for basic imaging software.
.html primer

R 3/7

Personal Web Space 2 Due. Continue to work on Personal Web Space Project.
More remediation examples: NY Times, Paradise Lost, Media and Communications Web Site, Labyrinths and Lines, Wurlitzer Jukebox, Telephone Home Page, The Matrix

T 3/12

Continue to work on Personal Web Space Project. Try to upload some version of the remediation project by today. Read Bolter & Grusin 9-14.

R 3/14
NO CLASS. Personal Web Space 3 Due i.e. definitely upload a draft of the remediation project by today.

T 3/19
Read Bolter & Grusin 15-18.

R 3/21
Complete Personal Web Space Project Due, uploaded to the AS server. Remember, this will be graded and commented on, with the understanding that you may revise it and re-submit (by 5/2). The project include:

1. Updated home page, with personal info and links to sites of interest (personal, career, etc.)
2. Remediation project (linked from home page)
3. Photo story project (linked from home page)

T 3/26 Spring Break

R 3/28 Spring Break

T 4/2
Read Calvino. Intro to Invisible Cities Project.

R 4/4
Brainstorm towards Invisible Cities Project.

T 4/9
Short Assignment 5 Due. Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

R 4/11
Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

T 4/16
Intro to Flash. Advantages: can run in a separate window or embedded in an html file; fast, small files, creating complex animations and cool interactions. Downside: hard to animate bitmaps (can include them thought); need a plugin; not controlled by the browser; not open sources.

- Common in business sites, e.g. <u>Nike Running Shoes</u>, <u>H. R. Giger (film/comic designer/artist)</u>, <u>WVU</u>
- Common for movies and TV, e.g. <u>Traffic</u>, <u>Alias</u>
- Common for, design: <u>Posttool</u>, <u>Precinct Design</u>
- Common for web literature and art, e.g. <u>Remedi Project</u>, <u>Megatight</u>
- Download Flash demo @ <u>Macromedia</u>. <u>Other useful Flash stuff</u>

Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

R 4/18
Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

T 4/23
Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

W 4/24
Lecture by Richard Grusin. Highly recommended.

R 4/25
Continue to work on Invisible Cities Project.

T 4/30
Presentations.

R 5/2
Presentations. Final Class.

Assignments

Short Assignment 1
Due 1/24. Write critiques of two web sites based on Tufte. Choose one from the

following list and one of your own choice (preferably a popular commercial site, e.g. Yahoo, Amazon, CNN, etc.). Identify how the site does and does not follow Tufte. Analyse the sites in terms of their use of multimedia - what kind? how effective? - and in terms of its intended audience. Discuss how the site might be improved. The writing should be a minimum of two pages.

Test Pilot Collective (testpilotcollective.com)
Fork Design (fork.de)
Mike Cina (mikecina.com)
Entropy8 (entropy8.com/greatest_hits/index.html)
Archinect (archinect.com)
Trueistrue (trueistrue.com)
Funny Garbage (funnygarbage.com/kipple)
Greyscale (greyscale.net)
Hoggorm (anart.no/~hoggorm)
Design Graphik (designgraphik.com)
Surfstation (surfstation.lu)
37signals (37signals.com)
Future Farmers (futurefarmers.com)
Cyphen (cyphen.com)

Short Assignment 2
Due 2/7. Write critiques of two web sites based on the course so far. Choose both sites from those reviewed in the Condon, Fraser, and Sutherland book. Select from the Literature section, or another section if you wish. Analyse the sites in terms of their use of multimedia - what kind? how effective? - and in terms of its intended audience. Discuss how the site might be improved. The writing should be a minimum of two pages.

Short Assignment 3
Due 2/14. Write critiques of two web sites based on the course so far. Choose both sites from those reviewed in the Condon, Fraser, and Sutherland book. Select from the Literature section, or another section if you wish. Analyse the sites in terms of their use of multimedia - what kind? how effective? - and in terms of its intended audience. Discuss how the site might be improved. The writing should be a minimum of two pages.

Short Assignment 4
Due 2/28. Write critiques of two web sites based on the course so far. Choose one one site from those reviewed in the Condon, Fraser, and Sutherland book and one other site of your choice - it may be from the *Digital Resources* book or any other site you choose. Analyse the sites in terms of their use of multimedia - what kind? how effective? - and in terms of its intended audience. Discuss how the site might be improved. The writing should be a minimum of two pages.

Short Assignment 5
Due 4/9. Write critiques of two web sites based on the course so far. Choose one business/commercial site of your own choice, and one immersive or multiuser environment from the list below. Analyse the sites in terms of their use of multimedia - what kind? how effective? - and in terms of its intended audience. Discuss how the site might be improved. The writing should be a minimum of two pages.

Habbo Hotel (habbo.com)
Lingua MOO (lingua.utdallas.edu:7000)
Cybertown (http://www.cybertown.com/main_ieframes.html)
Banja (banja.com)

Photo/Story Project

- This is an ongoing project, combining visual and written materials into a complex narrative. You need to start work on the project right away. Begin a visual archive of what you see in the world. Take photos of whatever strikes you. Don't plan too much ahead of time. Bring a camera and be ready. You can do the same with text as well if you want - copy down interesting words, snippets of conversation, whatever. But the main thing is to start your camera eye. You might take a special image-collecting trip, say to the Mesaros Art Gallery or the PRT. Or you may want to try ultra close ups. Or something else. Begin thinking about what images and designs interest you and why. You'll be able to load the photos straight to the computer if you're using a digital camera; otherwise, remember that you'll need to get the film developed.
- **Photo/Story 1, Due in Class on 1/31**. Bring prints of your photos (and other materials, if any). Laser print copies are fine if you're using a digital camera. We'll work in class on organization and accompanying writing.
- **Photo/Story 2, Due in Class on 2/12**. A draft storyboard of the image archive, including a minimum of five images. Considerations include: guiding navigational concept (narrative, game, poem, instruction manual, puzzle, quest, etc.); interactions/links; accompanying text, if any; awareness of conventions of representation and of viewer's experience (how do you draw in, immerse, create belief?). Try to avoid a solely traditionally linear exposition.

  Example diagrams of RLR (thanks to Janet Murray's graduate class in Interactive Narrative):
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3

- **Revised storyboard/treatment, Due in-class 2/19.**

Personal Web Space Project

- In this project, you develop several aspects of your personal web space. The goal is an online portfolio of your creative and professional work.
- **Personal Web Space 1, Due 2/26.** A basic web page. It must include identifying information, including a statement that the page is part of Multimedia Writing, English 303, and a link back to the class web page. Example.
- **Personal Web Space 2, Due 3/7.** Draft remediation of a print artifact in web form. (Alternatively, you may choose to remediate another medium.) Select an artifact from one of your areas of interest, i.e your career path or creative focus. Show an awareness of remediation and other principles of new media.
- **Personal Web Space 3, Due 3/14.** Expanded to include personal info, links to sites of interest (career, creative work, etc.), remediated artifact, and uploaded Photo/Story.
- **Final Version, due 3/21.**

Invisible Cities Project

The final project is a group project. Each group will create a multimedia exploration of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. These projects are neither interpretations nor reviews of Calvino's texts - closer to explorations, versions of his work. Each project must have a web component but need not be entirely web based, though it may. Furthermore, the aim is not necessarily a completed multimedia artifact, though that may be the result, but rather more an effort to imagine the multimedial possiblities of Calvino's book. We will work through proposals, storyboards, mock-ups, and so on, concluding with press releases and presentations of the projects. Completed projects will be included in *The Maddening Loop*, WVU's online literary journal.
Invisible Cities resource page: http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/cal.html

Two final things:

1. **If you have expertise in particular areas, whether technological, literary, or otherwise, feel free to help out. This is a workshop class and we'll benefit by building off**

each other's abilities.

2. **Note the *Majestic* requirement and the participation/attendance policy (see Grading).**