

ENGL 303: Multimedia Writing, Fall 2007

WVU Department of English, TR 1000-1115, 240 Stansbury Hall, Fall 2007

<http://www.clc.wvu.edu:8080/clc/Members/sbaldwin/courses/engl303f07>

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The Center for Literary Computing / www.clc.wvu.edu

Course Description

"A poem is a small (or large) Machine made of words." - William Carlos Williams.

"Computers are not only designed in language but are themselves equipment for language." - Winograd and Flores

From the English Department Catalog: "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. ENGL 303 is part of the English Department's Technical Writing and Editing sequence." ENGL 303 is not a web design course nor an intro to html. This is a writing course and does involve considerable writing.

The focus of the Fall 2007 course is electronic literature. What is electronic literature? What is an electronic author? How does electronic literature change the conditions of reading and writing? This course explores the history, practice, and problematics of electronic literature. On the one hand, there is already an emerging and contested canon of electronic literature, with major prizes, many academic conferences, books, and so on. On the other, there are still no clear techniques for analyzing the discourse and production of electronic literature. This course considers electronic literature as an assemblage of possibilities. Electronic literature includes literary works primarily written for electronic media (so-called "born-digital" texts). It also includes issues of access to and circulation of literary texts via electronic media. It also includes diverse writing practices and communities engaged in the poetics of electronic media. Finally, electronic literature includes the problem of literature in the age of the net. How does the emergence of electronic literature change the institution of literature? If we see electronic literature as a noisy and recursive loop in the literary system, we can understand transformations in authorship, in means of distribution, in practices of reading, and so on. A particular focus in the course will be "internationalizing electronic literature": To what degree the emerging field is defined regionally, by the academic and literary culture of the USA and Western Europe? What challenges do we face to creating a truly international community and study of electronic literature?

Course Format

A basic premise of the course is that the best way to learn about electronic literature is direct exposure to reading and composing electronic literature. Electronic literary practice will introduce and develop skills in multimedia writing. The course format combines 1) lectures and discussion on the history, aesthetics, and cultural conditions of electronic literature, with 2) a practical workshop in designing and composing electronic texts. In the workshop, students will create their own electronic literary works. In the process, you will:

- author and design web sites;
- write for the web with awareness of genres and audiences;
- understand the complexity of representation and expression using multimedia;
- analyze the social and material transformation of writing in multimedia environments.

You will need access to a camera, preferably digital, and a computer with internet access. You will be issued an account on the Arts and Sciences server. You will develop your websites on the latter account, and use SSH to transfer files. A good, free SSH client is at <http://versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/win/28216>. Talk to me if you need a Mac version.

Requirements and activities.

The following are brief summaries of activities to be scheduled throughout the semester. All technical skills will be taught in workshop sessions.

- Project 1: Hypertext Narrative. At least five pages, two interwoven narratives, a clear site map, and a thoughtful use of linking (at least two links per page). Due on the web by midnight Sep 15. 20%
- Project 2: Sound and Vision. Create a simple electronic work with no words, using images and links. At least five pages with at least one image per page. The work may be playable using a web browser, Flash, Flickr, Powerpoint, or other means. Due on the web by midnight Oct 13. Also, clean up home page and project 1: clearly organized homepage, links back from both projects, and site maps on home page. [Notes](#) 20%
- Project 3: Networked Persona. Create a fictional persona using a combination of [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#), [Twitter](#), [Wikipedia](#), [Picasa](#), [Google Maps](#), [Google Video](#), [Blogger](#), [del.icio.us](#), and other social software tools. The persona must be made up - use your imagination! You must use at least four of the sites listed. Grow your persona and develops his/her relations with others, both fictional and real. The sites must interlink. Your homepage must contain a biography of at least 250 words, with inline links to the sites. Also, clean up your homepage - perhaps give it some style? - including moving the project1 and 2 sitemaps onto a separate sitemap page. Due on the web by midnight Nov 10. 20%
- Project 4: All together now. The final project will be collaborative. You will work in set groups of about four. Each group will create a single website, housed on one member's page but with links from and to all other members' pages. The project topic and genre are up to you: it could be a complex digital literary work; it could be a made-up company

(humorous or serious); it could be an online journal with a few sample articles or stories or poems; it could be social advocacy (i.e. a site about some issue of social concern at WVU/Morgantown; etc. The website will be a substantial work that reflects participation of all group members and incorporates principles and topics from throughout the course. You must make use of the design and development principles of the first half of the course (up through week 8) and the social topics of the rest of the course. The point is not to relate the project to every single topic, but to clearly incorporate and reflect on those few that do pertain. Towards this end, the project must have an "about" page that includes group names, emails, and homepage urls; and includes a brief explanation of the formal techniques used and the social background (including direct reference and citation of at least three texts from the syllabus, and relevant urls). It must also have a site map, and appropriate navigation, linking, formatting, etc. Significant dates: Nov 27, 200 word proposal due at conclusion of class; Dec 4, in-class testing and workshop. **Final project due on the web by midnight Dec 11. Also, send an email to Sandy reflecting on the final project, including what you learned and how you experienced the group work..** 20%

- Participation. There will be frequent in-class work with groups of other students and occasional in-class writing. As part of your participation, you must meet with me before mid-semester for a conference (you can meet for additional conferences, of course). We'll discuss your thoughts about the class and your progress at that point. It is your responsibility to meet with me. You can just appear during my office hours or make an appointment. 10%
- Blog Posting. You will write five short blog postings during the semester, on dates marked **blog**. I will distribute a prompt in-class, directing you to respond to a reading or to other aspects of the course materials. The postings are evaluated on a pass/fail system. You can also use your blog as a general space for reflection on the lectures and discussion. Create a blog following the directions [here](#). You'll need a free google account, available [here](#). **By Tuesday 8/27, email me at charles.baldwin at mail.wvu.edu with a link to your blog. Also, indicate if your usual email is not Mix.** 10% (2%/post).

Attendance

A great deal happens during class and your presence contributes to the communal learning environment. Participation and attendance are crucial. Attendance will be taken regularly after the first week of classes. You are allowed two unexcused absences. Subsequent unexcused absences will reduce your overall grade. I will determine what constitutes an excuse. All reading, writing, and other work is due on the date indicated on the schedule. Unexcused late work will receive no credit. I will determine what constitutes an excuse.

Grade Descriptors

Adapted from standard grade descriptors for writing courses. These are intended to give general grading guidelines and may not apply in every case.

A Exemplary work that demonstrates originality and initiative. The content is mature, thorough, and well-suited for the audience; the style is clear, accurate, and forceful; the information is well-organized and formatted so that it is accessible and attractive; genre conventions are effectively used; mechanics and grammar are correct.

B Good work. The work generally succeed in meeting goals in terms of audience, purpose, and genre without the need for further major revisions. It may need some minor improvements in idea, content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics.

C Satisfactory. Work is adequate but requires some substantial revisions of idea, content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics; may require further work in more than one area.

D Work is unprofessional, requires extensive revisions of idea, content, presentation, writing style, and/or mechanics. The writer has encountered significant problems meeting goals of audience, purpose, and genre.

F Not enough information; inappropriate for the situation; and/or major and pervasive problems in terms of content, presentation, or writing style/mechanics that interfere with meaning. May be incomplete, or plagiarism may compromises the work on ethical grounds.

Academic Integrity

West Virginia University expects that every member of its academic community shares the historic and traditional commitment to honesty, integrity, and the search for truth. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and dishonest practices; and forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud. Here is WVU's [Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism Policy](#).

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 nondiscrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran 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 arrangement with Disability Services (293-6700)."

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction Topics include: Overview of the course. Provisional definition of electronic literature. How does it differ from print literature (conceptually, formally, materially, institutionally, etc.)? How does electronic literature feedback and recursively transform the system of literature?

Aug 21

Aug 23

Read Borges, [The Garden of Forking Paths](#) and Warnell, [Interview](#). Recommended: Hayles, [Intermediation](#) and [Electronic Literature: What is it?](#). Browse Blast Theory, [Uncle Roy](#), Cardiff, [Her Long Black Hair](#), [Facade](#), Glazier, [Io Sono](#), Joyce, [Twelve Blue](#), Leishman, [Deviant](#), Warnell, [lascaux.symbol.ic](#), [warnell.com](#) and [Warnell Works](#).

- 1) Definitions
- 2) Forking Paths
- 3) Genres
- 4) Code: Surface and Depth

Week 2: Precursors Topics include: The virtual reality and forking paths of narrative. Combinatory and procedural techniques in literature.

Aug 28

Read Berners-Lee, [The World Wide Web](#), Burroughs, [The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin](#), Bush, [As We May Think](#), [OuLiPo Selections](#). Browse Cramer, [Permutations](#), [Electronic version of Queneau's sonnets](#)

- 1) Potential and spontaneity: Cutups, OuLiPo
- 2) Associations and webs: Vannevar Bush and Tim Berners-Lee
- 3) Surface / depth of code: Ted Warnell, basic html structure, project 1

Aug 30

Introduction to html.

- 1) Continue and expand writing towards Project 1
- 2) HTML basics
- 3) Linking
- 4) Uploading to your A&S account

Week 3: Link, rhizome, web Topics include: The history of the hypertext. The link as connection and drift. Spatial hypertexts, distributed structures, and the nature of the web. Varieties of literary hypertext. Reading hypertext.

Sep 4

Read Joyce, [Siren Shapes](#), Nelson, from [Computer Lib](#), Deleuze & Guattari, from [Thousand Plateaus](#). Browse geniwaite, [Rice](#), Jackson, [My Body a Wunderkammer](#), Moulthrop, [Reagan Library](#), Rosenberg, [Diagrams](#)

- 1) Review uploading
- 2) Five principles of hypertext/linking, at least one from each essay
 - * flexible, represents construction and exploration, and thought
 - * following tangents of the minds
 - * unifying vision rather than technicalities
 - * constructive hypertext is at the origin of exploratory hypertext
 - * words, pictures, ideas --> all linked by thought
 - * rhizome: not tied to tools but is inherent in text
 - * rhizome: offshoots, variations, expansions, conquests, capture
 - * structure of collateration and jump

3) Examples of literary hypertext. How are links used? What types of links are there? How do links create the work (what difference does it make that these are hypertext)? How do we read these texts?

Sep 6

Continue html. Work on first project. **blog**

Week 4: Code, procedure, algorithm Topics include: What is a code? Text and / vs code. Reading code as “source” or “depth.” Relations between computer programming and literary writing. Turing tests and texts. The political economy of code.

Sep 11

Read Cramer, [Word Made Flesh](#). Browse Beiguelman, [Code Movie 1](#), Glazier, [White-Faced Bromeliads](#), [jodi](#), mez, [selections](#).

- 1) Homepages
- 2) Code and multimedia (Glazier, Beiguelman)
- 3) Writing towards the first project

Sep 13

Project 1 draft due in class.

- * Positioning with div (see code below)
- * Site maps (visual and outline). Don't forget to add a project1 site map to your home page.
- * Work on project1. Remember: all project 1 pages must be in project1 folder!

Sept 15

Midnight deadline for uploading Project 1 to website.

Week 5: Technotexts Topics include: Playable, navigable, manipulable text. The role of the reader and the work (ergodics) of reading. The spatiality of electronic literature. The reflexivity, economy, and materiality of technotexts.

Sept 18

Read Aarseth, [Ergodic Literature](#), Laurel, [Two Selections](#). Browse Nelson, [Digital Creatures](#) and Memmett, [Media Works](#)

- * Defining technotexts and cybertext
- * "As the cyber prefix indicates, the text is seen as a machine--not metaphorically but as a mechanical device for the production and consumption of verbal signs." - Aarseth
- * "Cybertext, as now should be clear, is the wide range (or perspective) of possible textualities seen as a typology of machines, as various kinds of literary communication systems where the functional differences among the mechanical parts play a defining role in determining the aesthetic process. Each type of text can be positioned in this multidimensional field according to its functional capabilities [...] As a theoretical perspective, cybertext shifts the focus from the traditional threesome of author/sender, text/message, and reader/receiver to the cybernetic intercourse between the various part(icipant)s in the textual machine. In doing so, it relocates attention to some traditionally remote parts of the textual galaxy, while leaving most of the luminous clusters in the central areas alone." - Aarseth

- * Definitions from Laurel
- * Testing out on Memmett and Nelson

Sep 20

Intro to Project 2. **blog**

- * [Be Succinct! \(Writing for the Web\)](#) and [How Users Read on the Web](#)
- ul & li for bullets* Interface Design: Safe Exploration --> Habituation --> Spatial Memory
- * Visual design: spacing/patterning/rhythm, deep backgrounds, few hues/many values (e.g. [banmapping](#)), borders
- * #1 rule: don't know what user is looking at, so plan based on what you know of your audience
- * Images: gif, jpg, png. 72 ppi, rgb color.
- Sample Image: [Bunny image](#). Image source: [Imageafter](#)
- * **For next Thursday: Bring 3 of your own images to class - either on a USB drive or uploading to your AS site.**

Week 6: VisPo and words that move Topics include: Looking vs. reading. The concrete tradition. Brazilian electronic poetry. Visual performance. Animation and time.

Sep 25

- Read Bolter, [Seeing and Writing](#), Gomringer, [From Line to Constellation](#), Kac, [Holopoetry](#), McCloud [Time Frames](#). Browse Andrews, [On Lionel Kearns](#), Aribé, [Anipoema/Anipoem](#), Leishman, [Red Ridinghood](#), Saroyan [15-30](#), Strasser and Sondheim, [Tao](#), Waber, [Strings](#)
- 1) Concrete poetry, e.g. [Apollinaire](#), [e.e.cummings](#), Saroyan (link above). Look at [Gomringer](#).
 - 2) McCloud on "sequential art" or "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence."
 - 3) McCloud on closure: The "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole." We recognize, fill in, complete, participate

Sep 27

- Sound and Vision. Work on project 2. **Bring 3 of your own images to class - either on a USB drive or uploading to your AS site.**
- 1) McCloud's [Carl Comics](#), [I Can't Stop Thinking](#)
 - 2) [Grafik Dynamo \(read About\)](#), [Zombie and Mummy](#)
 - 3) Size your images and put them in a sequence. Use Photoshop and Dreamweaver for this and the activities below.
 - 4) Expand one image into a sequence of 4
 - 5) Create a scrolling iframe
 - 6) Create image-map hotspots
 - 7) Brainstorm image narrative
- [Ernie](#), [Beach](#), [Godzilla](#)

Week 7: Screening sound. Topics include: Listening to the web. Voice and noise. Chatterbots and conversational software. Remixology and collage.

Oct 2

Read McCaffrey, [Sound Poetry](#), Spinelli, [Radio Lessons for the Internet](#), [YHC Interview](#). Browse [CTheory NetNoise](#), [Joerg Piringer](#) and [Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries](#), especially "Dakota," "Lotus Blossom," "The Sea." [ALT](#) tag.

Oct 4

Continue to work on project 2.

- Look at Piringer's [interactive sound poems](#) and YHC [Dakota](#). Note combination of sound and visuals.
- Quick demo of animated gif making using photoshop.
- Work on project 2.

Week 8: The Gaming Situation Topics include: Interactive fiction. Gameplay and narrative. First person, second person, third person. Avatars, subjectivity and gaming. The culture of gaming (gender, violence, economy).

Oct 9

Read Montfort, [Interactive Fiction](#), Turkle, [Video Games and Computer Holding Power](#). Browse [Game Studies](#), Montfort's [Interactive Fiction page](#), and [Grand Text Auto](#), [Zork](#), [Adventure Game in Wikipedia](#), Bookchin, [The Intruder](#); DeLappe, [dead-in-iraq](#); jodi, [Max Payne Cheats](#), [kingdomofloathing](#).
[Gaming and Narrative Talk](#)

Oct 11

Project 2 draft due in class.

Oct 13

Midnight deadline for uploading Project 2 to website.

Week 9: Dispersed Selves, Digital Identities Topics include: The presentation of the self in the virtual. Reading through the body. The gender of electronic literature. Artificial intelligence, chatterbots, and text generators.

Oct 16

Read Dibbell, [Rape in Cyberspace](#), Schleiner, [Does Lara Croft wear fake polygons?](#), Stelarc, [Extended Body](#). Browse: [gogolchat](#), [Stelarc](#), [Luther Blissett \(wikipedia\)](#), [VNS Matrix](#), [Reading Eye Dog](#)
[Home](#)

Oct 18

Intro to Project 3 **blog**

Week 10: Community, Folksonomy Topics include: Web 2.0. New communities and intimacies. Classification and creation. Semantics vs. folksonomics. Creative blogs and mashups. Geographic web. Keywords or writing the net.

Oct 23

Read Morville, [Ambient Findability](#), [Web 2.0](#). Browse [Alternative Reality Gaming Network](#), [Blogspot](#), [mez blog](#), [jimpunk blog](#), [jodi blog](#), [Twitter](#), [mez on Twitter](#) Readings and examples include: [YouTube](#), [MySpace Avatar Generator](#), [flickr](#), [Play Flickr](#), [MySpace](#), [del.icio.us](#), [Facebook](#), [Skype](#), [34n118w](#). [Tag Metadata](#)

Oct 25

Work on Project 3. Strategies for virtual personas? Read [Luther Blissett \(wikipedia\)](#) and [Blissett Blog](#). [Google Map](#) example.

Week 11: Virtual reality and other dimensions Topics include: MOOs, MUDs, and textbased VR. Immersive VR and CAVE-writing.

Oct 30

Read Cayley, [On Torus](#), Raley, [Writing.3D](#). Also, if you haven't already, read Dibbell, [Rape in Cyberspace](#). Browse Flanagan, [\[the house\]](#), Karpinska and How, [Open Ended](#), Shaw, [Legible City](#), Waber, [Five by Five](#). [Facebook investigations](#)

- What takes place in Dibbell's "Rape in Cyberspace"?

- Is what he describes rape, do you think? In what way are the events Dibbell describes rape?

- What do you make of his argument here: "Sometimes, for instance, it grew difficult for me to understand why RL society classifies RL rape alongside crimes against person or property. Since rape can occur without any physical pain or damage, I found myself reasoning, then it must be classed as a crime against the mind -- more intimately and deeply hurtful, to be sure, than cross burnings, wolf whistles, and virtual rape, but undeniably located on the same conceptual continuum. I did not, however, conclude as a result that rapists were protected in any fashion by the First Amendment. Quite the opposite, in fact: the more seriously I took the notion of virtual rape, the less seriously I was able to take the tidy division of the world into the symbolic and the real that underlies the very notion of freedom of speech."

- Are there analogies in the environments you are working with for your 3rd project? That is, what ways do you see social boundaries being crossed and challenged?

- Should there be strict rules of conduct for the internet? What should they be?

Nov 1

Class cancelled

Week 12: Virtuality Topics include: What is an electronic author? The "space" of electronic text. Capitalization and drift. Open source and copyleft. "Trust" online. Distributed narratives. Spamming and phishing. Selling out. Second Life. Net art vs. electronic literature. ASCII art. Protocols and artistic production. Hacking, spam, viruses and other subversive practices as art.

Nov 6

Browse [Avatar Portraits by 0100101110101101](#), [Lambdamoo](#), [Second Life](#). Intro to Project 4.

[Second Life Movies](#)

[Second Life on YouTube](#)

Nov 8

Project 3 draft due in class. **blog**

Nov 10

Midnight deadline for uploading Project 3 to website.

Week 13: Virtuality Continued Demographics and audiences for electronic literature. Major online journals and publishing venues. Freedom and control. Governance. Online relationships. Email lists. Textual practices in online communities. The Web as a distribution medium. The commercial / entertainment model. Ars Electronica, The Electronic Poetry Center, Nettime, Rhizome, UbuWeb.

Nov 13

Read Dibbell, [Goldfarmers](#), Goldsmith, [The Bride Stripped Bare](#), Filreis, [Kinetic](#). Browse Bruno, [Google Adwords](#), [Bureau of Inverse Technology](#), Lessig, [Code V2](#), Nelson, [Xanadu](#), Rider, [My Ball](#), [RTMark](#), Wark, [Gam3r 7h30ry](#)

- networks, links, tags vs. underlying semantics (capital, bodies, politics)
- Google: what is a search engine? The power of google. How does google work?
- [Anatomy of a Search Engine](#) (original google definition), [Googlism](#), [Google Zeitgeist](#) vs. [Yahoo Buzz](#), [Google Maps](#), [Google Sitieseing](#), [Googlebomb](#), [Google vs. the Scientologists](#) , [Miserable Failure Google](#), [Miserable Failure Yahoo](#)

Nov 15

Work on Project 4.

Nov 20

Thanksgiving

Nov 22

Thanksgiving

Week 14: Global electronic literature Discursive limits of electronic literature. Regional and national limitations. The problem of "global english." Censorship and control. The problematics of translation. Domain names. The darknet. Usability and access.

Nov 27

Read Dibbell, [After Babelfish](#), Rothenberg, [Endangered Languages](#). Browse Biggs, [Great Wall of China](#) Karpinska, [Mar Puro](#), Mencia, [Birds Singing Other Birds Song's](#), [Multibabel/Lost in Translation](#), [Sarai Net](#), [The Translation Map](#), [Writing Machine Collective](#)

- [MySpace Story](#)
- [Internet Traffic](#)
- [ICANN](#)
- [Mojibake](#)

Nov 29

Work on project 4. **blog**

- [Maria Mencia](#), [Sarai](#), [Writing Machine Collective](#)

Week 15: Conclusions, on the future of the net and e-lit

Dec 4

Work on project 4.

- [Usability](#)

Dec 6

Work on project 4. Present final projects.

Dec 11

Midnight deadline for uploading project 4 to website.

ENGL 303 Blogs

blog: [Ashley Anderson homepage](#)

blog: [Meagan Birmingham homepage](#)

blog: [Joseph Blosser homepage](#)

blog: [Erin Bruner homepage](#)

blog: [Laura Cheatwood homepage](#)

blog: [Summer Cochran homepage](#)

blog: [Amanda Drake homepage](#)

blog: [Maria Goodson homepage](#)

blog: [Emily Hurdzan homepage](#)

blog: [Lindsey Joyce homepage](#)

blog: [Jennifer Maurer homepage](#)

blog: [Max Lopatnikov homepage](#)

blog: [Alyson Murphy homepage](#)

blog: [Caitlin Quarles homepage](#)

blog: [Lewis Staubs homepage](#)

blog: [Cathy Walter homepage](#)

Project 4 Groups

Anderson, Cheatwood, Hurdzan, Murphy
Birmingham, Cochran, Joyce, Quarles
Blosser, Drake, Lopatnikov, Staubs
Goodson, Maurer, Turner, Walter

Useful Links

[WWW Consortium \(the reference for website specifics\)](#)

[Hypertext Terms](#)

[WWW Style](#)

[The GIMP, an alternative to Photoshop](#)

[CSS Official Reference](#)

[US Gov. Usability Guidelines](#)

[How Children Use the Web](#)

[How People with Disabilities Use the Web](#)

[k10k Designer Site](#)

[Alternative Reality Gaming](#)

[Cloudmakers/The Beast](#)

[Vanishing Point Game](#)

[Designing Interfaces Web Site](#)

[SL Learning Environments](#)

[Julian Dibbell's Page](#)

[Play Money Wiki](#)

[Test your webpage's usability](#)