

## Writing Digital Media

### First Draft Syllabus Provost's Mentored Teaching Fellowship

**Units: 4**  
**Spring 2017 - Day - Time**  
**Lecture/Discussion/Studio**  
**3 hours/week**

**Location:**  
**Instructor: Samantha Gorman**  
**Office: TBA**  
**Office Hours: TBA**  
**Contact Info: [gormans@usc.edu](mailto:gormans@usc.edu)**

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The digital age is not only expanding the means and methods of how we read and write, but also the notion of the "Literary". As artists, scholars and writers we must be mindful of how our work is influenced by the immediacy of this cultural shift. Therefore, this course will focus on composing writing that reflects on, and makes use of, the potentials offered by digital technology. Possible, but not limited, avenues for exploration include: Hypertext, Interactive Fiction, net.art, Flash Poetry, Code Work, Generative Literature, 3d Narrative, Installation, Video, and Sound Poetry. Our reflective writing practice will embrace a three-fold approach: art practice, discussion of theory, and review of history/context. Both print and digital sources will be consulted for critical vocabulary and historical foundation relevant to student projects.

This course explores Writing for Digital Media as a language-driven process that requires one or more of the following properties/methods and inscribes these properties/methods back into the work itself through programmable and networked writing tools:

- \* hypertextuality
- \* intermedia/transmedia (using digital encoding to cross-refer from medium to medium)
- \* temporality (that is enabled or generated by digital media, e.g. animation)
- \* expressive processing
- \* network-enabled collaborative/social composition/performance

Writing for Digital Media welcomes students with diverse interests and skill sets. Both beginning students with no technical experience and students who are comfortable working within specific media are encouraged to apply. The only prerequisite is an interest in investigating the intersection of creative writing and digital culture. A version of this class has been taught at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. It has been modified extensively to serve the unique needs of my department and the students of USC. I look forward to the opportunity to develop this class further with my faculty mentor and the Teaching Fellowship Advisors.

## AIMS

1. Create works of Digital Literature that contribute knowledge towards advancing the field. [practice-based]
2. Deepen our understanding of the craft of writing and the significance of its contemporary digital permutations.
3. Gain exposure to different genres and methods of working. Consider a broader historical and artistic context.
3. Have theory and discussion/topics inform practice and be of relevance to student projects. [practice-led]
4. Develop an appreciation for the scope, intermediality and possibility of Writing for Digital Media.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Reflect on the writing process: Identify defining characteristics of a medium and ask what is essential about writing for it.
2. Build a critical vocabulary to talk about our work and understand the traditions it emerges from.
3. Situate our learning within a historical framework of artists, approaches, and key ideas.
4. Experience work by artists from a variety of media, backgrounds and genres. Reflect on how projects impact our own practice and ideas of the "literary".
5. Learn new tools or improve on current skills, but keep focused on essentials of what is simple, effective and can be done in a timely manner.
7. Engage with a combination of theory, artwork, primary and secondary sources that satisfy course aims.

### Personal Note:

There is much to do about what is "digital literature", "electronic writing", "mediated text" and the anxiety of trying to classify what it is and is not both helps and hinders our ability to talk coherently about it. In this course we will definitely touch on the benefits and drawbacks of canonization and genre definition, but I personally have a really wide definition. I feel like seminars should be a haven for writers and artists using text to explore the process of composition in a variety of new and emerging encryption technologies outside of cannon. As we work together to explore the parameters of writing for these so called "encryption technologies" we will question how text and media coalesce and converge. What is the materiality of composition practice in new technology? How does it effect how we compose? How does it effect how we read? What are some of the considerations for *integrating* text with media? How can maximum evocative impact and aesthetic effect be achieved? Is good aesthetic objective?

## COURSE STRUCTURE

Writing Digital Media unfolds over 15 weeks. It begins with a three-part overview of historical projects, artists, and ideas in the field. It then builds off that context to teach units that address different mediums and methodologies for working with writing and digital media: cinema, the book, conceptual art, internet culture, games, performance and generative processes. Units contain combinations of exposure to new material, historical overview, theory and studio practice. This is a Web-Enhanced course with course material and archives hosted at the courses website. When appropriate reading excerpts from a longer text will be posted on Blackboard.

## REQUIRED PHYSICAL TEXTS

Hayles, Katherine N. *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008.

Montfort, Nick, and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, eds. *The New Media Reader*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003.

A majority of the reading/screenings will be electronic and freely available online. In the event that this is not the case, I will make electronic articles and materials available on Blackboard.

## **GRADING BREAKDOWN**

10%: Participation: Discussion, Critique, Class Labs and Exercises

30%: Midterm Paper

40%: Final Project

20%: Sketch Exercises, Response Papers and Presentations

## **DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS**

I favor a compassionate yet firm approach to course management. Therefore, it is fair to be upfront about my grading practices. I pay attention and keep notes on participation, exercises, attendance, and reading completion. In terms of major projects and papers, I grade for quality and effort. Quality is comprised of level of sophistication/understanding, effect, and use of class concepts. Weeks before the deadline, rubrics and hand-outs will be distributed for midterm paper and final project. We will also spend class time discussing expectations. Level of sophistication does not mean how “advanced” a project is technically. Rather, it represents how much thought went into it and how it shows understanding of class concepts, yet takes original risks. Projects will be bolstered by readings in theory, historical context and creative practice. Reading can include theory, page based literature, reviews, social networking sites, video games, Internet memes and hybrids between these categories.

### Sketch Exercises/Critical Responses

Certain weeks on the schedule (excluding weeks leading up to your midterm and final) I will ask for responses to the themes of take-home critical readings and artist screenings. Themes can be addressed critically or creatively. A critical response could take the form of a one-page paper that analyzes or reviews the week’s assigned readings. You may also bring up questions that you’d like to pose to the class for discussion. A creative response could take the form of a treatment or pitch for a larger project, a quick mini project in a medium of your choice, a direct emulation of one of the artists. . .

Responses will be referenced during the next week’s reading discussion. The response can be short as long as it demonstrates appropriate thought and effort. Students are welcome to run their exercises by me during the week. The main purpose of these exercises are to encourage thinking about the course materials and plant seeds for the midterm paper and project.

### Midterm: Research/Analysis paper [6-8 pages]

For the midterm you will execute a short research paper that explores a digital writing project or a genre/form of writing in digital media. Your topic can be an extension of class material or forms of digital writing you’ve found in the wider world. Your research should show examples, review approaches and deliver a hypothesis on how the work(s) could be stronger. For example, if your research is on eBook production, you could show different examples of interactive eBooks, analyze how the examples integrate story and interaction and provide a hypothesis for how this integration could be improved.

### Final Capstone Project

We will meet after your midterm to talk about your final project. Ideally, it will be informed by the research and hypothesis you generated during your midterm paper. At the beginning of your creative project, you will define a series of questions or objectives that you hope to address in the course of making your work. You will be asked to present these in a written artist statement when you turn in your project.

## ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

Assignments will be turned in on the day noted in the course schedule unless otherwise adjusted by both the instructor and the class in advance of the deadline. An online submission process will be available through Blackboard.

## ADDITIONAL POLICIES

### *Attendance and Participation:*

It is imperative to be engaged in class. Taking part in the course reflects an informal contract between your instructor, your peers and yourself. All members must be punctual, respectful, and informed participants. Therefore, you are expected to do all required reading and come to class prepared. To facilitate this preparation, you will be required to do occasional response papers and sketch exercises that respond to the material. Please see assignment section.

Attendance is Mandatory and will be taken at the start of class. Consistently arriving more than ten minutes late will incur a grading penalty of dropping a grade (from A to A-). You are allowed one unexcused absence over the course of the semester. Each further unexcused absence will lower your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. Students are expected to be responsible for any material missed.

### *Extenuating Circumstance, Health/Wellness and Disability/Counseling:*

That said. Please come to me if you have, or anticipate, an extenuating circumstance. Please take your health responsibly and plan as in advance as you can if you may miss a class. Excused absences are those either covered by a doctor's note or letter/documentation from disability office, or at the discretion of the professor in consultation with the Department Chair.

### *Use of Electronic Devices:*

Electronic devices are of course permitted for note taking and the type of work we do. However, checking email, browsing the internet, viewing social media is distracting and rude to myself and your fellow classmates. On the first day, we as a class will decide on an appropriate response if someone is using technology outside of class work.

### *Support Systems*

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://ali.usc.edu/>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## **ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity or to the Department of Public Safety. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources.

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

## **CITATION/BEST PRACTICES**

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Media Arts + Practice seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. Four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. There are several different citation styles and practices; please ask your professor(s) what style manual s/he would prefer.

## SCHEDULE

A classroom is a community. Students should have input in their own learning. The following schedule may be altered depending on responses to first week student surveys.

### **Week 1: What is Digitally Mediated Writing? Towards a Definition. . .**

Introduce the course and expectations. Show samples of a variety of approaches and methodologies. Invite students to share their pre-formed idea of what writing for digital media might mean.

Dreamlife: [http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans\\_the\\_dreamlife\\_of\\_letters/dreamlife\\_index.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans_the_dreamlife_of_letters/dreamlife_index.html)

Jason Nelson: <http://www.secrettechnology.com/>

Graffiti Research Lab: <http://graffitiresearchlab.com/projects/laser-tag/>

Judd: <http://www.judisdaid.com/>

Mez <http://www.hotkey.net.au/~netwurker/xor/xor.html>

Kentucky Route 0 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pvkCYNhf7M>

Eliza: <http://www-ai.ijs.si/eliza/eliza.html>

Address debates in genre classification. Raise the question of genre, cannon and categorization that will will interrogate throughout the semester.

If time: Execute in class exercise: Let's start fresh to compare our conceptions now with our ideas at the end of the semester:

Create a draft/description of a project you would make that addresses Writing for/of Digital Media.you may do this either as a description in text document form  
or begin to play around with a medium/digital strategy.

### **Due Next Week**

Reading:

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Electronic Literature: What Is It?" *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2008, p. 1-42. [Earlier web version at Electronic Literature Organization: PAD \(2007\)](#).

Brian Kim Stefens. "Privileging Language: The Text in Electronic Writing"  
<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/databased>

Sketch Exercise or Critical Response #1

### **Week 2 – DUE: Reading & Exercise #1**

Socratic Seminar discussion and showcase of work responding to readings

Intro to Digital Writing History and Context Part 1:

Guillaume Apollinaire: <http://www.ubu.com/historical/app/index.html>

Stéphane Mallarmé: <http://www.ubu.com/historical/mallarme/index.html>

John Cage: Graphical Mesostics from "M" (1967-72): <http://www.ubu.com/historical/cage/index.html>

French Lettrists: <http://www.ubu.com/historical/letterists/index.html>

Jackson MacLow: <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen8/youngTurtle.html>

Hannah Weiner: one page of code poems <http://www.jstor.org/pss/20598863>

Class Lab: Generation, Oulipo and "The Cut up Method"

Briefly introduce concepts of "recombinant poetics" and "generative literature"

Listen to William Burroughs read his take on the method and excerpts from a poem.

Follow Burroughs' instructions. Collage with scissors, tape, and media "sources."

### Due Next Week

Reading:

"The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin" in New Media Reader pg. 89-91

"For a Potential Analysis of Combinatorial Literature" in The Oulipo section of the New Media Reader. pg. 147-187

Theory Excerpts from Funkhouser, Chris. Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 2007. Print.

Sketch Exercise or Critical Response #2

### **Week 3 – DUE: Reading & Exercise #2**

Socratic Seminar discussion and showcase of work responding to readings

The early days: A brief overview of Literary Experiments of the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s

Hypertext and Hypercard

Internet Killed the HyperText Star (until Twine, etc.)

Electronic Literature Collection V.1 - V.3

<http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>

<http://collection.eliterature.org/2/>

Debates on Archiving Digitally Mediated Writing: Digital Humanities

Class Exercise: Choral Reading

Read Hypertext Patchwork Girl by Shelly Jackson. If time the work of Emily Short.

### Due Next Week

Reading:

Excerpts from Morris, Adalaide Kirby, and Thomas Swiss. *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2006. Print.

<http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>

<http://collection.eliterature.org/2/>

Prepare a work on the ELC for a five minute presentation

### **Week 4 – DUE: Reading & Presentation**

Present on ELC Works

Lecture- The contemporary state of Writing Digital Media: Between the Avant-Garde and Industry

<http://futureofstorytelling.org/>

<http://www.sundance.org/festivals/sundance-film-festival/program/NFF-guide>

<https://www.nfb.ca/interactive>

<http://thestoryoftelling.com/brand-story-services/>

Electronic Lit Vol. 3

<https://www.b-reel.com/projects/the-wilderness-downtown>

flarf writing

John Cayley Alexa & Writing Readers

Go over Hand-out for Midterm Paper, Rubric

### Due Next Week

Reading:

Excerpts from Jhave Johnston (forthcoming from MIT Press: *Aesthetic Animism: Digital Poetry's Ontological Implications*).

Abra: A Living Text <http://www.a-b-r-a.com/>

Ian Hatcher: <https://vimeo.com/38712823>

Dreaming Methods: <http://dreamingmethods.com/>

Sketch Exercise or Critical Response #3

### **Week 5 – DUE: Reading & Exercise #3**

Socratic Seminar discussion and showcase of work responding to readings

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Cinematic, “Expanded Cinema” and Kinetic Typography

Young Hai Chang “[Dakota](#)”

[Stephen Fry Kinetic Typography](#)

[Bembo Zoo](#)

body text projections by [John Ziemann](#)

talan memmot [nonce.executor](#) + [Ingenstans](#)

early work by [Michael Snow](#)

Goddard: [Goodbye to Language](#)

#### Due Next Week

Reading:

Excerpts from Mitchell, W. J. T. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*.

Chicago: U of Chicago, 1994. Print.

PRY: <http://prynovella.com>

Sketch Exercise or Critical Response #4

### **Week 6 DUE: Reading & Exercise #4**

Socratic Seminar discussion and showcase of work responding to readings

Artist talk on PRY [cinema/book]

Workshop on spatial narrative and attentional design.

#### Due Next Week

Midterm outlines/topics and student/instructor individual meeting schedule

### **Week 7 DUE: Midterm Outlines**

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Materiality and “Bookishness”

<https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/moss-graffiti>

Jenny Holtzer [Short Vid on some of her work](#)

“Emoji Dick” <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/fred/emoji-dick>

Between Page and Screen <http://www.betweenpageandscreen.com/>

Ice-Bound Concordance <http://www.ice-bound.com/>

<http://www.easylife.org/desktop/desktops/breeze.jpg>

Jessica Pressman - Visiting Theorist on Digital Materiality and the Book



### Due Next Week

Reading:

\*"[Flarf is Dionysus. Conceptual Writing is Apollo.](#)"

and.. Flarf? ([Kasey and Gary Sullivan](#))

<http://mainstreampoetry.blogspot.com/>

Select a work from [UBUWEB: Conceptual Writing Archive](#) to discuss in class.

### **Week 8: DUE Browse Ubuweb**

Short Presentations

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Conceptual Writing. Conceptual Writing and Implications of Race.

Goldsmith: [Day](#) & [Traffic](#) & [Head Citations](#)

Vanessa Place: [About](#) & "[Forgiveness](#)" & "[After Lyn Hejinian](#)"

Carolyn Bergvall [Her site](#)

Brian Kim Stefans: [Vaneigem series](#)

["The Dullest Blog in the World"](#)

["Entropy 8"](#)

["Blackness for Sale"](#)

["Unphotographable Blog"](#)

["On the Bro'd"](#)

### Due Next Week

Reading:

[Twitterature OH MY!](#)

Romeo and Juliet in Twitter <http://www.suchtweetsorrow.com/>

[http://www.cracked.com/photoplasty\\_137\\_facebook-fails-iconic-fictional-characters/](http://www.cracked.com/photoplasty_137_facebook-fails-iconic-fictional-characters/)

Living News Papers <http://www.judisdaid.com/livingnewspapers.php>

Midterms!

### **Week 9 Midterm Projects Due**

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Net Art, Web Culture and Memes

<http://www.jodi.org/>

Jason Nelson: <http://www.secretechnology.com/>

Meme Share Party!

Examining Internet Culture in our Daily Lives.

Effects of Anonymity, Access, Crowd

Visit: Twitter Bot Artist Mark Sample

### Due Next Week

Reading:

Table 38.1 "*The six qualitative elements of structure in drama and human-computer activity*" found in "*Two*" by Brenda Laurel pg. 565 of *The New Media Reader*.

Excerpt from Birringer, Johannes. "Performance, Technology, & Science. New York: PAJ, 2008.

Laurie Anderson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osHBA6YAHao>

Sondheim AVATARS.TXT at <http://www.alansondheim.org/AVATARS.TXT>

Sketch Exercise or Critical Response #5

## Week 10: DUE Reading & Exercise #5

Socratic Seminar discussion and showcase of work responding to readings

Laurie Anderson "Language is a Virus" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvOoR8m0oms>

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Performance, Writing and Technology

Screenings

Judisdaid The Precession <http://www.judisdaid.com/precession.php>

Touching Words <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk3XpVMGsk8>

Cris Cheek <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyGniEFuXCk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6b2kKsq-IP8>

Angela Washko <http://angelawashko.com/home.html>

<https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2008-March/000282.html> Blast Theory: Uncle Roy All

Around [http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work\\_uncleroy.html](http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_uncleroy.html)

Sondheim: <http://eyebeam.org/people/alan-sondheim>

### Due Next Week

Spring Break! Work on Finals

## Week 11

SPRING! BREAK

## Week 12

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Intersection of Games and Literature: Case Studies on Reader Agency

Play

"Adventure" in "the Interactive Fiction" 1970s designation of the *New Media Reader* html CD.

file:///Volumes/NewMediaReader/1970s/IF/index.html

"Galatea" in the CD that comes with Hayles Electronic Literature ELC Vol. One/For\_Mac/Galatea.z8

Device 6 <http://simogo.com/work/device-6/>

Discuss

80 Days: <http://www.inklestudios.com/80days/>

Grand Theft Auto:

Kentucky Route 0

Emily is Away

Screen by Noah Wardip-Fruin et. al.

### Due Next Week

Read:

Excerpts from Ensslin, Astrid. *Literary Gaming*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2014.

Play:

"The Path" by Tales of Tales

the Path: <http://grandmothers-house.net/>

free prologue at: <http://grandmothers-house.net/and-stay-on-the-path/>

**Week 13**

Genres & Methods

Lecture: Return to the Start: Codework and Generative Literature

Nick Montfort <http://nickm.com/post/2011/07/who-grabbed-my-gorge/>  
<http://nickm.com/>

Daniel Howe rednoise <http://www.rednoise.org/pdal/>

Markov Chain Demonstration

generators: [http://www.languageisavirus.com/automatic\\_poetry\\_generator.html#.VrnCxJMrlyk](http://www.languageisavirus.com/automatic_poetry_generator.html#.VrnCxJMrlyk)

Class CodeWork Poetry Lab

**Due Next Week**

Read:

Mez Breeze Codework <http://disapposable.blogspot.com/>

Talan Memmott: "On Codework a Phenomenology of an Anti-Genre"

**Week 14**

Socratic Seminar and Discussions of Reading

In class studio time and one-on-one assistance with final projects.

**Week 15 FINAL EXAMINATION/PRESENTATION**

Students present and submit final capstone projects.