

Media-Specific Literary Analysis: Reading Between the Page and Screen

(A course designed for senior undergraduates in the Humanities)

Course Description

What happens to narrative when text moves from the page to screen? This course examines works of print and digital literature in order to understand the many ways that we read and communicate information, covering texts as diverse as Mark Z. Danielewski's print novel *House of Leaves* (2000), Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries' digital poem *Into the Night* (2007), and independent video game *Journey* (2012). Reading between the page and screen will enable us to draw discursive and material comparisons between multi-modal literary works. In contemporary culture, digital media are particularly influencing attention, communication, education, and recreation; in our course, we will therefore focus on digital media's effect on reading patterns, such as the increasing prevalence of hyper-attentive reading methods. We will also explore contemporary forms of 'reading' print and digital narratives through the lens of media archaeology studies and digital humanities, and will finish the semester by considering the future of literature as an educational discipline.

Disciplines within the Humanities are founded on a print-based tradition of knowledge and culture. Millennial students' social and study habits suggest that members of this class will be proficient in the use of smart phones, computers, and the web,* and that such skills will be necessary for careers related to the types of close readings and complex understandings encouraged by the Humanities. This course is designed to interrogate 21st century reading patterns by undertaking media-specific analysis that equips students with the tools to interpret and communicate complex narratives through various medial platforms. Our class discussion will be supported with readings from Katherine Hayles' *Writing Machines* (2002) and Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, and Benjamin J. Robertson's *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*. Further critical readings from scholars such as Jessica Pressman, David Ciccoricco, Johanna Drucker, and Ian Bogost will also be referenced.

* Note that no technological expertise is explicitly required for this course; a mixture of lectures and workshops will ensure that we learn the skills required to navigate new texts and improve our digital literacy. Lectures (noted "L" in the syllabus) will undertake a traditional format in which we discuss course material, while workshops ("W") offer the opportunity to experiment with reading digital texts in a lab environment.

Expected Learning Outcomes/Course Goals

- To hone your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by analyzing multi-modal literature
- To identify material synergies and divergences between print-based and digital-born literary narratives
- To become familiar with the field of digital literature by examining hypertext fictions, digital poetry, digital fictions, and video games
- To gain an appreciation for literary experimentation and innovation

- To specifically examine 21st-century reading patterns in order to learn the skills required to interpret and communicate complex narratives through various medial platforms
- To appreciate literature as a cultural form that can recognize, re-instate, and/or resist social discriminations and biases

Required Texts

Danieleweski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. 2nd Ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000. Print.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. London: The MIT Press, 2002. Print.

Ryan, Marie-Laure, Lori Emerson, and Benjamin J. Robertson. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Print.

Supplementary texts

All other texts will be provided via the course website or accessed in the lab.

Assignments and grades

Tweets 15%

Blog posts 25%

Essay 20%

Media Archeology Lab project 15%

Class project 25%

Tweets: Beginning the second week of class, tweet at least one response to the set readings for the week (you will need to set up a twitter account if you do not already have one). Be sure to include the handle #RBTPAS in your tweet so that we can easily follow one another's communications. This an opportunity for you to step outside of formal academic discourse and engage with the wider community; feel free to tweet at specific individuals and to use other appropriate hashtags to join larger Twitter conversations.

Blog posts: For Weeks 2-11, post a reflection of at least 300 words to our WordPress blog. You should submit your post by 5pm Mondays, responding to the designated readings for that week. I do not expect that you complete a meticulous essay for each post, and they can be informal in style, but posts must demonstrate critical engagement with a course reading and/or lecture material. You are also welcome to respond to another student's post in lieu of an individual reflection.

Essay: This is a five-page formal analysis paper due in Week 7 that follows the completion of the first half of the course. A choice of essay questions will be communicated closer to this date.

Media Archaeology Lab Project: Working in small groups at the Media Archaeology Lab (1320 Grandview Ave, Boulder CO), you will undertake one of the three projects specified in the accompanying “MAL project briefs” document. The resulting two-page write-up is due in the penultimate week of class.

Class project: This final project will meld your writing skills with critical making as we build a digital platform to showcase our work. Further guidelines will be issued toward the end of the semester.

Course Syllabus

The following timetable lays out the lecture (“L”) and workshop (“W”) format for each week, as well the readings you are to complete for each lesson.

Note that readings from *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* are encyclopaedia-like entries rather than articles; therefore the reading load, while appearing substantial, should be manageable. It is advisable to get a head start on the longest text, *House of Leaves*, as soon as possible.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday	Assessment
1	Lecture: Introduction and the close reading of a print narratives	<p>L: Media-specific analysis</p> <p>N. Katherine Hayles, <i>Writing Machines</i> (2002), introduction and chapters one</p> <p>Jessica Pressman. “Old Media / New Media.” <i>The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media</i> (2014) (JHGDM)</p> <p>Anna Munster, “Materiality,” JHGDM</p>	<p>L: Media-specific analysis</p> <p>Jay David Bolter, “Remediation,” JHGDM</p> <p>Jan-Noel Thon, “Narrativity,” JHGDM</p> <p>Jan-Noel Thon, “Mediality,” JHGDM</p>	

2	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p>Mark Z. Danielewski, <i>House of Leaves</i> (2000) chapters 1-4</p>	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p><i>House of Leaves</i> chapters 5-9</p>	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p><i>House of Leaves</i> chapters 10-14</p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
3	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p><i>House of Leaves</i> chapters 15-19</p>	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p><i>House of Leaves</i> chapters 20-23</p>	<p>L: Experimental print fictions</p> <p><i>Writing Machines</i>, chapter eight</p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
4	<p>L: Introducing digital literature</p> <p>Scott Rettberg, "Electronic Literature," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Workshop: Hypertext fictions</p> <p>Stuart Moulthrop, <i>Victory Garden</i> (1992)</p>	<p>L: Hypertext fictions</p> <p>Astrid Ensslin, "Hypertextuality," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Anja Rau, "Storyspace," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Astrid Ensslin, "Non-Linearity," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
5	<p>L: Hypertext fictions</p> <p>Marie-Laure Ryan, "Spatiality of Digital Media," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Winfried Noth, "Self-Reflexivity in Electronic Art," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>W: Hypertext fictions</p> <p>Deena Larsen, <i>Disappearing Rain</i> (2000)</p>	<p>L: Hypertext fictions</p> <p>Kate Mondloch, "Cyberfeminism," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Ruth Page, "Gender and Media Use," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Marco Caricciola, "Virtual bodies," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
6	<p>W: Digital poetry</p> <p>Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, <i>Artist's Statement No. 45,730,944: The Perfect Web Site (Artist's Statement)</i> (2001)</p> <p>Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries (<i>Out of the Internet and Into the Night</i>) (2007)</p>	<p>L: Digital poetry</p> <p>David Golumbia, "Characteristics of Digital Media," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Robert Simanowski, "Digital and Net art," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Leonardo Flores, "Digital Poetry," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>W: Digital poetry</p> <p>Andy Campbell, <i>Dim O'Gauble</i> (2007)</p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>

7	<p>L: Digital poetry</p> <p>Nick Montfort and Ian Bogost, “Platform,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Carl Therrien, “Interface,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Lori Emerson, “Glitch Aesthetics,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Digital poetry</p> <p>Steven Edward Doran, “Identity,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Peter Mechant and Jan Van Looy, “Interactivity,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Performance and immersion</p> <p>Ragnhild Tronstad, “Performance,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Marie-Laure Ryan, “Interactive Narrative,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Essay due</p> <p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
8	<p>W: Digital fiction</p> <p>Erik Loyer, <i>Chroma</i> (2000)</p>	<p>L: Digital fiction</p> <p>Maria Enberg, “Digital Fiction,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Digital fiction</p> <p>Michael Heim, “Virtuality,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
9	<p>W: Digital fiction</p> <p>Erik Loyer, <i>Chroma</i> (2000)</p>	<p>L: Digital fiction</p> <p>Kim Knight, “Race and Ethnicity,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Digital fiction</p> <p>Raine Koskimaa, “Cyborg and posthuman,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
10	<p>W: Video games</p> <p><i>The Last of Us</i> (2013)</p> <p><i>The Wolf Among Us</i> (2013)</p>	<p>L: Video games</p> <p>Travis L. Ross, “Game Theory,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Jespar Juul, “Gameplay,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Video games</p> <p>Rune Klevjer, “Cut Scenes,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>David Ciccoricco, “Games as Stories,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
11	<p>W: Video games</p> <p><i>Journey</i> (2012)</p> <p><i>Shadow of the Colossus</i> (2005)</p>	<p>L: Video games</p> <p>David Ciccoricco, “Games as Art/Literature,” <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Celia Pearce, “Independent and Art Games,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Video games</p> <p>Brian Magerko, “Games as Education,” <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Blog post</p> <p>Tweet</p>
12	<p>Mid-semester break</p>	<p>Mid-semester break</p>	<p>Mid-semester break</p>	

13	<p>L: Media Archaeology</p> <p>Jussi Parikka, "History of Computers," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Matthew Fuller, "Software Studies," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>W: Media Archaeology Lab</p> <p>Field trip to the Media Archaeology Lab (general explorations)</p>	<p>W: Media Archaeology Lab</p> <p>Field trip to the Media Archaeology Lab (begin your MAL project)</p>	Tweet
14	<p>L: Digital humanities</p> <p>Matthew K. Gold, "Digital Humanities," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: Digital humanities</p> <p>E. Gabriela Coleman, "Hacker," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>L: The future of literary narrative</p> <p>Charles Ess, "Ethics in Digital Media," <i>JHGDM</i></p> <p>Anne Mangen and Jean-Luc Velay, "Cognitive Implications of New Media," <i>JHGDM</i></p>	<p>Media Archaeology Lab project due</p> <p>Tweet</p>
15	<p>L: Loose Ends</p> <p>Wrapping up any final lecture notes and beginning website building for the collaborative final project</p>	<p>W: Final workshop</p> <p>Workshopping the final class project</p>	<p>W: Final workshop</p> <p>Workshopping the final class project</p>	Class project due