WRITING FOR INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Instructor: KYLE BOHUNICKY	CREDIT HOURS: 3
Office location/Hours: TURLINGTON 4367/M PERIODS 5 AND 6	*CLASS MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION: M 7, W 7 - 8; NRG 0120*
Course Website: HTTP://DIGITALWORLDS.UFL.EDU/PROGRAMS/BA-IN-DAS/ **CANVAS SITE:** LSS.AT.UFL.EDU	COURSE NUMBER: DIG 4154
CONTACT EMAIL: KBOHUNICKY@UFL.EDU	*Semester/Year: Fall 2016*

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE: Writers and designers often use "interactivity" to distinguish storytelling with digital media from other media types. Nick Montfort explains that interactivity refers to "computer processes that respond to user input during execution" (7), and Alexander Galloway adds that, for readers, "What used to be primarily the domain of eyes and looking is now more likely that of muscles and doing, *thumbs*, to be sure, and what used to be the act of reading is now the act of doing…there has emerged in recent years a whole new medium, computers and in particular video games, whose foundation is not in looking and reading but in the instigation of material change through action" (3 – 4). Applied to story design, interactivity thus refers to participatory narratives that invite and respond to consequential and deeply transformative actions from an audience.

Building on these ideas, our course explores some of the major theories behind creating and discussing interactive stories. Throughout the semester, we will grapple with various approaches to interactive story design and discuss how to incorporate various interactive storytelling elements into media. By the end of the course, students will submit a short piece of interactive media that incorporates the ideas they have encountered throughout the semester.

COURSE GOALS AND/OR OBJECTIVES: *By the end of this course, students will be able to:*
1. Describe and implement diverse approaches and techniques for writing engaging interactive stories—specifically for digital games
2. Develop strategies for working collaboratively on writing and producing media
3. Creatively imagine a digital media project and write documents that support the development and production of the project

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: *Students can communicate directly with the instructor regarding the course material. Students are also encouraged to use e-mail. E-mails must demonstrate a formal tone and style and, unless absolutely urgent, will be responded to M-F from 9 AM to 5 PM.*

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE:
- GameSalad Game Developer (http://gamesalad.com/)
- GameMaker (http://www.yoyogames.com/gamemaker)

- Unity (https://unity3d.com/)
- Twine (https://twinery.org/)

REQUIRED TEXTS AND SOFTWARE: All course readings are available through our Canvas page under the "Modules" section. Steam is required for certain games. Microsoft Word is required for written assignments.

NOTE ON INSTRUCTION: This is a discussion-based course, not a lecture. As such, the value of this class will depend largely on what and how you decide to contribute to it. I expect everyone to participate in discussion by carefully engaging with the assigned readings. Many of these texts are complex, and some may challenge your conception of interactive media/stories, so careful reading and note taking is necessary. Give yourself enough time to work through the texts and approach each reading/discussion generously and with an open-mind.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

This schedule is only a guide and is subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments and readings are due the day they are listed on the syllabus, not the following day.

Date	Class Discussion
Aug 22nd	**Topic** Course Introduction; Syllabus Review; Major Assignments
	Defining "Story"
Aug 24th	**Topic** Storytelling **Assignment** Read: Crawford Chapter 1 Play: *Passage* Review: Effective and weak responses
Aug 29th	**Topic** Designing Stories **Assignment** Read: Adams Chapter 7 Play: *Unmanned*

Aug 31st	**Topic** Writing Stories **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 1 Play: *Façade* **Response:** Choose one game we have played and describe the various ways that it tells its story. Pay attention to how space, input, characters, menus, etc. contribute to the story telling. Include direct evidence from the media and texts we have read thus far. Bring your response to class.
Sept 5th	**Holiday, no class**
	Defining "Interaction"
Sept 7th	**Topic** Interactivity **Assignment** Read: Salen and Zimmerman Chapter 6; Crawford Chapter 2 Play: *Colossal Cave Adventure*, *Loss of Grasp*
Sept 12th	**Topic** Interaction Continued **Assignment** Read: Murray Intro and Chapter 5; Salen and Zimmerman Chapter 18 Play: *The Stanley Parable*
Sept 14th	**Topic** Story Structure **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 2 **Response:** By now you should have read through Stern's shapes in "Making Shapely Fiction." For class, create your own shape and describe how it could be incorporated into a story. Bring copy to class.

Sept 19th	**Topic** Writing Cybertexts **Assignment** Read: Aarseth Chapter 1 Play: *Afternoon*
Sept 21st	**Topic** Discuss "Studying Shapely Fiction" **Assignment** **Due:** "Studying Shapely Fiction," submit digital version online and bring hard copy to class
Sept 26th	**Topic** Discuss "Proposal" and "Scripting" Assignment **Assignment** Read: Miller Chapter 10
Sept 28th	**Topic** Interactive Stories: Hypertext and Interactive Fiction **Assignment** Read: Montfort "Cybertext Killed the Hypertext Star" Play: *Depression Quest* OR *Player 2*
Oct 3rd	**Topic** Wrapping up "Interactive Storytelling" **Assignment** Read: Crawford Chapter 3 **Response:** Choose a hypertext, interactive fiction, or text adventure we have discussed and explain how you think its **design** may have influenced or is currently influencing contemporary interactive media. Be sure to cite direct evidence from the media and select specific examples of contemporary interactive media. Bring your response to class.
	Writing Interactive Stories
Oct 5th	**Topic** Action **Assignment**

	Read: Anthropy and Clark Chapters 1 and 2 **Response:** Select a piece of interactive media and create a list of all the forms of interaction it provides between player and game world (and, if possible, players and players). How do these exchanges contribute to the story? Bring this list to class.
Oct 10th	**Topic** Writing Action **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 7 **Response:** Digital stories typically rely on guns and explosions to convey action. Instead, write an action-based sequence around something dull or mundane such as watering plants or cleaning a litterbox. Next, describe how you might incorporate that scene into an interactive media. Responses should not simply rely on hyperbolic language to convey action. Use Hart's chapter for guidance.
Oct 12th	**Topic** Characters **Assignment** Read: Adams Chapter 6
Oct 17th	**Topic** Writing Characters **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 5 **Response:** Write two paragraphs outlining a character in your interactive media. Character profile should include personality, history, motivations, ethics, etc. Bring these profiles to class.
Oct 19th	**Topic** Perspective **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 3
Oct 24th	**Topic** Designing Perspectives **Assignment** Read: Bogost "The Rhetoric of Games"

	Play: *September 12th* OR *Darfur is Dying*
Oct 26th	**Topic** Play **Assignment** Read: Salen and Zimmerman Chapters 3, 22, 26
Oct 31st	**Topic** Designing Play **Assignment** Read: Adams Chapter 9 **Response:** Select a piece of interactive media and consider how the writing/narrative supports and motivates play. Bring your response to class.
Nov 2nd	**SLSA Conference, meet with group to discuss media project** <u>Due</u>: Proposal and Scripting Assignment
Nov 7th	**Topic** Writing Scenes **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 6
Nov 9th	**Topic** Designing Scenes **Assignment** Read: Anthropy and Clark Chapter 3
Nov 14th	**Topic** Scenes and Space Presenter(s): **Assignment** Read: Wolf "Theorizing Navigable Space in Video Games" **Response:** Select a piece of interactive media that features a space you find significant (emotionally, intellectually, narratively, etc.) and describe why this space matters to you. What makes this space significant or emotionally resonant? Bring this response to class.
Nov 16th	**Topic** Space

	Assignment Read: Jenkins "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" Play: *Gone Home*
Nov 21st	**Topic** Designing Voice and Style **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 4 Play: *The Beginner's Guide*
Nov 23rd	**No Class, Holiday**
Nov 28th	**Topic** Writing Dialogue **Assignment** Read: Hart Chapter 8 Play: *Oxenfree*
Nov 30th	**Topic** Writing Dialogue **Assignment** Read: Miller Chapter 6 Play: *Oxenfree*
Dec 5th	**Topic** Finalizing the prototype **Assignment** Discuss prototype progress
Dec 7th	**Topic** Demo prototypes in class **Assignment** **Media Project due Dec 14th at 5 PM** **We will not meet for our scheduled course final. Please submit your project electronically or with a jump drive in my English Department Mailbox by Dec 14th at 5 PM.**

REQUIRED TEXTS: (AVAILABLE AT THE UF BOOKSTORE OR ONLINE) AND SOFTWARE

1. Everything Unlimited Ltd. *The Beginner's Guide*. 2015.

2. Fullbright Company. *Gone Home*. 2013.
3. Galactic Cafe. *The Stanley Parable*. 2013.
4. Night School Studios. *Oxenfree*. 2016.

EVALUATION OF GRADES

Assignment	Percentage
Attendance/Participation– Students are expected to attend classes and participate in discussions, critique, and group work.	10%
Responses --- A series of written and presented assignments	20%
Midterm Proposal and Script -- You will write a proposal for a short piece of interactive media that may become your final project for the	25%
Final Group Project – Working in small teams, you will produce a short piece of interactive media that draws on the ideas and concepts discussed throughout the course. You will also submit individual analyses of said media	35%

GRADING SCALE:

Letter Grade	% Equivalency	GPA Equivalency
A	94 – 100%	4.0
A-	90 – 93%	3.67
B+	87 – 89%	3.33
B	84 – 86%	3.00
B-	80 – 83%	2.67
C+	77 – 79%	2.33
C	74 – 76%	2.00
C-	70 – 73%	1.67
D+	67 – 69%	1.33
D	64 – 66%	1.00
D-	60 – 63%	.67
E, I, NG, S-U, WF		0.00

More information on grades and grading policies is here:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

COURSE POLICIES:

Writing_For_Interactive_Media_V1_KB_Fall_2016

PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE POLICY:
We value **participation** more than mere **attendance**. Each instructor is responsible for communicating the specific details of what percentage of your grade (if any) will be assigned to participation, and how will class participation be measured and graded.

Real Time [RT] interaction with your peers and the Instructor will empower you to greater achievement. Residential On-Line students should attend class sessions in RT or your participation points may suffer.

In our course, attendance for On-Campus and RT On-Line students is mandatory. Students are allowed **three unexcused absences**. If you miss more than **three classes** during the semester, each additional absence will lower your overall grade by 100 points. If you miss more than **six classes**, you will fail the course. Exempt from this policy are only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, family emergencies, and health issues for which **you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence**.

Additionally, tardiness will not be tolerated. If you are tardy for three class periods, you will receive an unexcused absence.

YOT On-Line students will be expected to stay in sync with the rest of the class, and to achieve their participation portion by contributing to the course discussion page by responding to the topics discussed in class for that day.

COURSE TECHNOLOGY: *The students will be required to have access to, and use a personal computer with the access to the Internet.*

UF POLICIES:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "*We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.* "You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment*." It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates

academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php

PLAGIARISM:
Plagiarism is a violation of the UF honor code. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

"1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student."

Students shall not use unauthorized materials or resources in an academic activity. Unauthorized materials or resources includes any paper or project authored by the student (or another student) "and presented by the student for the satisfaction of any academic requirement if the student previously submitted substantially the same paper or project to satisfy an academic requirement and did not receive express authorization to resubmit the paper or project."

CLASS DEMEANOR:
Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:
Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php.

Writing_For_Interactive_Media_V1_KB_Fall_2016

NETIQUETTE: COMMUNICATION COURTESY:
All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats, more information can be found at:
http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS:
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

GETTING HELP

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:
- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.
Other resources are available at http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help for:
- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents the instructor's current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such chances, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.