EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

FA / FILM 3840 3.0 SECTION M
GAMES AND CINEMA
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Examines the history of expanded forms of cinematic narrative and interactivity within an intermedial context that includes games, environments and computers. Explores the relation between cinema and games, including non-linear modes of storytelling in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Open to non-majors

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

Expanded Course Description

This class offers an in-depth examination of the intermedial encounter between games and cinema through a blend of media theory and media practice. Both games and cinema are time-based, immersive media, however, games are arguably a performative, material, and procedural media in which the player measurably and consequentially interacts with the game world. A theoretical question worth exploring is: how do the shared and distinct formal properties of games and film inform each other, in turn, expanding the limits of their respective grammars? Students are invited to think, play, and create across games and film; to discover new and unrecognized connections and disjunctions between games and film; and to experiment with the filmic and ludic forms at their bleeding edge fringe, engendering new understanding of both. To inform media practice, we engage with three overarching conceptual themes—transmediality, remediation, and gamification: 1) transmediality is examined through the genres of interactive narrative and the live-action role-playing game (LARP); and the structural similarities between puzzle games (i.e., Tetris, Portal, Myst) and puzzle films (i.e., The Matrix, Memento, Inception); 2) remediation is examined through the hybridized form of machinima; and 3) gamification is examined through the relationship between first-person shooter (FPS) games and action/adventure films. Each class consists of a presentation of the weekly topic in combination with screenings. Classes also integrate workshops on Twine interactive narrative, Unity retro-game design, machinima making, and the writing, performing, and filming of a LARP.

COURSE TEXTS AND SOFTWARE TOOLS

Students are encouraged to borrow readings from the York University Library system that will be placed on reserve. If some readings are not available through the library, they will be made available by the instructor. Links to freeware are supplied in this syllabus for students to download on their own laptops—i.e., Twine, Unity, Ren’Py, capture-screen tools, etc.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS
Week 1 (Jan 9). Class Canceled

Week 2 (Jan 16). TRANSMEDIALITY, REMEDIATION, AND GAMIFICATION: DEFINITIONS

Students sign up to lead weekly presentations on assigned readings.

Overview: an introduction to the three concepts of transmediality, remediation, and gamification in framing the relationship between games and cinema.

Required Readings:


Recommended:


“This game is a movie: ‘New Cinema’ explores the altered future of film”

Week 3 (Jan 23): TRANSMEDIALITY–INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE, PART I

Overview: We consider the concept of transmediality through text-based digital interactive narrative—namely, branching and foldback narrative play systems—and how they are reinventing storytelling, gaming, and play.

Examples of interactive narrative: “Depression Quest” by Zoe Quinn, 2013:
http://www.depressionquest.com/#info-section


Required Readings:


https://ludicine.ca/sites/ludicine.ca/files/PICARD%20-%20Video%20Games%20and%20Their%20Relationship%20with%20OtherMedia.pdf

Week 4 (Jan 30). TRANSMEDIALITY–INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE, PART II

Required Readings:


Media-Making Workshop: Twine, an open source, text-based interactive narrative tool. Students are invited to download this software at: http://twinery.org/ and come to class with laptop for a 3-hour Twine making workshop.

Week 5 (Feb 6): REMEDIATION–MACHINIMA AND GAME-BASED FILMMAKING, PART I

Overview: We consider Bolter and Grusin’s concept of remediation in terms of how ‘old’ media—i.e., TV, film, performance, render into digital media. Machinima is an example whereby two distinct media—film and animation—are refashioned or remediated through game engines and gameplay performance.

Screening: “Second Bodies” (2009, 44 min.) Director: Sandra Danilovic https://vimeo.com/29069086

Required Readings:


Demo: Introduce Steam Engine & Games: Flower, Firewatch, Portal 2, Becalm, Dear Esther

Week 6 (Feb 13). REMEDIATION—MACHINIMA AND GAME-BASED FILMMAKING, PART II

Required Readings:


**Media-Making Workshop:** Machinima workshop using capture screen software.  
Suggestion: Stage a scene from *Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet* in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*.

Please download the capture screen software on your laptop:  
https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-best-screen-recorders-capturing-mac-os-x/

Feb 20: Reading Week (No Classes)

**Week 7 (Feb 27). PRESENTATIONS OF GROUP MEDIA PROJECT #1**

& **TRANSMEDIALITY: THE LUDIC AND CINEMATIC PUZZLE**

**Deliverable:** Students present their group media projects #1 (*Twine* or Machinima) for in-class critique and analysis, DUE TODAY.

**Overview:** We examine the concept of transmediality through the structural similarities between puzzle games (i.e., Tetris, Portal, Myst) and puzzle films (i.e., The Matrix, Memento, Inception).

**Screenings/Playings:** Clips from *The Matrix* (Dir. The Wachowskis, 1999), *Memento* (Dir. Christopher Nolan, 2000), and *Inception* (Dir. Christopher Nolan, 2010); *Tetris* (Designer: Alexey Pajitnov, 1984), *Portal* (Valve Corp., 2007), and *Myst* (Producer: Laurie Strand, 1993).

**Required Readings:**


**Week 8 (March 5). TRANSMEDIALITY: THE LUDIC AND CINEMATIC PUZZLE**

**Required reading:**


Also review, online version *Gamer Theory 2.0*:  
http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory2.0/index.html@cat=2.html


**Media Making Workshop:** Unity https://unity.com/ or Ren’Py Visual Novel engine: https://www.renpy.org/

**Demo:** Unity Asset Store & PreFabs

“Simple Unity Game Tutorial” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlKaBl4etrik

Additional Unity Tutorials Playlist: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j48LtUlZkRjU&list=PLPV2KyYb3jR5QFsefuO2RIAgWEz6EvViel

**Week 9 (March 12). GAMIFICATION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FPS GAMES AND ACTION FILMS**

**Theme:** We examine the concept of *gamification* through the relationship between first-person shooter (FPS) games and action/adventure films.

**Required readings:**


**Week 10 (March 19): REMEDIATION: THE LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAYING GAME (LARP), PART I**

Writing, performing, and filming your first LARP game with

**Guest LARP Workshop Facilitator:** Allison Kyran Cole, Game Designer

https://www.allisonkcole.com/

- https://www.indiecade.com/anthology-of-intimacy/
- https://www.allisonkcole.com/promgame/

**Required readings:**


**Week 11 (March 26): REMEDIATION: THE LIVE-ACTION ROLE PLAYING GAME (LARP), PART II**


Boss, Emily Care, Ellingboe, Julia B. Moringstar, Jason, Stark, Lizzie eds. #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, Ch 7: At Work, Stone Skin Press; 2nd edition, 2017

**Media-Making Workshop:** Editing the filmed LARP game into a short film using free editing software.

**Week 12 (April 2). PRESENTATIONS OF GROUP MEDIA PROJECT**

**LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF**

The course is intended to deepen student media practice through an in-depth immersion in three conceptual/thematic areas. Through class discussions, and workshops, students explore key issues in contemporary media practice and the multiple modes in which artists, activists, and creative workers have engaged media. Working collaboratively in teams on and off campus, students are facilitated in developing skills in collective brainstorming, collaboration, and network thinking and sharing. The course is organized in modules of three weeks each. Following each module students will use class time to work on the design, planning, and execution of their creative project.

**GRADED ASSESSMENT**

Class Attendance: **10%**

**Group Media Project 1: 20% Due Week 7**

Group Media Project 2: 20% Due Week 12

**Media project options:**

*Twine* interactive narrative

*Machinima*

*Ren’ Py* visual novel

*Unity*

LARP film
Group-led Reading Presentation: 20% Due Week of Class’ Reading Discussion

Analytical/Critical Essay: 30% Due Week 12
An essay (1000-1200 words) that critically and/or analytically engages with the three overarching concepts—transmediality, remediation, and gamification. Students are invited to answer the theoretical question: how do the shared and distinct formal properties of games and cinema inform each other, in turn, pushing the limits of their respective grammars? Alternatively, students can pursue their own theoretical question by engaging with the above three concepts.

Penalties for late submissions are 10% per day, unless student supplies relevant documentation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

TEXTS USED IN THIS COURSE:
Boss, Emily Care, Ellingboe, Julia B. Moringstar, Jason, Stark, Lizzie eds. #Feminism: A Nano-Game Anthology, Ch 7: At Work, Stone Skin Press; 2nd edition, 2017

Academic Policies /Information
The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) provides a Student Information Sheet that includes:
• York’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures / Academic Integrity Web site
• Access/Disability
• Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants
• Religious Observance Accommodation
• Student Code of Conduct
Additional information:

- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
- Alternate Exam and Test Scheduling
- Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy
  The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (a) the grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and that, (b) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for ‘full year’ courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade.
- Important University Sessional Dates (you will find classes and exams start/end dates, reading/co-curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more.
  http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm
- "20% Rule"
  No examinations or tests collectively worth more than 20% of the final grade in a course will be given during the final 14 calendar days of classes in a term. The exceptions to the rule are classes which regularly meet Friday evenings or on Saturday and/or Sunday at any time, and courses offered in the compressed summer terms.

Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.

Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.
Moodle @ York University